



The Normalization of Lying in the Post-Truth Era: A Moral-Philosophical Analysis of Social Validation and Digital Culture

Felisa Sulistyawati^{1*}, Zahra Khoiru Nisa²

¹Public Administration Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University

²Public Administration Study Program, Faculty of Social and Political Sciences, Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University

*Correspondence E-Mail: felishasulistyawati@gmail.com

Received: 07/02/2026, Revised: 15/02/2026, Approved: 17/02/2026

Abstract

Honesty has traditionally been regarded as a fundamental moral virtue that sustains trust and ethical responsibility in social life. However, in the contemporary post-truth era, honesty increasingly loses its moral authority as lying becomes normalized within everyday social practices, particularly in digitally mediated environments. This study aims to examine the normalization of lying from a moral-philosophical perspective by analyzing how pragmatic ethical reasoning, digital culture, and structural social pressures contribute to the erosion of honesty as a shared moral value. Employing a qualitative research design with a philosophical and interpretative approach, this study relies on a systematic literature review of scholarly works on moral philosophy, post-truth culture, and digital ethics published over the last decade. The analysis reveals that moral evaluation in modern society has shifted from principled ethical obligations toward outcome-oriented and pragmatic considerations. Social media platforms further accelerate this shift by rewarding visibility, performativity, and symbolic success, thereby legitimizing deceptive self-presentation and strategic manipulation. Additionally, economic competition and performance-driven success standards encourage moral justification, allowing lying to be perceived as a rational and socially acceptable practice. The study concludes that the normalization of lying poses significant ethical risks by undermining moral integrity, weakening social trust, and threatening social cohesion. Reaffirming honesty as a core moral commitment is therefore essential for addressing the moral challenges of the post-truth era.

Keywords: Lying, Moral Philosophy, Post-Truth Era, Digital Culture, Social Validation.

INTRODUCTION

Honesty has long been recognized as a foundational moral virtue that sustains social trust, ethical responsibility, and the integrity of human relationships. Across philosophical traditions, truthfulness is not merely regarded as a communicative norm but as a moral obligation that shapes personal character and collective life. Classical moral philosophy, particularly deontological ethics, positions honesty as an unconditional duty that must be upheld regardless of consequences (Kant, 1785). Within this framework, lying constitutes a serious moral violation because it undermines both human dignity and

the possibility of trust-based social interaction. For centuries, this moral understanding provided a relatively stable ethical foundation for evaluating human conduct.

However, contemporary society is increasingly marked by a profound transformation in how honesty and lying are perceived, practiced, and morally evaluated. In modern social contexts—especially those shaped by digital communication—lying is no longer universally condemned as a moral failure. Instead, it is frequently rationalized, tolerated, and even normalized as a pragmatic response to social pressure, competition, and the pursuit of recognition (Sudrajat, 2021; Lee, 2021). This shift signals a broader moral transition in which ethical judgments are increasingly guided by outcomes, utility, and effectiveness rather than principled moral commitments.

This moral transformation is closely associated with the emergence of what scholars describe as the post-truth era. The concept of post-truth refers to a cultural condition in which objective facts lose their authority in shaping public opinion, while emotional appeal, personal belief, and strategic narratives gain dominance (McIntyre, 2018; Waisbord, 2018). In this environment, truth is no longer treated as a binding moral reference but as a flexible resource that can be adjusted to serve particular interests. As a result, individuals may knowingly accept, distort, or disseminate false information when it aligns with their identity, ideology, or social goals (Cosentino, 2020; Lewandowsky et al., 2017).

Importantly, the post-truth condition does not merely describe the spread of misinformation or fake news; it reflects a deeper erosion of moral sensitivity toward truth itself. Scholars argue that repeated exposure to misleading narratives and strategic falsehoods gradually normalizes deception, making it appear ordinary rather than ethically problematic (Bakir & McStay, 2018; Lazer et al., 2018). In such contexts, lying is no longer perceived as a moral transgression but as an acceptable, and sometimes necessary, social practice.

