Research Paper

Exploring the Interplay between Morality, Lying, and Personality

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the relationship between morality, lying behavior, and personality traits in 120 young adults. Moral identity was assessed using a 20-item Morality Identity Questionnaire (MIQ), while lying tendencies were measured through a 14-item Lying in Everyday Situations (LiES) scale. Personality types were determined using the NEO-Five Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI 3), a 60-item measure. Statistical analysis revealed a significant correlation between all three variables. Assuming the effectiveness of the measures and the absence of extraneous influences, the findings suggest a negative correlation between morality and lying individuals with stronger moral identities tend to lie less frequently. Furthermore, personality traits play a role, with neuroticism and agreeableness (NEO-FFI 3) exhibiting positive correlations with lying, while extraversion, openness to experience, and conscientiousness show negative correlations, suggesting these individuals might lie less often.

Keywords: *Morality, Lying, Personality*

We each possess a unique constellation of personality traits, the enduring patterns of thought, emotion, and behavior that define who we are. These traits influence how we navigate the social world, from our comfort level in social situations to our decision-making processes. Psychologists have identified various personality factors that might be linked to lying tendencies. For instance, individuals high in conscientiousness, who value following rules and being dependable, might be less likely to lie. Conversely, those low in agreeableness, prioritizing their own needs over others, might be more prone to self-serving lies. Palena et al., (2022) conducted research on exploring the relationship between personality, morality and lying on the person-centric approach and obtained four clusters, one of which was marked by high Machiavellianism and moral disengagement but low scores on the personality factors, and one of which showed the opposite trend. Heck et al., (2018) concluded that a medium to large effect of Honesty-Humility (HH) on unethical behavior, with higher HH linked to less lying. No other personality traits from the HEXACO or Big Five models showed a significant association with lying. Additionally, HH's effect remained independent of demographic characteristics and situational factors. Agreeableness was the only other trait associated with lying, but it did not show incremental validity beyond HH.

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The moral compass, our internal sense of right and wrong, also plays a crucial role. Lying can be a moral transgression, a violation of trust. However, the moral implications of a lie can be complex. A "white lie" told to spare someone's feelings might be seen as morally acceptable, while a lie used to manipulate or harm someone is clearly unethical. Understanding how personality factors interact with our moral framework can shed light on why we lie, and the justifications we use for doing so. McFerran et al., (2010) found that individuals high in conscientiousness, agreeableness, and who viewed morality as central to their self-concept, endorsed a more principled (as opposed to expedient) ethical ideology and further revealed that ethical ideology mediated the connection between personality, moral identity, and two work-related behaviors: organizational citizenship behaviors (positive) and the propensity to morally disengage (negative). The findings suggest that personality and moral identity influence ethical decision-making through the lens of ethical ideology.Kashy et al., (1996) study's results indicated that people lied more frequently in interactions with acquaintances than with close friends or strangers. Lies were most often motivated by a desire to avoid negative social consequences or to protect oneself or others. The likelihood of lying also increased with the perceived importance of the interaction and the participant's self-reported deceitfulness.

This exploration will investigate the "why" behind the lie. We'll examine how specific personality traits like conscientiousness, agreeableness, and neuroticism might influence our propensity to lie. We'll also delve into the concept of moral disengagement, the ability to detach ourselves from moral principles when it suits our needs. By examining these factors, we can gain a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between personality, morality, and the act of lying.

There has been considerable amount of research focusing on exploring the relationship between morality, lying behavior, and personality traits.Grant et al., (2019) investigated lying behavior in young adults, exploring its association with personality traits and cognitive abilities. The findings suggest that lying behavior in young adults is influenced by situational factors and self-perceptions of deceitfulness, rather than by broad personality traits. Fleeson et al., (2014) explores various avenues for integrating personality research into the domain of morality, including examining the consistency of moral behavior across situations, the content and scope of moral traits, the underlying psychological mechanisms linking personality to morality, and the development and validation of measures to assess moral character. By incorporating personality, the authors suggest, we can gain a more comprehensive understanding of moral psychology.

The significance of this research lies in its focus on the Indian context and the 18-35 age range. This demographic segment is crucial as it represents a period of significant personal and social development. Moral values and personality traits are often solidified during this time, making it an ideal window to examine the interplay between these factors and lying behavior. Additionally, exploring these relationships within the Indian sociocultural landscape offers a unique perspective that can contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of these complex dynamics across cultures.

