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Children told lies by parents are later more like adults who face adjustment difficulties -ScienceDaily

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"If you don't behave, I'll call the police," is a lie that parents could use to make their young children behave. Mentions of parents cause short-term compliance, but a new psychology study conducted by Nanyang Technological University of Singapore (NTU Singapore) suggests that they are associated with harmful effects when the child becomes an adult.

The research team asked 379 young adults in Singapore if their parents lied to them when they were children, how much their parents are lying to them now, and how well they adapt to the challenges of adulthood.

Adults who reported lying more as children were more likely to report the lie of their parents to adulthood. They also said that they faced greater difficulties in meeting the psychological and social challenges. Adaptation difficulties include

disruption, conduct problems, guilt and shame, as well as selfish and manipulative character.

The research, conducted in collaboration with the University of Canada in Toronto, the University of California, San Diego, and the Normal University of China in China, was published in the *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology* in September.

Assistant principal author Setoh Peipei of the NTU School of Social Sciences in Singapore said: "Lying parenting may seem to save time especially when the real reasons behind parents wanting children to do something are complicated to explain. When parents tell their children that "honesty is the best policy," but displays dishonesty through lies, such behavior can send conflicting messages to their children. The dishonesty of parents may ultimately erode trust and promote dishonesty in children. "

"Our research suggests that parenting is a practice that has negative consequences for children when they grow up. Parents should be aware of these potential downstream implications and consider alternatives to lying, such as recognizing children's feelings, providing information for children to know what to expect, offering choices and solving problems together, to bring about good behavior from children. "

How the study was done

379 young adults from Singapore completed four online questionnaires.

The first questionnaire asked participants to remember if their parents told them lies about food; departure and / or stay; wrong behavior of children; and spending money. Some examples of such lies are "If you do not come with me now, I will leave you here alone" and "I have not brought any money with me today, we can return the next day".

The second questionnaire asked participants to indicate how often their parents lied to adults. Asked about lies about their activities and actions; prosocial lies (or lies intended to benefit others); and exaggerations about events.

Finally, the participants completed two questionnaires that measured their self-reported psychosocial unjustification and their tendency to behave selfishly and impulsively.

The analysis found that liar parents can put children at greater risk of developing problems that society faces, such as aggression, breaking rules and intrusive behaviors.

Some limitations of the study include relying on what young adults report about their retrospective experience of parenting. "Future research can explore using more informants, such as parents, to report the same variables," suggested Prof. Aset.

The authors also pointed out that the study is correlational in design, which aims to discover relationships that occur naturally between variables, they are not able to draw causal inferences.

Another area to be investigated would be the nature of the parent's lies or goals. As Prof. Setoh said, "it is possible for a lie to assert the power of parents, such as saying 'If you do not behave, we will throw you into the ocean to feed the fish', it may be more related to the adaptation of the children. Difficulties as adults, compared to the lies aimed at respecting children, for example "there is no candy in the house".

"Affirming authority over children is a form of psychological intrusion that can undermine children's sense of autonomy and convey rejection, ultimately undermining children's emotional well-being. Future research should examine the nature of parents' lies and goals, so researchers can suggest what kind of lies to avoid and what kind of parents to tell the truth should get involved. "

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