Digital technology and social media platforms play a crucial role in accelerating this moral shift. Social media environments are structured around visibility, performance, and validation, where individuals are rewarded through algorithmic mechanisms such as likes, shares, and followers (Fuchs, 2017; Zuboff, 2019). Within these spaces, users are encouraged to construct idealized self-presentations that often blur the boundary between reality and fabrication. Practices such as exaggeration, selective disclosure, and symbolic self-promotion—commonly referred to as “flexing”—illustrate how deception can become socially rewarded rather than morally sanctioned (Sari & Gilang, 2023).

The normalization of deceptive self-presentation in digital culture reshapes moral perception in subtle but powerful ways. When exaggerated or misleading representations are repeatedly encountered and socially validated, individuals gradually internalize the belief that honesty is less valuable than attractiveness, popularity, or perceived success (Bakir & McStay, 2022). Over time, this process contributes to what Bennett and Livingston (2018) describe as a disinformation order, where manipulation becomes embedded in everyday communication practices. In such environments, moral evaluation shifts from truthfulness to performativity, reinforcing the acceptability of deception.

From a moral-philosophical perspective, this condition reflects the growing dominance of moral pragmatism. Moral pragmatism emphasizes practical outcomes and situational effectiveness over universal ethical principles (Lee, 2021). Rather than asking whether an action is morally right or wrong, individuals increasingly ask whether it works or produces desired benefits. This pragmatic orientation allows lying to be justified as long as it serves strategic goals such as career advancement, social acceptance, or economic survival (Sudrajat, 2021; Zamroni, 2022). Consequently, moral norms become flexible and negotiable, weakening the authority of traditional ethical frameworks.

The normalization of lying is further reinforced by structural pressures in modern society. Economic uncertainty, competitive labor markets, and performance-oriented success standards create conditions in which individuals feel compelled to present themselves as more competent, successful, or stable than they truly are (Setiawan, 2020; Zamroni, 2022). In such contexts, honesty may be perceived as risky, while deception is framed as a rational strategy for survival. This situation illustrates that moral behavior cannot be understood solely as a matter of individual character, but must also be analyzed in relation to broader social and economic systems.

Scholars have also highlighted the role of information overload in weakening moral commitment to truth. The rapid circulation of digital content often exceeds individuals' capacity for critical evaluation, leading to passive consumption and unreflective sharing of information (Wardle &



Derakhshan, 2017; Tandoc et al., 2018). When misinformation and half-truths become pervasive, individuals may develop moral desensitization toward deception, gradually accepting it as an unavoidable feature of social reality (Utami, 2024). This condition fosters moral relativism, where truth is viewed as subjective, situational, and contingent rather than universal and binding.

The consequences of normalized lying extend beyond individual behavior and pose serious risks to social cohesion. Trust functions as a fundamental form of social capital that enables cooperation, solidarity, and institutional legitimacy (Putnam, 2000). When lying becomes widespread and socially tolerated, trust deteriorates, leading to increased suspicion and reliance on verification rather than mutual confidence (Setiawan, 2020). Over time, this erosion of trust may result in social fragmentation, weakened civic engagement, and declining credibility of public institutions (Nyhan & Reifler, 2015).

From a philosophical standpoint, the normalization of lying also raises profound questions about moral identity and human dignity. Moral philosophers emphasize that integrity requires coherence between belief, speech, and action (Taylor, 1989). When individuals habitually engage in deception to meet external expectations, they risk becoming alienated from their authentic moral selves. Floridi (2016) argues that respect for human dignity depends on truthful representation and ethical responsibility, both of which are compromised when deception becomes routine.

