

Research Article

Self-serving Altruism: Cheating Behavior Camouflaged as “Support” in Breaching the Social Norms

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Abstract.

The influence of surrounding conditions can change a person's behavior, both positive and negative behavior. The negative behavior in question is a behavior that violates applicable social norms. As with the presence of other people who will benefit from fraudulent behavior that occurs. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to identify patterns of fraudulent behavior that tend to escalate under the assumption that others will also benefit. This study used an experimental design with two groups that obtained differences in treatment (individual group vs. partner group). The number of participants was 122 people with a sampling technique, namely random sampling. The results of this study showed that the group that was informed that only participants themselves would receive benefits from each question that could be answered correctly showed lower average results ($M = 6.88$), when compared to the group that was informed that the benefits obtained would also be felt by partners from participants ($M = 11.44$). So it can be concluded that if there is profit sharing with others, it increases a person's tendency to engage in unethical behavior.

Keywords: self-serving altruism, experiment, unethical behavior

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Published: 8 November 2024

Publishing services provided by Knowledge E

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Selection and Peer-review under the responsibility of the ICoPsy 2024 Conference Committee.

1. Introduction

Previously, if we noticed, some people may be influenced to show an Action because of the presence of others. For example, the Bystander Effect related to the case that occurred in Kitty Genovese shows that the more witnesses around the victim who need help, the lower the possibility of the victim getting help [1], or research conducted by [2] related to behavior changes influenced by pressure from his group (Consistency). The actions/behaviors seen from both examples, are a picture of how the circumstances around a person can affect his behavior.

As explained earlier, the influence of surrounding conditions can change a person's behavior, both into positive and negative behavior. The negative behavior in question is behavior that violates applicable social norms. For example, dishonesty when doing

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tasks, stealing, lying and others [1]. However, sometimes someone will justify dishonest behavior in order to reduce guilt. The justification can be the reason that the individual is cheating to help others and not to benefit himself. Like Robin Hood, a folklore that justifies stealing, to help the poor or a case in the Baseball League related to the Pitcher controversy, Andy Pettitte, who used steroids to help his team win, not to make himself stronger or faster than anyone else. With justification motivated by profit, it is obtained not only for oneself, but also benefits and benefits others, so that there is the potential that someone will tend to often lie or commit certain cheating [3].

The existence of lies by forging financial documents to defend the Company became one of the reasons employees including the chairman of Daihatsu Company, Japan, committed the forgery. This can also happen in everyday life even for small things, such as the case that happens in a supermarket. There is a thief who is trying to steal milk. Thieves have a reason to feed their starving children. Scandals or problems that are sometimes found in everyday life make academics or researchers understand that social phenomena like this always exist. So that some researchers conduct experiments that can prove their hypothesis related to ethical dilemmas in someone who wants to be someone who is moral and always ethical or become someone who will justify all means in order to get many benefits [3; 4; 5].

Perhaps the most significant case in Indonesia is corruption. Although there are corruption eradication institutions or corruption alleviation programs, according to the results of the Transparency International Indonesia (TII) survey related to the corruption perception index, it is known that in 2022 Indonesia will have decreased its score from a score of 38 to 34. This has led to a drop in Indonesia's rank in corruption perception in 2022 to 110, which was previously ranked at 96 [6]. Fraud, theft, and corruption, as in previous cases, are just a few examples of unethical behavior that often occurs in society. In general, many people assume that perpetrators who commit unethical behavior only want to pursue material gain. However, sometimes individuals have a motive to help others by behaving unethically, even though the individual does not gain any benefit [7].

However, research conducted by [8], showed that there were not too many cheating participants (15%-20%). Interestingly, the study showed that the amount of reward or the possibility of being caught had less influence on the level of dishonest behavior, but the level of dishonest behavior was influenced by participants' reflection on their moral standards, especially their identity as someone who is honest and ethical. With the difference in research results, this study wants to prove a hypothesis related to

fraudulent behavior that will increase with the condition that the benefits obtained will also be felt by others. It should be noted that none of the participants were forced into unethical behavior and this study was not used to judge each individual who participated in the experiment as cheating or always lying. This study only wanted to prove whether if there is an external motivation in the form of the presence of others who receive benefits from unethical actions, it can affect changes in one's behavior.

