

Trust or distrust? There is an alternative mindset for confronting disinformation, argues researcher

December 19 2023



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In the face of rampant disinformation, Professor Ruth Mayo from the Hebrew University of Jerusalem delivers a fresh perspective on the

cognitive mindsets influencing our susceptibility to false information. Her comprehensive review challenges the prevailing belief that trust or distrust alone is the answer in combating disinformation.

The work is [published](#) in the journal *Current Opinion in Psychology*.

When it comes to confronting disinformation, solely relying on [trust](#) or distrust mindsets isn't the most effective approach. While trust often leads to accepting [false information](#), and distrust can act as a shield against it, both mindsets have limitations.

The proposal is for an alternative [mindset](#)—the Cartesian mindset—which encourages individuals to critically evaluate information for accuracy without automatically accepting or rejecting it. This evaluative approach has shown promise in distinguishing between true and false information, offering a more effective strategy for combating disinformation.

The review, entitled "Trust or Distrust? Neither! The Right Mindset for Confronting Disinformation," offers a nuanced exploration of how mindsets impact our beliefs and responses to information. Professor Mayo delves into the pervasive truth [bias](#), a predisposition to accept information as true, and its relevance in the context of trust. This bias, often considered the root cause of embracing disinformation, is contextual and subject to change based on mindset.

"While trust is commonly viewed as the default mindset leading to belief in disinformation, our review highlights that mindsets, be it trust or distrust, aren't absolute. They are highly contextual," states Prof. Mayo.

The review emphasizes that while a distrust mindset can act as a shield against uncritical acceptance of disinformation, it paradoxically leads individuals to embrace alternative and potentially false narratives. This

dual effect underscores the limitations of solely relying on trust or distrust mindsets in addressing disinformation.

"Both trust and distrust mindsets present limitations when dealing with disinformation. The answer lies in a different approach: the Cartesian mindset," Prof. Mayo says.

The Cartesian mindset, proposed by Prof. Mayo, advocates for a pause before automatically accepting or rejecting information, urging individuals to critically evaluate its accuracy. This evaluative approach has shown promise in distinguishing between true and false information, reducing the propagation of disinformation, and promoting accurate evaluation without a predisposition to trust or [distrust](#).

"We advocate for an evaluative mindset that prioritizes accuracy over the automatic classification of information as true or false. It's about considering the content critically," Prof. Mayo says.

The implications of this review stretch beyond [cognitive psychology](#), offering a novel framework for combating [disinformation](#). Prof. Mayo's insights pave the way for strategies and interventions aimed at cultivating an evaluative mindset as a universally effective approach to information processing.

More information: Ruth Mayo, Trust or Distrust? Neither! The Right Mindset for Confronting Disinformation, *Current Opinion in Psychology* (2023). [DOI: 10.1016/j.copsy.2023.101779](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsy.2023.101779)

Provided by Hebrew University of Jerusalem

Citation: Trust or distrust? There is an alternative mindset for confronting disinformation, argues

researcher (2023, December 19) retrieved 28 April 2024 from
<https://phys.org/news/2023-12-distrust-alternative-mindset-disinformation.html>

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