Despite growing scholarly attention to post-truth politics, misinformation, and digital manipulation, moral-philosophical analyses of everyday lying as a normalized social practice remain relatively limited, particularly in non-Western contexts. Much of the existing literature focuses on institutional disinformation or elite-level deception, while fewer studies examine how ordinary individuals internalize pragmatic moral reasoning in daily life (Rini & Nugroho, 2020; Utami, 2024). This gap highlights the need for ethical inquiry that connects digital culture, social validation, and moral philosophy.

Accordingly, this study seeks to critically examine the normalization of lying in the post-truth era through a moral-philosophical lens. By analyzing how digital culture, pragmatic ethics, and structural pressures reshape moral perceptions of honesty and deception, this research aims to contribute to contemporary ethical discourse. Understanding lying not merely as individual misconduct but as a socially normalized practice is essential for addressing the moral challenges posed by the post-truth condition and for reasserting honesty as a core moral value in modern society.

METHODS

Research Design and Approach

This study employs a qualitative research design with a moral-philosophical and interpretative approach to examine the normalization of lying in the post-truth era. A qualitative design is appropriate because the research does not aim to measure the frequency or distribution of deceptive behavior, but rather to explore meanings, ethical interpretations, and normative shifts embedded in contemporary social practices (Creswell & Poth, 2018). By focusing on values, moral reasoning, and ethical implications, this approach enables a deeper understanding of how honesty and deception are socially constructed and morally justified in modern digital society.

The study is grounded in moral philosophy and social theory, particularly deontological ethics, moral pragmatism, and virtue ethics. Moral philosophy provides conceptual tools to analyze how ethical standards evolve and how individuals rationalize actions that conflict with traditional moral principles (Rachels & Rachels, 2019). This approach is especially suitable for examining post-truth phenomena, where ethical issues cannot be adequately captured through empirical measurement alone, but require normative and interpretative analysis (McIntyre, 2018).

Data Sources and Literature Selection

The primary data for this study consist of secondary sources obtained through a systematic literature review. The reviewed materials include peer-reviewed journal articles, academic books, and scholarly reports that address moral philosophy, post-truth culture, digital ethics, misinformation, and social behavior. To ensure relevance and timeliness, the literature was limited to publications from the last ten



years (2015–2025), with a small number of classical philosophical works included solely for theoretical grounding (Bakir & McStay, 2018; Cosentino, 2020).

The literature selection process was conducted using academic databases such as Google Scholar and institutional repositories. Keywords used in the search process included *lying*, *honesty*, *moral pragmatism*, *post-truth*, *digital culture*, *social validation*, and *misinformation*. Only sources with clear academic credibility—such as peer-reviewed journals and reputable academic publishers—were included to maintain analytical rigor and reliability (Bowen, 2009).

Data Collection Technique

Data collection was carried out through qualitative document analysis. Document analysis is a systematic procedure for reviewing and interpreting written materials to gain understanding and develop theoretical insights (Bowen, 2009). In this study, each selected text was carefully read and examined to identify key arguments, conceptual frameworks, and ethical positions related to honesty, lying, and moral reasoning in contemporary society.

The documents were organized and categorized into thematic clusters based on their relevance to three main analytical dimensions: (1) shifting moral standards and ethical reasoning, (2) the role of digital media and social validation in normalizing deception, and (3) the ethical and social consequences of normalized lying. This categorization allowed for a structured and coherent analysis of diverse sources (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Data Analysis Procedure

The data analysis employed a critical–interpretative method grounded in philosophical analysis. This method involves conceptual clarification, comparison of ethical frameworks, and normative evaluation of social phenomena (Ricoeur, 1981). First, the study analyzed how honesty and lying are defined and framed within contemporary scholarly discourse, particularly in relation to post-truth culture and digital communication (McIntyre, 2018; Bakir & McStay, 2022).

Second, these contemporary interpretations were compared with classical ethical theories, especially deontological ethics and virtue ethics, to identify tensions and shifts in moral reasoning (Rachels & Rachels, 2019). This comparative process enabled the identification of moral transitions from principled ethics toward pragmatic justification, where lying is increasingly viewed as context-dependent and outcome-oriented (Lee, 2021).