In light of this existing evidence, the current research was designed to achieve the following objectives:
- To explore the relationship between Personality traits and lying in young adults.
- To explore the relationship between Personality traits and Morality in young adults.

- To examine the relationship between Lying and Morality in young adults.

Based on the above-mentioned objectives, the following hypothesis were laid:
- **H1** - There will be significant correlation between certain personality traits and tendency to lie.
- **H2** - There will be significant correlation between certain personality traits and morality.
- **H3** - There will be negative correlation between morality and lying.

METHODOLOGY

Aim:
To study the Interplay between lying, personality and morality among young adults.

Design:
The present study was of cross-sectional, correlational, and quantitative design.

Sampling:
To ensure a representative group for this study, the total number of participants in the present study was 120 participants comprising of both male and female. The technique applied was random sampling method. The focus is on young adults between the ages of 18 and 35, residing in India.

Tools Used:
1. **Lying in Everyday Situations (LiES) scale**, **is developed by Hart, C. L., Jones, J. M., Terrizzi, Jr., J. A., & Curtis, D. A. (2019).** The study utilized the Lying in Everyday Situations (LiES) scale, a 14-item self-report measure assessing an individual's tendency to lie in various everyday situations. The authors claim the LiES possesses good psychometric properties, including reliability in terms of consistent responses across items and over time, as well as validity in capturing both its intended construct (lying tendencies) and its relationship with other relevant measures.
2. **The NEO FFI-3 (NEO Five-Factor Inventory-3) developed by Costa and McCrae**, it streamlines the NEO PI-R inventory to provide a quick and reliable measure of the five major personality domains. The NEO FFI-3 employs a 60-item questionnaire. Studies have consistently reported good internal consistency for the five domains, with Cronbach's Alpha coefficients ranging from 0.68 to 0.89. While test-retest reliability for the earlier NEO-FFI version was around 0.80, the NEO FFI-3 is said to exhibit even greater stability in results over time.
3. **The Moral Identity Questionnaire (MIQ) scale is developed by Black & Reynolds, (2016).** This 20-item self-report measure gauges the importance individuals place on moral principles and their commitment The authors report that the MIQ subscales demonstrated acceptable internal reliability and consistency, indicating that participants' responses within each subscale were aligned. Additionally, the authors claim the MIQ exhibited acceptable validity, suggesting it effectively measured the intended constructs of moral self and moral integrity.

Procedure
After the formulation of the research problem Questionnaire was structured and materialized in google forms. Participants completed a battery of questionnaires to assess demographics,

personality traits, lying tendencies, and moral identity. Questionnaire included consent form and participant's basic rights like confidentiality and the right to withdraw participation were informed.

Statistical Analysis
To achieve the research goals and test the hypotheses, the study employed various descriptive as well as inferential statistical analysis (Pearson correlation) techniques using IBM SPSS Statistics Version 21.0.

