



**REASONS FOR WHICH PEOPLE LIE:  
AN EVALUATION IN THE CONTEXT OF VALUES EDUCATION  
(TURKEY EXAMPLE)**

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**Abstract:**

The aim of this study is to investigate; reasons for which people lie and explore what they get by telling lie in the context of values education. Additionally, the study aims at investigating whether thoughts about telling lie are varied depending on gender and marital status. Both qualitative and quantitative methods are used in the study. The study was carried out by receiving opinions of 52 teachers and 69 pre-service teachers living in Isparta through interview forms, and data were analyzed by using content analysis method. Reliability of the study was ensured by consulting 4 experts' opinions and using Miles and Huberman formula. At the end of the research, it was found out that compared to men and singles, women and married ones stay under the influence of lie that they tell. It is noticed that women mostly tell lie to themselves, men lie to their wives and girlfriends, single people lie to themselves and their families and married people lie to their partners to a large extent. When people tell lie, they pay attention to consistency, be convincing and not to reveal the truth. Furthermore, it was concluded that people felt guilty after lying.

**Keywords:** lie, liar, reasons for which people lie, value, values education

**1. Introduction**

Lie is a deliberate successful or unsuccessful effort of an individual without any stimulus to create a belief that the source is not true (Vrij, 2008, 15). In order for a word to become a lie, it is needed that individual behaves in this way willingly and

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intentionally. Lie takes place in every part of our life. Regarding lie, there is no difference between a person who says that there was a heavy traffic not to have conflict with his boss when he is late to work and a child whose financial situation is different from the one he tells others. However, most of the people do not approve that they lie. "*Everybody lies. Even the person who denies it, is actually a liar*" (Wolk and Henley, 1970).

Lying takes place in a very wide range of disciplines such as psychology, criminology, philosophy, sociology and communication. For this reason, it is difficult to define lie; and many different opinions and definitions emerge as result. There are two meanings of lie: the first; is false information uttered with the purpose of deceiving, and the second is anything uttered to induce a wrong effect (Znakov, 1995). Zuckermen et al. (1982, 171) defined lie as to feed someone with a belief or percept which is regarded as lie by liar. According to this definition, giving information in a false way or remembering something wrongly, is not regarded as lie. According to Mitchell (1986, 3), it is a fictitious communication aimed at providing benefits for liar; for example, telling a mother who has survived a traffic accident that all the family members are fine by hiding the truth that they died. The main purpose here is that the woman completes the treatment process without being affected by the situation. The lie may also be told to provide benefits for the other side.

Ekman (1985, 26) sets two criteria by distinguishing lie from other types of deceiving. The first of these is the intention of the person who lied. That is, the person who lied will knowingly and intentionally give false information to the person. The other criterion is that the person who lied does not know that he is lying. Bok (1978) argued that lying and fooling are different terms in his book on lies. He stated that a message used to deceive must be expressed in verbal, written or symbolic form so that it can be regarded as a lie. That is to say, compared to lie, fooling is in a broader category than lying.

According to Vrij (2008, 15), when a person intends to lie, he is unwittingly lying, even if the content is correct. When a person lies, even if it is not proven or even if he gives true information by chance; he is still regarded as he lied, because he intended to do so.

DePaulo (1996, 703), come up with a different point of view by dividing lies into three categories as outright lies (total falsehoods), exaggerations and subtle lies. Outright lies are telling exactly the opposite of true information; for example, a healthy person fakes being sick not to attend an event he has been invited. Subtle lie is a kind of way hiding truth. A man, deceiving his wife, defends himself and hides his deceit with another woman by saying "*I did not deceive you with that woman.*" Exaggerations are overstatements of truths; for example, a sick child, by exaggerating his illness, says that he is worse than actually he is, because he is expecting more attention from his mother. Albert Vrij listed the characteristics of the good liars as follows (Vrij, 2010, 8):

- Not to feel guilty while lying
- To have self-confidence
- Not to show signs of having trouble when lying
- Intelligence
- To have a good memory, to remember the lies he has told

These traits can be regarded as the most distinctive features that distinguish good liars from bad ones (Akçay, 2012, 237): Riggio and colleagues found out positive relation between being extroverted and successful in lying in their study, analyzes the relationship between communication skills and telling lie (Riggio and Friedman, 1983; Riggio, Tucker and Throckmarton, 1987). Moreover, these studies reveal that individuals who are socially competent, thoughtful, extrovert and have developed self-expression skills, are regarded as more believable and convincing (Seçil Yeter, 2008, 20).