Finally, the analysis evaluated the broader ethical implications of normalized lying, particularly its impact on trust, integrity, and moral identity. Insights from social theory were integrated to examine how structural pressures and digital environments shape moral behavior and ethical justification (Setiawan, 2020; Zamroni, 2022). This multi-layered analysis allowed the study to move beyond descriptive accounts and toward normative ethical reflection.

Trustworthiness and Analytical Rigor

To ensure the trustworthiness of the analysis, this study applied established qualitative rigor criteria, including credibility, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Credibility was enhanced through theoretical triangulation, drawing on diverse sources from moral philosophy, digital ethics, and social theory. Dependability was maintained by clearly documenting the literature selection criteria and analytical procedures, enabling transparency and potential replication.

Confirmability was addressed by grounding interpretations in established ethical theories and scholarly arguments rather than personal opinion. Reflexive awareness was maintained throughout the analysis to minimize subjective bias and ensure that conclusions were logically derived from the reviewed literature (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

Ethical Considerations

As a literature-based philosophical study, this research did not involve human participants or primary data collection. Therefore, formal ethical clearance was not required. Nevertheless, ethical responsibility was upheld by accurately citing all sources, avoiding misrepresentation of authors'



arguments, and respecting intellectual property. Ethical integrity is particularly crucial in philosophical research that addresses moral values and normative judgments (Rachels & Rachels, 2019).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

This section presents the main findings derived from a critical analysis of selected literature on moral philosophy, post-truth culture, and digital social behavior. The results are organized thematically to demonstrate how lying has gradually shifted from being perceived as a moral violation to becoming a normalized and socially tolerated practice in contemporary society. The findings reveal that this normalization is driven by changes in moral reasoning, the influence of digital culture, collective social processes, and structural pressures embedded in modern life.

Shifting Moral Standards: From Ethical Obligation to Pragmatic Calculation

The first major finding indicates a significant transformation in moral standards related to honesty and lying. Classical ethical frameworks, particularly deontological ethics, define honesty as an unconditional moral obligation that must be upheld regardless of consequences (Kant, 1785). However, contemporary literature demonstrates that this moral absolutism has weakened considerably. Moral judgments are increasingly based on pragmatic evaluation, where actions are assessed according to their effectiveness and outcomes rather than their intrinsic moral value (Lee, 2021).

Several studies highlight that individuals now tend to justify lying when it produces tangible benefits or prevents perceived harm. Sudrajat (2021) notes that in modern social contexts, honesty is often viewed as conditional and situational rather than absolute. The literature consistently shows that individuals ask whether lying is “useful” or “necessary” rather than whether it is morally right or wrong. This shift reflects the growing dominance of moral pragmatism, where ethical principles are subordinated to strategic considerations.

The findings further indicate that this pragmatic moral orientation is not limited to extraordinary circumstances but extends into everyday social interactions. Lying is increasingly framed as a form of adaptation to complex social demands rather than as a moral deviation. As a result, the moral stigma traditionally attached to lying is significantly reduced, contributing to its normalization in daily life (Zamroni, 2022).

Post-Truth Culture and the Declining Authority of Truth

Another important finding concerns the erosion of truth as a moral and epistemic authority in the post-truth era. Scholars describe the post-truth condition as a cultural environment in which objective facts are less influential in shaping beliefs and behaviors than emotional appeal, personal narratives, and ideological alignment (McIntyre, 2018; Waisbord, 2018). The literature shows that in such environments, truth is no longer treated as a shared moral reference point but as a negotiable construct.

The findings reveal that individuals increasingly tolerate or accept falsehoods when they resonate with personal beliefs or social identities. Cosentino (2020) emphasizes that post-truth dynamics encourage selective acceptance of information, where factual accuracy becomes secondary to emotional satisfaction or group loyalty. This condition contributes to the normalization of lying by weakening the moral imperative to be truthful.