RESULTS

Figure 1 Gender: Histogram depicting the frequencies of the Age in Years of the sample
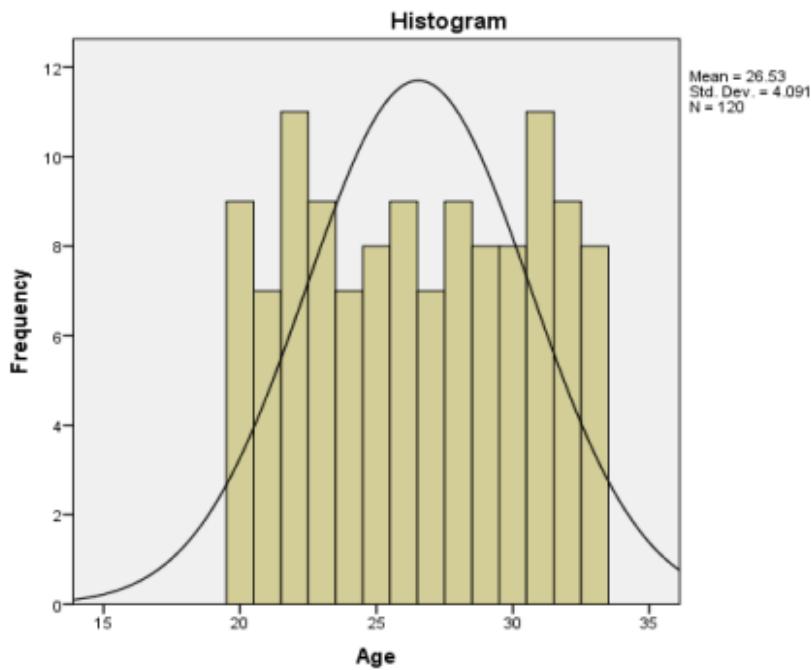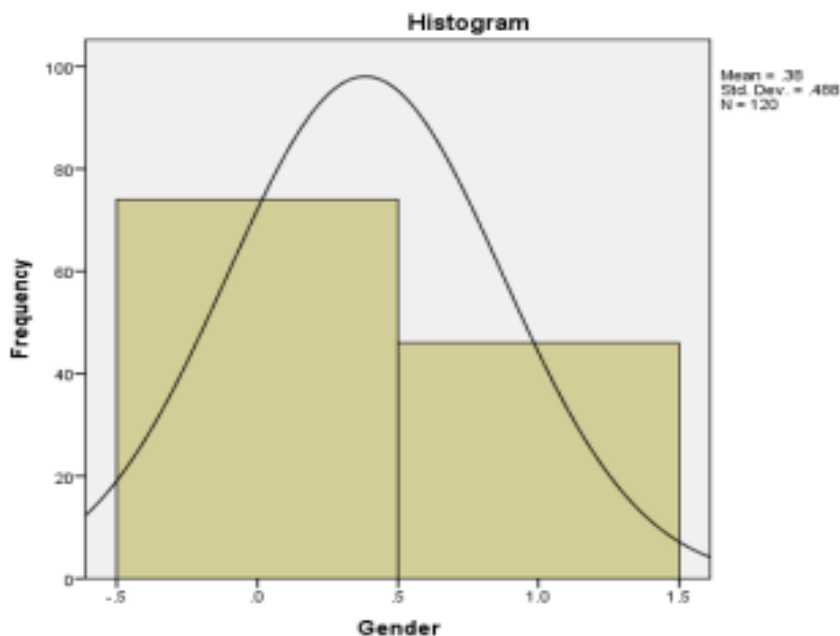
Mean = 26.53
Std. Dev. = 4.091
N = 120

Figure 2 Age: Histogram depicting the frequencies of the Genders of the sample

Mean = .38
Std. Dev. = .488
N = 120

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics

Scales	Variables	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
LiEs Scale	Relational lies	22.00	8.762	-0.166	1.754
	Vindictive Lies	13.27	9.423	-0.748	2.366
MIQ Scale	Moral Integrity	37.73	7.877	-1.324	-0.689
	Moral Self	52.33	9.514	1.889	-0.243

Table 2: Correlation Coefficient between Variables of NEO-FFI 3 and Variables of LiES

Variables	RL	VL
Neuroticism	.445**	.216*
Extraversion	-	-.203*
Openness	-	-.449**
Agreeableness	-	.265**
Conscientiousness	-	-.391**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

H1 - There will be significant correlation between personality traits and tendency to lie.

Results presented in the above table states that the hypothesis, which is that there will be significant correlation between personality traits and tendency to lie is true, as all the traits in the table above shows significant relation with at-least one of the variables of lying.

Table 3: Correlation coefficient between Variables of NEO-FFI 3 and Variables of MIQ

Variables	MI	MS
Neuroticism	-	-
Extraversion	.379**	-
Openness	-	.567**
Agreeableness	-.333**	-
Conscientiousness	.582**	.309**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

H2 - There will be significant correlation between personality traits and morality.

The result shows that Neuroticism, (a personality trait) is not significantly correlated with either of the variable of morality, which means the hypothesis is not true.

Table 4: Correlation coefficient between Variables of LiES and Variables of MIQ

Variables	MI	MS
RL	-	-.557**
VL	-.286**	-.590**

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

H3 - There will be negative correlation between morality and lying.
The result from the above table clearly shows that lying and morality are negatively correlated, which means that the hypothesis is true.

DISCUSSION

This research questions, *how do individual differences in personality traits interact with moral values to influence the propensity for lying?* This question encapsulates the core objectives of the dissertation, which include examining the influence of personality traits on lying behavior, elucidating the role of moral values as moderators in this relationship, and identifying potential implications for ethical theory and practical interventions.

