

EFFECTS OF ISSUE INVOLVEMENT, IN-GROUP AND OUT-GROUP HIGH CONSENSUS MESSAGES, AND ARGUMENT QUALITY ON PERSUASION

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This study investigated the persuasive effects of in-group and out-group high consensus messages with varying argument strength under high or low issue involvement conditions. A 2 (high or low issue involvement) \times 2 (in-group or out-group source) \times 2 (strong or weak arguments) factorial design was used, and participants were exposed to a counterattitudinal message representing the majority viewpoint of in-group or out-group. Results showed that participants in high, relative to those in low, issue involvement conditions were less persuaded. In addition, participants agreed more with the strong message than with the weak one in low issue involvement conditions. However, the arguments did not differ significantly in their persuasibility under conditions of high issue involvement. These results suggest that participants in high issue involvement conditions were more resistant to the message, while those in low issue involvement conditions were less resistant to the persuasive appeal and processed the persuasive message in an objective fashion. Path analyses revealed that high (vs. low) issue involvement led to fewer positive cognitive elaborations, more negative affect, lower evaluations of the source, thus resulted in resistance to persuasion. The persuasive impacts of the source and argument quality were mediated by evaluations of the source. Out-group source was evaluated less favorably, and had little persuasive impact. Strong arguments from in-group source proved more persuasive than the weak one as a result of evaluating the source more favorably. Results of path analyses indicate that the persuasive effects examined were mediated not only by cognitive responses, but also through affective responses and evaluations of the source.

Keywords: Resistance to persuasion, Cognitive process, Affective process, In-group vs. out-group source, Issue involvement, Argument quality, Attitude change