

Cognition and Dishonest Behavior

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Abstract

Dishonesty has received increased attention in recent years from many professionals due to its importance in many social areas such as finance and psychology, among others. Understanding the mechanisms underlying dishonesty and the channels through which it operates may allow for the detection and even prevention of dishonest behaviour. However, studying dishonesty is a difficult task; dishonesty is a complex behaviour that imposes a psychological and cognitive burden. The study of this burden has spawned a new research trend centred on the role of cognition in dishonesty. Theoretical aspects of how such cognitive processes modulate dishonest behaviour are reviewed in this paper. We will pay special attention to executive functions that may influence the decision to be honest, such as inhibitory processes, working memory, or set-shifting.

Keywords: Dishonesty • Social cognition • Working memory • Dishonesty models

Introduction

Dishonesty has received increased attention from many professionals in recent years due to its importance in many social areas such as finance and psychology, among others. Understanding the mechanisms underlying dishonesty and the channels through which dishonesty operates may allow for the detection and even prevention of dishonest behaviour. However, studying dishonesty is a difficult task because it is a complex behaviour that imposes a psychological and cognitive burden. The study of this burden has spawned a new research trend that focuses on the role of cognition in dishonesty. This paper examines the theoretical aspects of how such cognitive processes modulate dishonest behaviour. We will pay special attention to executive functions such as inhibitory processes, working memory, and set-shifting that may influence the decision to be honest. We also take into account some cognitive and social psychology frameworks that may aid in understanding dishonesty, such as the Theory of Mind, the role of creative processes, and discourse analyses in language studies. Finally, we'll go over some specific cognitive-based models that use cognitive mechanisms to explain dishonesty. We demonstrate that cognition and dishonest behaviour are inextricably linked, and that there are several important milestones to be reached in the future to advance our society's understanding of dishonesty.

Literature Review

Dishonesty has been extensively researched over the last decade, reflecting a strong interest in human behaviour and having a significant impact on professional structures such as businesses and organisations. Many studies have concentrated on individual differences in dishonest behaviour and the personal characteristics associated with dishonesty. Recent novel experimental paradigms, on the other hand, have enabled a new trend of research focused on the mechanisms underlying dishonesty, including the cognitive processes directly associated with it. When the concept of dishonesty is broken down, elements and terms from the cognitive literature, such as suppression or monitoring, can be easily identified. As a result of such decompositions, a new body of research has emerged that assumes dishonesty has a cognitive disadvantage/burden over honesty. Several works have emerged in order to test for additional resources.

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When compared to truthful scenarios, they demonstrated faster reaction times and specific physiological indexes related to attentional processes. They proposed that deceptive speech must conform to another's knowledge and purposes, as well as maintain internal consistency between verbal and behavioural cues. Several subsequent studies reported intriguing findings on the potential role of cognition in dishonest behaviour, which we will discuss below. As a result, the purpose of this paper was to review what we know about cognitive processes in dishonest behaviour. Despite extensive evidence of cognition mediating dishonest behaviour, there is still no agreement in the literature on how cognition modulates dishonesty. This disagreement could be caused by a number of factors. First, there is the complication of both concepts: cognition and deception. Memory, language, learning, perception, and executive functions are examples of cognitive processes.

Discussion

According to the literature, the most important cognitive processes for understanding dishonest behaviour are executive functions. The majority of research on cognition and dishonesty has concentrated on EF. As a result, we will first look at the most important studies on EF and dishonesty, focusing on inhibition, working memory, and task switching, three of the most important cognitive processes defining EF. Although we will discuss how these cognitive processes are implemented in our neural structures and circuits at some points, our primary focus will be on the cognitive processes themselves, with less emphasis on structural brain implementation or connectivity. There are other works available for readers interested in a thorough examination of the neuroscience of dishonesty. While some of those works will be cited in this review in order to understand how cognition mediates dishonesty.

Dishonesty is, at its core, a social behaviour. It is dependent on other people's perceptions and how they interact with our understanding of the world. As a result, how dishonesty interacts with social cognition is a critical question. The cognitive Theory of Mind is the ability to comprehend the beliefs of others. As a result, it appears to be critical to comprehending dishonesty. Furthermore, while discussing how personality traits can explain dishonest behaviour is beyond the scope of this review (and would necessitate a separate review), we will discuss some related factors, such as creativity. We will look at some interesting research on dishonesty and creativity, as well as research on the role of language in dishonest behaviour. However, because honest people may also exhibit high levels of activation as a result of the stress of being under interview pressure, attention has shifted to studying the cognitive strategies and mechanisms underlying dishonesty. Many current techniques for detecting dishonesty support a cognitive approach and outperform traditional methods in terms of accuracy. These strategies are frequently based on depleting the dishonest individual's resources, with the assumption that cognitive resources are required to sustain a lie. As a result, cognitive processes like attention, working memory, attentional shift, inhibition, and others appear to be important in the study of dishonesty: dishonesty frequently pursues a goal that must be maintained and updated, flexible enough to adapt to the context, and focused by attentive processes [1-5].

Conclusion

However, as we have seen, some studies produce contradictory results. These differences may be due to the variety of manipulations and paradigms used in different studies, as in many other research fields. More research is needed to solve the mystery of how cognition influences dishonesty. Despite the differences between models and studies, there are some commonalities. Most people believe that dishonesty is a process that can be divided into stages that include monitoring (working memory), inhibition, and information set-shifting. The specifics of how this happens differ between models and studies, as well as the empirical data that supports each of them. Certain models, for example, propose that certain general cognitive processes, such as inhibition, may influence behaviour differently depending on the dishonest task manipulation or contextual variables.

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Conflict of Interest

There are no conflicts of interest by author.

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