Furthermore, repeated exposure to misinformation and manipulated narratives leads to moral desensitization. Lewandowsky et al. (2017) argue that constant interaction with false or misleading content reduces individuals' sensitivity to deception, making lying appear ordinary rather than ethically troubling. The findings suggest that the post-truth environment does not merely facilitate deception but actively reshapes moral perception of truthfulness.

Digital Culture and the Normalization of Deceptive Self-Presentation

The analysis highlights digital culture as a central factor in the normalization of lying. Social media platforms create environments that reward visibility, popularity, and emotional engagement rather than accuracy or honesty (Fuchs, 2017; Zuboff, 2019). The findings show that within these environments,



individuals are encouraged to construct idealized self-images that often involve exaggeration, selective disclosure, or fabrication.

Sari and Gilang (2023) identify practices such as flexing culture, where users display exaggerated lifestyles or achievements to gain social recognition. These practices are widely tolerated and socially validated through likes, shares, and followers. The literature indicates that such validation mechanisms function as moral signals, implicitly communicating that deceptive self-presentation is acceptable or even desirable (Bakir & McStay, 2022).

The findings also demonstrate that digital platforms blur the boundary between authenticity and performance. When deceptive representations consistently receive positive reinforcement, honesty loses its social value. Over time, users internalize the belief that truthfulness is less important than maintaining an attractive digital persona. This process significantly contributes to the normalization of lying as a routine aspect of online interaction.

Collective Repetition and Social Normalization of Lying

Another key finding is that the normalization of lying occurs through collective repetition rather than isolated individual actions. The literature shows that when deceptive practices are widely performed and rarely sanctioned, they gradually become embedded as social norms (Utami, 2024). Individuals learn acceptable behavior not only through moral instruction but through observation of others' actions and their social consequences.

This collective dimension reinforces conformity. Setiawan (2020) notes that individuals who choose strict honesty in deceptive environments may experience social or economic disadvantage. As a result, honesty is often perceived as impractical or naïve, while lying is framed as a rational response to prevailing norms. The findings indicate that social pressure plays a crucial role in sustaining deceptive practices.

Moreover, the normalization of lying is strengthened by moral relativism. When individuals observe widespread dishonesty, they tend to reinterpret moral standards as flexible and context-dependent. This perception reduces feelings of moral guilt and increases tolerance toward deception, further embedding lying within everyday social interaction.

Structural Pressures and Moral Justification

The results also reveal that structural pressures significantly contribute to the normalization of lying. Economic insecurity, competitive labor markets, and performance-oriented success standards create conditions in which individuals feel compelled to manipulate information to meet expectations (Zamroni, 2022). The literature shows that deception is frequently justified as a necessary strategy for survival rather than as an ethical failure.

These structural pressures encourage moral justification processes. Individuals reinterpret lying as temporary, harmless, or unavoidable, thereby reducing moral dissonance (Sudrajat, 2021). The findings suggest that moral behavior is shaped not only by personal values but also by systemic incentives that reward strategic self-presentation over integrity.

Importantly, the normalization of lying under structural pressure is not limited to economic contexts but extends to education, professional life, and social relationships. This indicates that moral compromise has become institutionalized across multiple domains of modern life (Setiawan, 2020).

Erosion of Trust and Social Integrity

A recurring finding across the analyzed literature is the erosion of trust resulting from normalized lying. Trust functions as a fundamental component of social cohesion, enabling cooperation and mutual understanding (Putnam, 2000). The results indicate that when deception becomes widespread, individuals adopt a defensive stance, relying more on verification and skepticism than on trust.

Nyhan and Reifler (2015) argue that persistent exposure to deception reduces confidence in both individuals and institutions. The findings show that normalized lying undermines not only interpersonal trust but also institutional credibility, particularly in media, governance, and public discourse. This erosion of trust contributes to social fragmentation and moral cynicism.