### **1.1 Motivations behind Telling Lies**

Identifying and having knowledge of motivations behind telling lies have a great importance for the studies done to determine why people lie. Lindskol and Walters (1983) identified six different categories in their study:

- Rescuing someone from harm and shame.
- Protecting him/herself or someone else from punishment or disapproval,
- To influence officers for his/her earnings,
- To show him/herself better or to protect a gain,
- To persuade others to do something for our own benefit,
- To hurt someone for personal gain.

Hample (1980), identified motives that cause lies under four headings. These are; to benefit him/herself, to benefits others, to provide benefits for relationships, and other various motives. De Poulo, Kashy, Kirkendol and Wyer (1996) sub-divided motives into two as self-directed motives and the ones that directed to others. Self-directed motivation refers to the gains of a person him/herself. These gains may be material gains or avoiding any punishment. The motivations behind telling lies for someone are as follows; to prevent a person from being upset, to save him from a bad situation or to benefit him. As an example for this kind of motives: Saying a friend, who failed in contest that s/he will succeed in another one. It's a lie told to prevent the other side from being upset.

### **1.2 Purpose of the Study**

The purpose of this research is to examine lying in the context of values education by revealing the causes and gains of lying. For this objective, answers for the following questions were sought:

### 1.3 Sub-Objectives

- Do peoples' thoughts about lying vary depending on gender?
- Do peoples' thoughts about lying vary depending on marital status?
- What do people gain by lying?
- What do you pay attention to when you lie?
- What are the lies that you tell mostly to opposite sex?
- In what ways do you show yourself more differently than actually you are?

## 2. Method

### 2.1 Research Design

This research is a descriptive study in which data are gathered through a questionnaire consisting of closed-ended and open-ended questions. Descriptive studies, as the name suggests, are carried out to describe the characteristics of the phenomena studied (Borg, Gall and Gall, 1993).

In this study, both qualitative and quantitative methods were used. The quantitative part is based on the scanning model and in descriptive quality; and the qualitative part is based on case study. Scanning models are based on presenting the existing situation in its own way of existence and an objective manner (Karasar, 1999). In case study, the basic idea is to investigate an event in a detailed way by an appropriate method (Yıldırım and Şimşek, 2005). In this study, the factors related to the situation have been discussed with an holistic approach and it has been tried to determine how they are influenced by the related situation.

### 2.2 Participants

The research was conducted with the participation of 121 people, 52 teachers and 69 pre-service teachers living in Isparta. Since the universe is so large, 121 people were sampled. The demographical information of participants is given below.

**Table 1:** Demographical information of participants

Gender	Male	Female
	39	82
Marital Status	Married	Single
	49	72

### 2.3 Data Collection

Qualitative data were collected through an interview form consisting of 4 open-ended questions, and quantitative data were collected through a questionnaire of 8 close-ended questions. The reason that semi-structured interview technique was used in this study is, it is more appropriate in educational science researches because it has certain

level of standard and also flexibility at the same time (Ekiz, 2003). In the process of preparation of the form, the relevant literature was firstly reviewed and interview questions were revealed by using the information gathered. Reliability is a hard and an important issue in qualitative studies, because it can be difficult to present data in numerical ways as can be done in quantitative studies. Thus, to increase reliability, strategy, used in the study, was clearly shown and it is anticipated that it will allow other researchers to use the strategy in a similar way (Silverman, 2000, Yildirim and Simsek, 2011). External reliability of the research was ensured by reporting the steps that the researchers have followed, clearly and in a detailed way; and by showing the results through the researcher's point of view to convince readers and by presenting the some of the results as they were collected, the internal reliability were increased to a great extent (Türnüklü, 2001; Robson, 1999). In order to ensure the reliability of the study, 4 experts' opinions were consulted and the formula of Miles and Huberman (1994) (Reliability = agreements / agreements + disagreements) was used. The reliability coefficient found in this study is 91%.

