

Personality and Moral Resiliency: False Feedback and Its Effects on Moral Decisions

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Personality and moral disengagement are important factors in predicting various forms of behaviors. Past studies that have established this association, however, have been limited by not considering coexisting outside influencing factors. Accordingly, this study sought to closely examine the relationship between specific personality traits such as openness, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism; self-esteem; and lies, a specific form a moral behavior. This study also sought to investigate the effects false moral disengagement feedback had on the decisions individuals made when faced with moral dilemma tasks. Data was obtained from two hundred college students at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in two separate studies. Participants were randomly assigned to one of two conditions in which half would receive false feedback on the moral disengagement measure and the other half did not. Of the participants who were assigned to the false feedback condition, half were informed they were either more or less morally disengaged than their average peer. Results from the non-experimental survey study, Study 1, indicated only openness and moral disengagement were predictive factors of self-serving lies. Results from the experimental study, Study 2, that provided false moral feedback indicate that there was no significant effect on the decisions individuals make when faced with moral dilemmas. Further research, however, is needed to fully understand the relationship between false feedback, moral disengagement, and personality.