The literature consistently warns that long-term normalization of deception may weaken social solidarity. When honesty is no longer expected, social relationships become transactional and strategic, further reinforcing deceptive behavior.

To clarify the main results, Table 1 summarizes the core themes identified in the literature and their moral implications.

Table 1. Summary of Findings on the Normalization of Lying

Thematic Dimension	Key Findings	Moral Implications
Moral Reasoning Shift	Ethics evaluated by outcomes rather than principles	Decline of deontological morality
Digital Culture	Deception rewarded through visibility and validation	Honesty loses social value
Social Normalization	Repeated and collective lying becomes acceptable	Lying perceived as normal behavior
Structural Pressure	Economic and social competition justify dishonesty	Moral justification increases
Social Trust	Widespread deception erodes trust	Weakening of social cohesion

Overall, the results demonstrate that lying has become deeply embedded in contemporary social structures and cultural practices. The normalization of lying is sustained by pragmatic moral reasoning, digital validation mechanisms, collective conformity, and structural pressures. These findings provide an empirical-conceptual foundation for the subsequent discussion, which will critically examine the ethical implications of normalized deception and explore its consequences for moral philosophy and social life.

Discussion

The findings of this study reveal that the normalization of lying in contemporary society is not an accidental moral deviation, but rather a systematic outcome of shifting ethical frameworks, digital culture, and structural social pressures. This discussion interprets these findings through the lens of moral philosophy and social theory, emphasizing how pragmatic reasoning increasingly replaces principled ethics in the post-truth era.

Moral Pragmatism and the Decline of Normative Ethics

The findings indicate that the normalization of lying reflects a fundamental shift in moral reasoning, from principled ethics toward pragmatic calculation. Classical moral philosophy, particularly deontological ethics, treats honesty as an unconditional moral duty that must not be compromised by situational benefits (Kant, 1785). However, the results demonstrate that contemporary moral judgment increasingly prioritizes outcomes, effectiveness, and social advantage. This confirms arguments that moral pragmatism has become a dominant ethical orientation in modern society (Lee, 2021; Sudrajat, 2021).

From a philosophical perspective, this shift signifies a weakening of normative ethics. When moral evaluation is guided primarily by utility, ethical standards become flexible and negotiable rather than binding. Lying is no longer assessed as inherently wrong, but as contextually acceptable if it serves personal or social goals (Zamroni, 2022). This condition erodes the universality of moral norms and transforms ethics into an instrumental tool rather than a moral compass.



Post-Truth Culture and the Moral Relativization of Truth

The discussion of results further reveals that the post-truth condition plays a critical role in undermining the moral authority of truth. In post-truth societies, factual accuracy competes with emotional resonance, identity affirmation, and ideological alignment (McIntyre, 2018; Waisbord, 2018). This cultural shift contributes to moral relativism, where truth is no longer treated as a shared ethical reference but as a subjective and negotiable construct.

The acceptance of misleading or false narratives, as long as they align with personal beliefs or group identities, weakens moral sensitivity toward lying (Cosentino, 2020; Lewandowsky et al., 2017). As truth loses its normative force, lying becomes morally neutralized. This supports the view that post-truth is not merely an epistemic crisis but a moral one, where ethical commitment to honesty is displaced by emotional and strategic considerations.

Digital Culture as a Moral Accelerator

The findings confirm that digital culture functions as a powerful accelerator of moral transformation. Social media platforms reward visibility, emotional appeal, and symbolic success, often regardless of factual accuracy (Fuchs, 2017; Zuboff, 2019). Within these environments, deceptive self-presentation is not only tolerated but normalized through algorithmic validation mechanisms such as likes, shares, and followers.

This condition reshapes moral perception by redefining success and credibility in performative rather than ethical terms. Practices such as exaggerated self-branding and flexing culture illustrate how deception can be socially rewarded (Sari & Gilang, 2023). As Bakir and McStay (2022) argue, repeated exposure to affective and manipulative content gradually weakens moral resistance to deception. Consequently, honesty loses its social value, while deception becomes a rational strategy for gaining recognition.