#### **2.4 Data Analysis**

Quantitative data were interpreted using values such as frequency and percentage. The resulting data were compared and analyzed. The qualitative part of the data were analyzed using descriptive analysis technique, which has an important place in qualitative research techniques. As Yıldırım and Şimşek (2011) have described, descriptive analysis takes place in four steps:

- Framework for data analysis was set through research questions and dimensions on interview forms and / or observation.
- Data was read, processed and organized according to this framework. In this step, data were chosen in order to identify, and they were gathered together in a meaningful and logical way. Additionally, in this process direct citations were chosen to be used when reporting results.
- Findings and organized data were identified and supported with direct quotations where necessary.
- Findings were interpreted. Cause and effect relationship between findings were explained.

### **3. Findings**

The following findings were arrived at as result of analysis of the data obtained from the interview forms made in order to reveal the reasons for which people lie and their perceptions of lying.

**A. Findings for the First Sub-Objective (Do peoples' thoughts about lying vary depending on gender?)**

**Table 2:** Distribution of thoughts about lying according to gender

Questions	Female	Male	Questions	Female	Male
Are you influenced by lies you tell?	Frequency	Frequency	How do you feel when you lie?	Frequency	Frequency
Yes, I do	47	17	Guilt	53	19
No, I don't	35	22	Shame	25	13
			Happiness	2	3
			Loneliness	2	4
Do you lie?	Frequency	Frequency	Why do you think a person needs to lie?	Frequency	Frequency
Never	3	4	Exclusion	2	-
Sometimes	53	20	Fear	27	11
If need be	24	10	Punishment	4	4
Frequently	1	4	Loss	14	11
In any case	1	1	Mediating	18	1
			Making things happen	17	12
To whom you lie most?	Frequency	Frequency	Would you lie for the benefit of someone?	Frequency	Frequency
To myself	16	6	Yes	72	24
To my mother	13	2	No	10	15
To my father	9	6			
To my sibling	2	-			
To my teacher	2	1			
To my friend	14	4			
To a person that I dont know	11	7			
To my spouse	15	13			
What do you lie about most?	Frequency	Frequency	Do you detect that someone lies to you?	Frequency	Frequency
Love	22	9	Yes	55	28
Money	32	12	No	27	11
Sex	1	-			
Lessons	13	10			
Work	14	8			

According to Table 2 above, women are more affected by the lies they tell than men. The lie was so settled in our daily lives that most of women and men said that they often resort to lie when they are in a difficult situation. According to DePaulo, Kashy and colleagues (1996, 980), women are closer to those who interact than men. For this reason, they tend to lie less, but they are more inclined to tell white lies when they are in an environment that requires courtesy. Women lie mostly to themselves, whereas

men lie more to their wives and their loved ones. Hiding the financial situation, or showing it differently than it is, have become acts that people do all the time. It is also seen in the table that women and men lie mostly about money. However, Dreber and Johannesson (2008, 198) have identified that men are more likely to lie in order to protect their financial interests. Lying is an immoral and socially bad behavior, but even though they are aware of their acts, people often lie and feel guilty after that. Women lie mostly when they are frightened and to mediate. Men, on the other hand, tell lies to make things happen. DePoulo, Kashy et al. (1996, 980) found that women tell more lies about others, while men tell more lies that centralize themselves. The majority of women and men stated that they realize that the other side lies to them. Saka (1981) in his study reached the conclusion that women are more likely to realize that other side lies to them, regardless of the sex of the person who lied.

