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Do people behave dishonestly easily?

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Abstract: This study examines whether dishonest behaviors occur easily. In 60 trials, 100 undergraduate students viewed 20 dots on a square divided into right and left sides and had to decide which side contained more dots within one second (developed by Gino et al., 2010). In with-reward condition, participants received 0.1 point for each left decision and 1 point for each right decision, and they received more sweets depending on points. Therefore, this asymmetrical payment structure triggered motivation to dishonestly report more right-side dots, even when there are actually more left-side dots. The results demonstrate that participants decided at greater frequencies that more dots were on the right side in with-reward condition than in without-reward condition, indicating dishonest behaviors occurred. Furthermore, participants with greater right-side frequencies in with-reward condition showed lower points on a morality scale. These results suggest dishonest behaviors occur easily and are related with a decline in morality.