On studying the relationship between personality traits and tendency to lie the result found in table 2 suggests that:
1. Openness, Extraversion, and Conscientiousness: People high in these traits were less likely to lie for revenge (negative correlation). In other words, those who are curious, outgoing, and organized tend to be less motivated to lie out of spite. The correlations for Openness and Conscientiousness were especially strong (above 0.3).
2. Neuroticism and Agreeableness: These traits had a different relationship with vindictive lying. Neuroticism (experiencing negative emotions easily) did not correlate with vindictive lying, but it did correlate with relational lying (lying to protect relationships, positive correlation above 0.4). This suggests people high in neuroticism might be more likely to lie to maintain harmony, even if it means bending the truth.
3. Agreeableness (being cooperative and trusting): Surprisingly, this trait had a positive correlation with vindictive lying. While the reason needs further exploration, it could be that highly agreeable people might feel more hurt or betrayed, leading them to lie in retaliation.

Hart et al. (2020) partially corroborated the present findings. Their research aligned with the current study on the relationships between neuroticism, openness, extraversion, conscientiousness, and vindictive lying. However, their findings diverged regarding agreeableness.

Regarding the relationship between Personality traits and morality, the results from table 3 indicates that:
1. Neuroticism: Interestingly, this trait did not seem to affect moral behavior (neither moral integrity nor moral self). So, being neurotic does not necessarily make someone less moral.
2. Agreeableness: This trait had a surprising twist. People high in agreeableness showed a weaker connection between their moral beliefs and actions (negative correlation with moral integrity). In simpler terms, they might struggle to translate their good intentions into consistent moral behavior.
3. Extraversion: People who are outgoing (extraverted) tend to have a stronger connection between their moral beliefs and actions (positive correlation with moral integrity). So, their outward personality seems to align well with their moral compass.
4. Openness: This trait showed a strong positive correlation with moral self (coefficient above 0.5). This suggests that people open to new experiences tend to have a well-developed internal sense of morality (moral self).
5. Conscientiousness: This was the standout trait, showing positive correlations with both moral integrity and moral self. People who are organized and dependable (conscientious) tend to be both consistent in their moral actions (moral integrity) and have a strong internal moral compass (moral self). Interestingly, the correlation was

stronger with moral integrity, suggesting a particularly clear link between conscientiousness and acting according to their morals.

The results of this research differs from the study conducted by McFerran et al., (2010) found that individuals high in conscientiousness, agreeableness, and who viewed morality as central to their self-concept, endorsed a more principled (as opposed to expedient) ethical ideology on the context that here conscientiousness shows negative correlation with morality.

Lastly the results, seen from table 4, between the relationship of Lying and Morality it is found that lying is seen as immoral (negative correlation). Interestingly, there was not a clear connection between how honest someone is in their relationships (relational lying) and their overall moral character (moral integrity). This suggests these two aspects might be independent.

However, the results did show some interesting patterns:
1. People with strong moral values (high moral self) were less likely to lie for revenge (vindictive lying). This means the stronger your moral compass, the less likely you are to lie to hurt someone.
2. People with strong moral values were also less likely to lie to maintain relationships (relational lying). In other words, honesty is especially important in close relationships for those with high moral character.

While the study sheds light on personality and lying and morality, some limitations exist. The small sample size might not generalize well to the broader population. Additionally, participants' desire to appear socially desirable could have influenced their responses. Furthermore, external factors beyond the scope of the study might have also impacted the results. These limitations warrant further research with larger, more diverse samples and stricter controls.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this dissertation delves into the intricate interplay between personality traits and moral values, exploring how they combine to influence an individual's tendency to lie. The core objectives center around understanding how personality characteristics (as defined by the OCEAN model) shape lying behavior, the moderating role of moral values in this relationship, and the potential implications for both ethical theory and practical interventions.

The research findings paint a nuanced picture. While lying is viewed as morally wrong, certain personality traits like conscientiousness seem to promote strong moral character and act as a deterrent to lying. Conversely, other traits like agreeableness exhibit a more complex influence, potentially leading to lies in specific situations, particularly to preserve relationships.

Key takeaways from the study include the observation that individuals high in openness, extraversion, and conscientiousness are less likely to lie out of revenge. Neuroticism, however, does not necessarily correlate with revengeful lying but might influence individuals to lie for the sake of maintaining relationships. Interestingly, agreeableness showed a positive correlation with vindictive lying, suggesting a need for further exploration of this unexpected association.

Overall, the study underscores the significance of considering both personality and moral values when seeking to understand the complexities of lying behavior. By recognizing the interplay between these factors, we can gain valuable insights into the underlying motivations for lying and potentially develop more effective interventions to promote ethical decision-making.

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