**B. Findings for the Second Sub-Objective (Do peoples' thoughts about lying vary depending on marital status?)**

**Table 3: Thoughts about lying according to marital status**

Questions	Single	Married	Questions	Single	Married
Are you influenced by lies you tell?	Frequency	Frequency	How do you feel when you lie?	Frequency	Frequency
Yes, I do	42	22	Guilt	45	27
No, I dont	30	27	Shame	23	15
			Happiness	3	2
			Loneliness	1	5
Do you lie?	Frequency	Frequency	Why do you think a person needs to lie?	Frequency	Frequency
Never	5	2	Exclusion	1	1
Sometimes	46	27	Fear	24	14
If need be	19	15	Punishment	7	1
Frequently	1	4	Loss	14	11
In any case	1	1	Mediating	14	5
			Making things happen	2	17
To whom you lie most?	Frequency	Frequency	Would you lie for the benefit of someone?	Frequency	Frequency
To myself	18	4	Yes	59	37
To my mother	11	4	No	13	12
To my father	14	1			
To my sibling	2	-			
To my teacher	3	-			
To my friend	13	5			
To a person that I don't know	9	9			
To my spouse	2	26			

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What do you lie about most?	Frequency	Frequency	Do you detect that someone lies to you?	Frequency	Frequency
Love	29	2	Yes	52	31
Money	15	29	No	20	18
Sex	1	-			
Lessons	19	4			
Work	8	14			

According to table 3 above, single people are more influenced by lies they tell than married ones. We can say that most people lie in difficult situations regardless of being married or single. Üretmen (2008, 32) has said that lie is not viewed as an unwanted or extraordinary phenomena but as part of the daily social interaction process. This shows the place of lie in our daily lives and that every human being resorts to it. Single people are most likely to lie to themselves and their family, while married people lie to their spouses to a large extent. Cole (2002), in his study, investigated how often couples lie. At the end of the research, it was found that people who had fear of attachment lied more to their spouses or loved ones. High school and college students were asked how often they lied to their families. As a result, it was revealed that they often lie to their families in order to gain their freedom (Jensen et al., 2004, 101). Additionally, we can say that, while single people lie mostly about love and relationship matters, married people tell lies to show their financial situations differently than they are or to protect their financial interests. Single and married people feel guilty after lying. Single people lie mostly when they are afraid, while married people lie to make things happen. Married and single people stated that they can realize that they are being lied, to a large extent.

### C. Findings for the Third Sub-Objective (What do people gain by lying?)

**Table 4:** Gains from lying

Features	Frequency	Percentage
Interest	30	27,03
Esteem	5	4,5
Nothing	37	33,3
I don't have any idea	1	0,9
What they want	12	10,8
Distrust	8	7,2
Satisfaction	9	8,1
Sin	3	2,7
Success	1	0,9
Money	4	3,6
I don't know	1	0,9



As a result of the survey and as seen in Table 4, people gave the answer; as ‘they do not get anything’ (f = 37) and as ‘they gain some interests’ (f = 30) to the question of what people would get by lying. People want to present themselves well and positively to others (Tedeschi and Lindskol, 1976). De Poulo et al. (1996) sub-divided the motivation behind lying into two as self-directed motives and motives that directed towards others. When we look at all the results on the table, it turns out that people lie mostly because of the motives related to themselves. For example, they lie to feel good temporarily, to meet the needs of others' approval, to try to provide benefits, to gain respect, to earn money, to get success.

#### D. Findings for the Fourth Sub-Objective (What do you pay attention to when you lie?)

**Table 5:** Points to consider when lying

Feature	Frequency	Percentage	Feature	Frequency	Percentage
Not to exaggerate	5	5	To be convincing	13	13
Not to be unkind	2	2	Spiritual dimension of it	1	1
To look addressee in the eyes	5	5	To pull through	2	2
Nothing	8	8	Not to hesitate	1	1
That it is not be revealed	1	1	All details	1	1
Not to harm anybody	3	3	Not to forget previous lie	1	1
Not to forget it	1	1	To hide my facial expressions	1	1
Mimics	2	2	To be logical	1	1
Not to give clues about it unwillingly	16	16	To avoid blushing	1	1
That it is not an important issue	6	6	To avoid trembling	1	1
To be determined	3	3	Not to get anxious	1	1
Not to harm anybody other than me	6	6	Not to make very long sentences	1	1
To be consistent	14	14	Not to laugh	1	1
Tone of voice	2	2			

As seen in Table 5, when they lie, people pay attention to not to give clues about it (f = 16), be consistent (f = 14) and convincing (f = 13). According to these results, after lying, people try to hide their lies and not to be realized by others. Researchers suggested that facial expressions and verbal cues are more controllable than tone of voice and body movements (Generator, 2008: 7). In their study, Ekman and Friesen (1969, 1974) described behavioral cues of lie in two ways, as leaking hints and tricking hints. The details that people pay attention to when they lie and the ability to lie are different

things. In this case, educational and life experiences of individuals, parents' attitude, cultural level, school, their close relationships and random acquaintances have important role to play in (Ekman, 1999, 272).