Collective Normalization and Moral Conformity

Another important implication of the findings is that the normalization of lying occurs through collective social processes. Deception becomes embedded as a social norm when it is repeatedly performed and left unchallenged (Utami, 2024). This aligns with social constructivist perspectives, which emphasize that moral norms are shaped through shared practices and social reinforcement rather than individual choice alone.

The results suggest that individuals often conform to deceptive norms to avoid social or economic disadvantage. Setiawan (2020) notes that in environments where dishonesty is widespread, honesty may be perceived as naïve or impractical. This creates moral conformity, where individuals adjust their ethical behavior to align with dominant practices rather than personal moral convictions. Such conformity weakens moral agency and shifts responsibility from individual judgment to collective norms.

Structural Pressures and Ethical Rationalization

The discussion also highlights the role of structural pressures in shaping moral behavior. Economic insecurity, competitive labor markets, and performance-oriented success standards generate conditions in which individuals feel compelled to manipulate information to survive or succeed (Zamroni, 2022). Under these pressures, lying is often rationalized as a necessary response to systemic demands rather than as an ethical failure.

This process of ethical rationalization reduces moral dissonance by redefining deception as situationally justified (Sudrajat, 2021). The findings indicate that moral compromise becomes normalized not because individuals lack ethical awareness, but because social structures reward strategic self-presentation over integrity. This reinforces the argument that moral decline cannot be understood solely at the individual level, but must be analyzed in relation to institutional and systemic incentives.

Erosion of Trust and the Crisis of Social Integrity

One of the most significant ethical implications of normalized lying is the erosion of trust. Trust is a foundational element of social cohesion, enabling cooperation, solidarity, and institutional legitimacy



(Putnam, 2000). The findings show that when deception becomes routine, individuals adopt defensive attitudes, relying more on skepticism and verification than mutual confidence.

Nyhan and Reifler (2015) argue that prolonged exposure to deception undermines confidence in both interpersonal relationships and public institutions. This condition leads to what Setiawan (2020) describes as a crisis of integrity, where moral cynicism replaces ethical trust. Over time, this erosion of trust threatens social cohesion and weakens the moral foundations of collective life.

Implications for Moral Identity and Ethical Responsibility

Beyond social consequences, the normalization of lying has profound implications for moral identity. Moral philosophy emphasizes that integrity requires coherence between belief, speech, and action (Taylor, 1989). When individuals habitually engage in deception to meet external expectations, they risk becoming alienated from their authentic moral selves.

Floridi (2016) argues that respect for human dignity is closely linked to truthful representation and ethical responsibility. The findings suggest that normalized lying encourages individuals to prioritize external validation over internal moral reflection. This condition reshapes moral subjectivity, transforming individuals into performers of socially acceptable narratives rather than morally responsible agents.

Toward Ethical Reorientation in the Post-Truth Era

The discussion indicates that addressing the normalization of lying requires ethical reorientation rather than moral condemnation alone. Reaffirming honesty as a shared moral commitment is essential for restoring trust and social integrity. Ethical education, critical digital literacy, and integrity-oriented institutional practices are necessary to counteract pragmatic moral reasoning (Rachels & Rachels, 2019).

From a moral-philosophical perspective, this reorientation involves balancing pragmatic considerations with normative ethical commitments. Honesty must be understood not merely as a personal virtue but as a collective moral responsibility that sustains social life in the post-truth era.

CONCLUSION

Conclusion

This study critically examined the normalization of lying in contemporary society through a moral-philosophical perspective, situating the phenomenon within the broader context of post-truth culture and digital social life. Rather than understanding lying as an isolated individual failure, this research conceptualizes it as a socially embedded practice shaped by shifting ethical frameworks, technological mediation, and structural pressures. The analysis demonstrates that the post-truth era has altered the moral environment in which honesty operates, weakening its status as a non-negotiable ethical commitment.