2. Literature Review

News about the Company's bankruptcy, financial scandals, tax evasion, or unethical behavior committed by employees and leaders of the Company is news that always appears in the mass media, both electronic, print and online [9; 10]. Several previous studies, such as, [11; 12; 13] identified several predictors that influence individual unethical behavior, including, moral reasoning, ethical orientation, organizational culture and structure, and goal-setting policies.

A study conducted by [7] identified two mechanisms that are important factors in predicting the conditions that cause individuals to engage in unethical behavior to help others, even to the point of hurting others first so that they benefit themselves.

1. The first mechanism is financial self-interest. In other words, the source of the thinking of the two mechanisms is the benefit to oneself financially. Individuals tend to engage in unethical behavior, or fraudulent behavior in order to help others when the individual has the urge to do so (e.g., monetary rewards). Research in organizational psychology and behavior has found that when compensation relates to employee performance and if the performance is the best and will be compensated higher than other employees, then individuals tend to cheat to improve their performance, even manipulate the work of other employees to make it look worse. This is what describes the mechanism to benefit oneself even if it has to hurt others.
2. The second mechanism is equity concern. In research conducted by [10] it shows that individuals tend to cheat to provide justice for others. For example, [10] research shows that some vehicle emissions inspectors give worse grades to people with higher incomes than people with lower incomes, so that fines for people with higher incomes are more than people with lower incomes, to make it look fairer.

Meanwhile, there are new findings from research by [3] which found two new mechanisms about individual factors of unethical behavior. Including:

1. Having other people or the presence of others who benefit from someone's unethical behavior increases the tendency of cheating to occur. This can happen because the presence of other people who benefit helps justify fraudulent behavior committed by someone.
2. Another visible mechanism is that the individual has the possibility to care about the benefits that others can receive from the unethical behavior carried out by the individual. This can have an impact on reducing guilt for engaging in unethical behavior with the aim of "helping" others so as to maintain the individual's self-image as a good helper.

Humans in general tend to look for various excuses to justify the "minor" cheating they have committed. A person can reason that they are cheating because of pressure from a more powerful person, or because the person who committed the fraud is not only him, or that the cheating he did would not harm others. People use self-serving justification to convince themselves and others that their fraudulent behavior is still within normal and ethical limits [14; 15; 16]. For example, research conducted by [17] shows that one group member takes a little money for his group so that not only he benefits himself, but also benefits other group members. Other similar studies have shown that a person will be more likely to engage in fraudulent behavior if they share the profits from the fraud with others. This makes it easier for them to ignore their feelings of guilt and moral dilemmas. So basically the presence of other people who also benefit from fraudulent behavior can create ambiguity and fade self-serving motivation (benefiting themselves) in a person [18].

Another study that corroborates the results of Wiltermuth's research, is research conducted by [19] which shows that the utility collected by participants from monetary results is a combination of nonsocial utility (profits felt by oneself) and social utility (profits shared with others). Similar results have been seen in other studies that have found that concern for the outcomes and well-being of others can influence individuals to behave unethically when they feel empathy for others who will also benefit or benefit from the individual's cheating [7].

3. Method

Pilot Study. Research on the topic of cheating behavior begins by conducting a pilot study related to how many questions can be answered in one minute. This is used as a benchmark for determining the limits of the tendency of individuals or participants to answer questions honestly. The results of the pilot study found that the average participant can answer 20 questions in one minute, for a maximum of nine questions. So the number of questions that can be answered in this pilot study is the basis for seeing the tendency to cheat.

Research Design. The research design used was an experimental design. In this study, there will be 2 groups that get different treatments (Between Subject), which is the group that will receive benefits individually, and the group that will receive benefits with partners (individual vs. partner). With each participant in the group= 61 people (Total = 122 people). The sampling technique used is random sampling, without considering age, gender, or education. The study was carried out for 4 months.

Instrument. Unethical behavior: Cheating, How to see cheating tendencies using material in the form of basic math problems as many as 20 problems with a maximum number series of 10 and in the form of addition or subtraction (for example, $23 - 8 + 2 + 13 - 10 =$). The duration to do the task is one minute.