E. Findings for the Fifth Sub-Objective (What are the lies that you tell most to opposite sex?)

**Table 6:** Lies told to opposite sex

Feature	Frequency	Percentage	Feature	Frequency	Percentage
I am studying	3	3,7	You are so beautiful	4	4,9
I am working a lot	3	3,7	I am happy	2	2,4
I don't wander a lot	1	1,2	I am single	1	1,2
I don't remember	1	1,2	I don't know anything about it	1	1,2
I quit smoking	1	1,2	I never lie	1	1,2
Physical appearance	2	2,4	You are like my son	1	1,2
I love you	3	3,7	I protect my honor	1	1,2
I don't see my dad	1	1,2	I am so meticulous	1	1,2
I am at home	3	3,7	You are sexy	1	1,2
You are so kid	1	1,2	I am honest	1	1,2
I haven't seen anything, I don't know	1	1,2	I am sick	1	1,2
I don't have any money	7	8,5	I was busy	2	2,4
You are a good person	2	2,4	Your hair is so nice	1	1,2
I have a boy/girlfriend	3	3,7	I see	1	1,2
You look very good	2	2,4	It is not your fault	1	1,2
I haven't had relationship with anyone	1	1,2	It costs that much	2	2,4
I am busy	5	6,1	I promise	1	1,2
About my private life	1	1,2	You are wonderful	1	1,2
You are the first in my life	3	3,7	You have a very kind heart	1	1,2
You are the one	1	1,2	I hadn't thought in this way	1	1,2
I am in/at (somewhere)	1	1,2	I wondered	1	1,2
I haven't seen your call	3	3,7	I dont love you	1	1,2
I trust you	1	1,2	It will be ready in 5 minutes	2	2,4
My spouse's decisions are worth than mine	1	1,2	You are so special	1	1,2

According to table 6 above, the primary lies that are mostly told to opposite sex 'I don't have any money' (f = 7) and 'I am busy' (f = 5). We can conclude that most of the people do not want to spend money for opposite sex and try to show their financial situation

less than actually it is. Dreber and Johannesson (2008, 198) stated that men are more likely to lie in order to protect their financial interests. In addition, 'I am busy' is main lie of the people who don't pay loving attention to spouses and partners, to defend themselves; and in this way, by attributing his/her lack of interest to his/her work load, he thinks he will have less problems in his emotional relationship. DePaulo and Kashy (1998) found that as the duration of a relationship lengthens, the proportion of the lie that was told also increased. Cole (2002) conducted a study on the reasons why are lies told in romantic relations. According to this study, people tell lie in romantic relationships for the reasons of recompense, avoidance of punishment and differences in their need for attachment.

**F. Findings for the Sixth Sub-Objective (In what ways do you show yourself more differently than actually you are?)**

**Table 7:** The ways in which participants show themselves more differently than they are

Feature	Frequency	Percentage (%)	Feature	Frequency	Percentage (%)
On none of the issues	6	7,9	Weakness	2	2,6
Tidying up the house	1	1,3	Showing-off	8	10,5
On my relationship issues	3	3,9	Trust	4	5,3
Success	1	1,3	About family	1	1,3
When I am angry	1	1,3	Creed	2	2,6
About job	4	5,3	Honesty	10	13,2
When I am in a strange situation	2	2,6	In every respect	1	1,3
Character	2	2,6	Cleanliness	1	1,3
Happiness	5	6,6	Being homely	1	1,3
My thoughts	2	2,6	On educational matters	1	1,3
Physcial appearance	2	2,6	Pretending to be understanding	1	1,3
Pretending to be strong	4	5,3	Pretending to be hot-headed	1	1,3
Pretending to be more intelligent	3	3,9	Patience	1	1,3
On emotional matters	4	5,3	On matters that need skills	1	1,3
Health	1	1,3			

According to table 7 above, people show themselves more differently than they are on honesty (f = 10) and showing-off (f = 8). Especially in childhood and adolescence, because of the lack of self-confidence and the gap in the formation of their characteristic traits, individuals try to show themselves in a way that they want to be or dream.

