

Outcome Bias

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Outcome Bias is the tendency to evaluate a decision on the basis of its outcome rather than on what factors led to the decision. For example, a doctor decides to give a critically ill child a new, experimental medication that has a 50% chance of curing the child's condition. If the child survives, the doctor will be praised for his actions. However, if the child dies the doctor will be criticized harshly for his "mistake."

This form of biased thinking occurs more often with negative events. When decisions lead to poor outcomes, people assign more blame and harsher punishment to the decision maker than if their decision had led to a positive outcome, even if the decision was well thought-out or the probability of success was due to chance.

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