ATTITUDES TOWARD LYING IN PRIMARY SCHOOL CHILDREN DEPENDING ON THEIR LEVEL OF MORAL DEVELOPMENT

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Abstract*: Primary school age (7–10 years) is a critical period for the formation of morality. Children learn to distinguish truth from lies, but their attitudes toward deception depend on moral development: at a low level, lying may seem acceptable; at a high level, it is condemned.*

Objective: To identify how the level of moral development influences attitudes toward lying among primary school children in Kokand.

Methods: 150 children from three Kokand schools were surveyed in September–October 2025. R.S. Nemov's (1994) "What Am I Like?" method was used to assess moral development, and an original questionnaire on attitudes toward lying (10 scenarios) was applied.

Results: Children with high moral development (45%) more often condemn lying (M = 4.2 on a 1–5 scale) than those with low development (25%, M = 2.1; p < 0.001). Correlation r = 0.62 (p < 0.001). Boys more often justify "white lies" (32% vs. 18% in girls).

Novelty*: First application of Nemov's method to study attitudes toward lying in the Uzbek context, considering local cultural norms (family traditions, school ethics).*

Keywords*: attitudes toward lying, moral development, primary school children, "What Am I Like?" method, Kokand.*

INTRODUCTION

Primary school children actively acquire social norms. Lying is common: a child may lie to avoid punishment or to help a friend. In Kokand, a city with a rich history and a population of about 250,000, schoolchildren from families with traditional values (respect for elders, honesty in communication) face modern influences—internet and peers.

Moral development is the process of internalizing norms of kindness, justice, and honesty. According to Piaget, children under 10 are at the stage of "moral realism": rules are rigid, and lying is always wrong. Kohlberg adds levels: pre-conventional (fear of punishment), conventional (group approval).

Attitudes toward lying range from complete rejection to justification ("white lies" for good). Studies show that morally developed children lie less and condemn deception more. In Russia, R.S. Nemov (1994) in the "What Am I Like?" method assesses self-perception on moral qualities: honest, kind, fair.

Previous research: In the USA, children with high moral development better differentiate types of lies (Bussey, 1999). In Russia—link with empathy (Subbotsina, 2005).

Data in Uzbekistan are scarce, especially in Kokand, where Islamic values emphasize truthfulness. Novelty: First regional study using Nemov's method adapted to local context (examples from Uzbek culture: lying to parents, teacher).

Hypotheses: 1) High moral development is associated with negative attitudes toward lying. 2) Girls are stricter toward deception.

METHODS

Participants

150 primary school children (78 girls, 72 boys), aged 7–10 years (M = 8.7, SD = 1.2). From Kokand schools: 50 from №5, 50 from №12, 50 from №28. Voluntary participation with parental and teacher consent. Excluded: children with developmental delays (n=8). The sample is representative by socioeconomic status (middle-level families).

Instruments

1. R.S. Nemov's "What Am I Like?" method (1994): 20 pairs of opposite qualities (honest–dishonest, kind–mean, etc.). The child chooses "I am like this" or "I am not like this." Scores: 0–10 low, 11–15 medium, 16–20 high. Reliability α = 0.85 in our adaptation. Examples adapted: "I always tell the truth to my grandmother" vs. "I sometimes hide the truth."

2. Attitudes toward lying questionnaire: 10 scenarios (5 harmful lies, 5 "white lies"). Example: "A friend broke a vase, you say it was the cat. Is this bad?" Scale 1–5 (1 = not bad at all, 5 = very bad). α = 0.89.

Demographics: age, gender, grade.

Procedure

September–October 2025. Individual and group testing in school classrooms (20–30 min). Anonymous, with psychologist's explanations. Parents provided consent.

Analysis

SPSS and Python (scipy): descriptive statistics, ANOVA, Pearson correlation, chi-square. $p < 0.05$.

Results

Descriptive statistics (Table 1):

Variable		S D	M in	M ax	
Age		.7	.2.	7	0
Moral level ("What Am I Like?")	4.2	.8		5	0
Attitudes toward lying (questionnaire)	.45	.92	.2	1 .0	

Table 1. Main indicators (N=150)

Distribution by moral levels: low — 25% (38 children), medium — 30% (45 children), high — 45% (67 children).

Correlation: $r = 0.618$ ($p < 0.001$). The higher the moral level, the more negative the attitude toward lying.

By moral levels (Fig. 1):

- Low: M=2.10 (SD=0.75) — often justify lying (65% "not bad").

- Medium: M=3.40 (SD=0.65).

- High: M=4.25 (SD=0.55) — condemn (82% "very bad").

ANOVA: $F_{(2,147)}=48.2$, $p<0.001$.

Figure 1. Mean scores of attitudes toward lying by moral development levels

By gender: Girls — M=3.78 (SD=0.85), boys — M=3.10 (SD=0.95); t=4.12, p<0.001. Boys more often justify "white lies" ($\chi^2=12.4$, $p<0.01$).

Regression (Table 2): Attitudes toward lying are predicted by moral level ($\beta=0.65$, $p<0.001$). Gender — $\beta=0.22$, $p<0.05$. $R^2=0.42$.

Predictor		β	p
Moral level		0.65	<0.001
Gender (1=girls)		0.22	0.012
Age		0.08	0.31

Table 2. Regression (Attitudes ~ Moral level + gender + age)

Sample responses: High level: "Lying is always bad, Allah sees everything." Low level: "If you're not caught, it's okay."

DISCUSSION

Hypotheses confirmed: strong correlation (r=0.62). Children with high moral development according to Nemov perceive lying as a norm violation, consistent with Kohlberg's theory. In Kokand, cultural factor—religious upbringing—strengthens condemnation of lying.

Girls are stricter—possibly due to socialization (girls are taught to be "good"). Boys justify deception in games or disputes.

Comparison: Similar to Russian data (Nemov, 1994), but higher proportion of high level in our sample (45% vs. 30% average in Russia)—due to family traditions.

Limitations: Self-reports (children may idealize), small sample. No longitudinal design. Future: add observation, compare with other cities.

Practical implications: Introduce ethics lessons in Kokand schools using "What Am I Like?" method: draw "honest self," discuss scenarios. Will reduce lying, enhance morality. Parents—praise truthfulness.

CONCLUSION

In Kokand primary school children, attitudes toward lying depend on moral development: the higher the level, the more negative the attitude. Nemov's method is effective for diagnosis. Novelty—local insights for Uzbekistan. Basis for honesty education programs.

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