Adolescents see themselves as worthless when they are not aware of their potential, talents and values. They can be identified as low self-confidence and lack of self-esteem. These lead him/her to self-embarrassment, and they lie not to feel humiliated, so they present themselves differently from what they are (Rays, 2000, 656).

#### **4. Conclusion and Discussion**

This research was conducted to examine people's reasons for lying in the context of values education and to investigate whether people's thoughts of lying vary depending on marital status or gender. As a result of the research, it was revealed that compared to men and married people, women and singles are more influenced by the lies they tell. It also emerged that women mostly lie to themselves, and men lie to their wives and their loved ones. When the case was examined depending on the marital status, it was revealed that single people lie mostly to themselves and their families; and married people lie to their spouses to a large extent. It was reported that those who regarded their relationship as warm, continuous, and satisfying lie less to themselves and in total (Kashy and DePaulo, 1996). Single people lie mostly about love and relationship whereas married people lie in financial matters. Even when men and women are analyzed separately, we have the same conclusion that both group lie mostly in financial matters.

At the end of the research, and as DePaulo, Kashy et al. (1996, 980) also stated, it was once again revealed that women tell lie more about others, and men lie mostly by placing themselves in the center. While the majority of people say they do not get anything by lying, the other majority lie to gain benefits. So, they are more likely to lie because of self-directed motives. Lindskol and Walters (1983) tried to find out why people lie in their study. They collected the results they found under six items. These are to save others from harm and shame; protect yourself or someone else from punishment or disapproval; to influence officers for their own benefit, to show themselves better or to protect a gain; persuade others to do something for our benefit; to hurt someone for personal gain.

When people lie, they pay attention not to give clues about it, to be consistent, and that the lie they tell is convincing. Ekman and Friesen (1969) revealed in their studies that the face expressions, body movements and tone of voice of liars give them away. Thus, people try to hide their lies by trying to reduce these leakages of clues. The most frequently told lies to opposite sex are about financial matters and being busy. By lying, they show themselves differently in terms of honesty and showing-off. People want to present themselves well and in a positive way to others (Tedeschi and Lindskol, 1976).

In general terms, lie is in every part of our lives. The research revealed that all people mostly lie in their daily lives regardless of their marital status and gender. Wolk and Henley (1970) stated that everyone lies and the one who denies it, is the worst liar. People start to lie verbally or non-verbally from birth. For example, a child who cries to have his mother do what he wants to do, as time passes he lies to avoid anger of his parents; and during adolescence he lies because of his lack self-confidence and to gain social status. In this way, we learn to lie from birth. It is necessary to inform and teach the concept of lying to children in the context of values education and moral development. Russell says that the time of starting moral education is the moment of birth (1984, in Dilmaç, 1999, 3). First of all, mothers and fathers should not introduce them to different types of lies. It should not be forgotten that child takes his mother and father as example at first.

In the study, it was found that even though most of the people lie, they often regret after lying and feel guilty. Thus, it can be inferred that people learn the concept of lie in the context of moral education but, after that they still lie. However, the moral dimension of telling lie causes them to feel guilty. Moreover, people state that they do not plan the lies they tell, they just spend little cognitive effort when they lie, and they feel a little bit sadness but later, they don't worry about being realized of their lies, neither they feel guilty or regret (DePaulo and Kashy, 1998, DePaulo et al., 1996, Kashy and DePaulo, 1996).

It is expected that this study will bring a different perspective to the issues as; reasons and gains of lying, and how thoughts are varied depending on marital status and gender and will shed light for further researches.

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