How children tell a lie:
gender and school achievement differences in children's lie-telling

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Research about children's lie-telling mainly include the so-called "temptation resistance paradigm". However, this procedure implicits only short, simple answers that do not require in-depth elaboration of lies. Aim of this study was to enforce a new procedure for measuring children's ability to lie and investigate gender and school achivement differences in children's lie telling. New procedure is designed to measure the degree of ability to lie, based on a person's persuasiveness while telling a story of false autobiographical events. The fulfillment of this task requires the ability to construct detailed, coherent and plausible content of the story in a short period of time and the ability to present this content as convincing in order to persuade others that the event really took place.

According to the reports of parents and teachers, boys tell lies more often than girls [1], so we expected that due to the greater experience they would be better at lie-telling than girls. In contrast, some studies showed that there are differences in performance of lies in favour of girls [2,3]. Also, we expected the correlation between ability to lie and school success, considering that learning as well as lying, requires high cognitive capacity.

First, children (N = 48, M_{age} = 10.66) balanced by gender, were given three loosely structured events for which was previously determined that they had not happened to them. Their task was to construct an event that did not happen and describe it as convincing as possible, to make someone believe that the event actually happened. Time for lie-telling was limited to 2 minutes and children were recorded with a camera. After collecting the video material, 15 independent psychology students watched the videos and assessed ability to lie of each child on a seven-point Likert scale. The assesing questionnaire was specially designed and it included three indicators of ability to lie: persuasiveness, richness of detail and uneasiness.

Interclass correlation coefficients were high: for persuasiveness 0.89, for richness of detail 0.98 and for uneasiness 0.90. Results showed no differences between boys and girls in persuasiveness ($t(46)$ = - 0.818, p = 0.418), nor in richness of detail ($t(46)$ = - 0.558, p = 0.579) or uneasiness ($t(46)$ = 0.316, p = 0.753). However, children who have higher school achievement are estimated as more persuasive (r = 0.41, p = 0.004) in constructing and reporting false, pre-determined autobiographic stories and their stories were richer in detail (r = 0.40, p = 0.004).

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