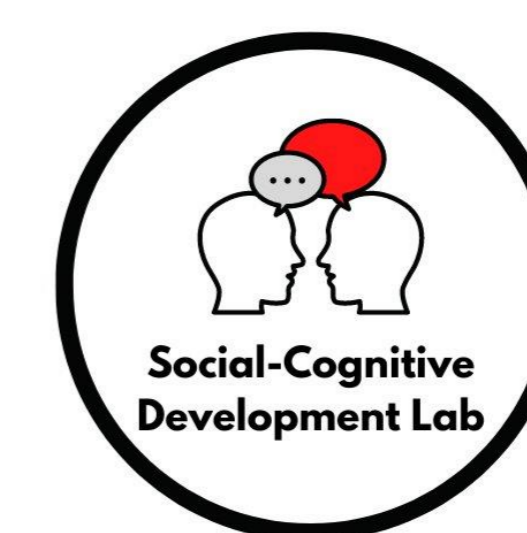


Prosocial Lies: Longitudinal Associations Between Adolescents' Attitudes and Their Lying Behavior

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Introduction

- Prosocial lies are told to protect others from harm, yet dishonesty can harm interpersonal relationships (Levine & Lupoli, 2022).
- Adolescence is a period of marked social change, and adolescents may use prosocial lies to navigate social relationships (e.g., gaining peer acceptance, establishing independence from parents).
- Previous research suggests that adolescents' attitudes towards prosocial lying may predict their lying behavior (Buta et al., 2020), but the direction of this relationship is unknown.

Purpose

- To examine the association between youths' **moral evaluations of prosocial lying** and their **prosocial lying behaviors** to parents and friends over time.

Methodology

Brock Healthy Youth Project: A longitudinal study examining adolescent development

Participants (Time 1):
N = 1128 9-15 years old,
 $M_{age} = 11.54$, $SD = 1.68$,
50.2% female

Measures:

Moral Evaluations of Prosocial Lies

Is it okay to lie...

- To protect friends' feelings
- To help friends avoid getting in trouble
- To make someone feel good about themselves

Ratings of acceptability: 1 (never) to 4 (always)

Lie-Telling Rates

How often have you lied in the last two weeks to your (1) parents and (2) friends

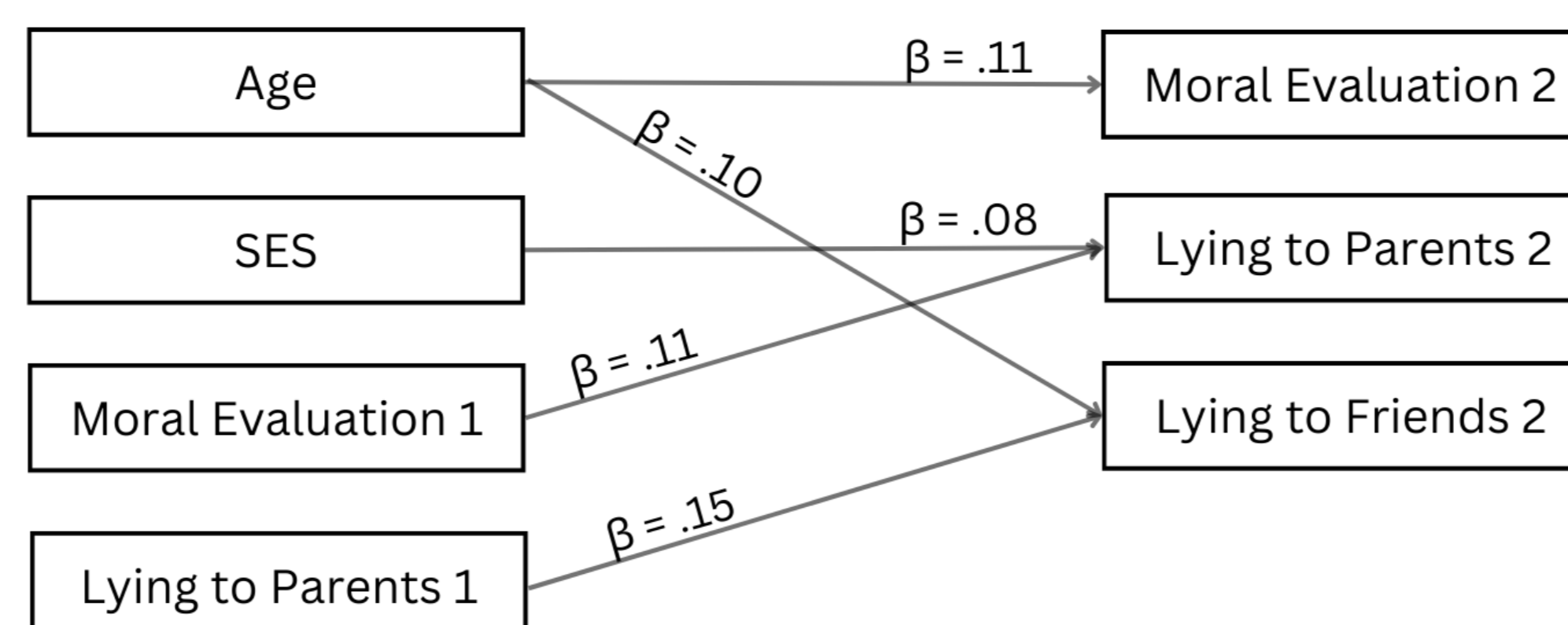
- to make them feel good about themselves.

Frequency ratings: 1 (never) to 5 (10+ times)

Adolescents' prosocial lying to parents was predicted by their moral evaluations of prosocial lying.

Adolescents' prosocial lying to friends was predicted by age and prosocial lying to parents.

Figure 1. Significant autoregressive and cross-lagged paths among study variables.



*Note: positive associations are indicated by solid arrows.

Model Results

Autoregressive cross-lagged analysis was performed with age, sex, and SES as covariates. The model fit was excellent: $\chi^2(3) = 6.404$, $p = .0935$, $CFI = .995$, and $RMSEA = .03$, 90% CI [.000, .066], $p = .775$.

Procedure

Participants completed all measures at two time points one year apart.

Results at T2

- **Moral Evaluations:**
 - **Being older** at T1 was associated with more positive evaluations of prosocial lies at T2 ($p < .001$).
- **Lying to Parents:**
 - More **positive evaluations of prosocial lying** at T1 were associated with more frequent prosocial lying to parents at T2 ($p < .001$).
 - **Higher SES** at T1 was associated with more frequent prosocial lying to parents at T2 ($p = .041$).
- **Lying to friends:**
 - **Being older** at T1 was associated with more prosocial lying to friends at T2 ($p = .002$).
 - More **frequent prosocial lying to parents** at T1 was associated with more prosocial lying to friends at T2 ($p < .001$).

Discussion

- These results highlight the importance of adolescents' attitudes towards prosocial lying in predicting their prosocial lying behaviors towards parents, suggesting that socialization around prosocial lying is important for future behavior.
- Additionally, prosocial lying to parents predicted lying to friends, suggesting that behavior within the family context may influence how adolescents behave in other relationships.



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