Scenario. Participants will be divided into two groups, namely

Scenario 1. The group that gets the first scenario will be referred to as the “Individual Group”. In this group, participants will get a scenario that each reward obtained based on the number of questions that can be answered correctly, will be compensation for themselves, or referred to as Full Compensation.

Scenario 2. The group that gets the second scenario is referred to as the “Partner Group”. In this group, participants will get a scenario that each reward obtained based on the number of questions that can be answered correctly, will be divided between themselves and their “Partner”, or called Divided Compensation.

The research procedure is that the participants will be given different influences. In individual groups, participants will be asked to answer 20 questions that have been provided and told that each question that is answered correctly will be given a prize for participants themselves (Prizes in the form of money as much as Rp 2000 per correct question). If the participant has finished, then the participant can check for himself how many questions can be answered correctly according to the answer

key to be distributed. The researcher will ask and record how many questions were answered according to the statements of the participants. While in the partner group, the instructions for working on the questions are the same, but what is different is that participants will be paired with other participants, but they will not meet in person. The correct number of questions will be rewarded, to both participants and partners.

4. Results and Discussion

Based on testing using an experimental design carried out for 4 months, it was found that participants in the Partner group tended to cheat or provide a greater number of answers than participants in individual groups.

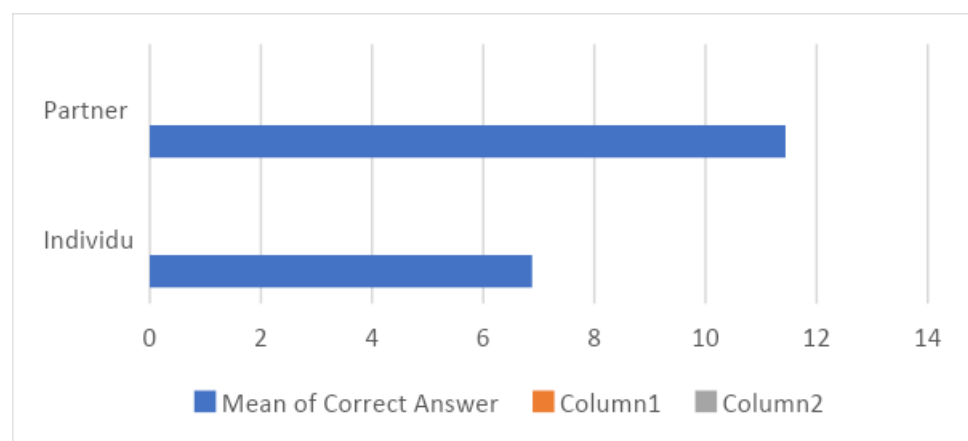


Figure 1: Description Mean of Correct Answer from 2 Groups.

It can be seen from the figure above that the group that received information that only the participants themselves would receive the benefits of each question that could be answered correctly showed lower average results ($M = 6.88$), when compared to the group that was informed that the benefits obtained would also be felt by the partners of the participants ($M = 11.44$). So it can be concluded that the hypothesis from the study is proven and acceptable.

This study also proves the results of previous research that if there is profit sharing with others, it increases a person's tendency to engage in unethical behavior (Gino & Pierce, 2009; Gino, Ayal & Ariely, 2012). The existence of justification or justification by fading perceived ethical dilemmas makes individuals less guilty when carrying out a behavior that defies social norms. Even if the benefits are not large, when the possibility of being caught or caught is still small, then the tendency to act unethically becomes another motivation or motivation that can reinforce the behavior. This reinforces previous

research related to certain conditions or factors of a person to show certain behaviors, even though these behaviors are unethical behaviors (Gino, Ayal, & Ariely, 2013; Gino, Schweitzer, Mead & Ariely, 2011; Mead, Baumeister, Gino, Schweitzer, & Ariely, 2009; Mazar, Amir, & Ariely, 2008).

Acknowledge

The researcher thanked the participants who had volunteered to follow the research to the end, and the corresponding researcher thanked his colleague, Aldi, who had helped in data collection and data analysis in this study.

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