The normalization of lying reflects a deeper transformation in moral consciousness. Ethical evaluation is increasingly guided by pragmatic considerations such as effectiveness, recognition, and survival, while principled moral obligations lose their binding force. This shift signals a movement away from normative ethics toward situational moral reasoning, where truth becomes conditional and instrumental. In this context, honesty is no longer upheld as a shared moral standard, but is often subordinated to strategic self-presentation and social performance.

From a philosophical standpoint, this condition poses serious risks to moral integrity and social trust. When deception becomes morally neutral, ethical responsibility is weakened, and trust—an essential foundation of social cohesion—becomes fragile. The study underscores that the normalization of lying is not merely an ethical concern but a structural moral challenge that affects how individuals relate to one another and to society as a whole.

By framing lying as a normalized social practice rather than a moral anomaly, this study contributes to contemporary moral discourse and highlights the urgency of re-evaluating ethical commitments in the post-truth era. Reasserting honesty as a core moral value is essential for sustaining moral integrity and collective life in digitally mediated societies.



Recommendation

Based on the ethical reflections developed in this study, several recommendations are proposed to address the moral challenges posed by the normalization of lying in the post-truth era. These recommendations are intended as normative and reflective directions rather than prescriptive solutions, recognizing the complexity of moral transformation in contemporary society.

First, ethical education should be strengthened as a central strategy for restoring moral sensitivity toward honesty. Educational institutions at all levels are encouraged to integrate moral philosophy, applied ethics, and critical reasoning into their curricula, particularly in relation to digital communication. Ethical education should emphasize moral reflection and responsibility rather than mere rule compliance, enabling individuals to critically evaluate pragmatic justifications for deception.

Second, the development of digital ethical literacy is essential. Given the powerful influence of social media on moral perception, individuals must be equipped to understand how algorithmic visibility, validation mechanisms, and performative norms shape ethical behavior. Digital literacy programs should incorporate ethical awareness, helping users reflect on authenticity, truthfulness, and responsibility in online self-presentation and communication.

Third, social institutions and organizations should promote integrity-oriented cultures. Evaluation systems in education, employment, and governance should minimize incentives that unintentionally reward deceptive self-presentation or exaggerated performance. Transparent and ethics-based standards can reduce structural pressures that encourage moral compromise and support the sustainability of honest behavior.

Finally, future research is encouraged to further explore everyday moral practices in post-truth societies, particularly in non-Western contexts. Comparative and interdisciplinary studies can deepen understanding of how honesty, deception, and moral responsibility are negotiated in diverse cultural and digital environments.

Together, these recommendations aim to support ethical reorientation by reaffirming honesty as a shared moral responsibility essential for trust, integrity, and social cohesion.

REFERENCES

Bakir, V., & McStay, A. (2018). Fake news and the economy of emotions. *Digital Journalism*, 6(2), 154–175.

Bakir, V., & McStay, A. (2022). Optimizing deceit: Fake news, affective journalism, and the rise of post-truth. *Journal of Digital Ethics*, 9(1), 1–18.

Bennett, W. L., & Livingston, S. (2018). The disinformation order: Disruptive communication and the decline of democratic institutions. *European Journal of Communication*, 33(2), 122–139.

Cosentino, G. (2020). *Social media and the post-truth world order: The global dynamics of disinformation*. Palgrave Pivot.

Floridi, L. (2016). On human dignity as a foundation for the right to privacy. *Philosophy & Technology*, 29(4), 307–312.

Fuchs, C. (2017). *Social media: A critical introduction* (2nd ed.). SAGE Publications.

Kant, I. (1785). *Groundwork of the metaphysics of morals*. Cambridge University Press.

Lazer, D. M. J., Baum, M. A., Benkler, Y., et al. (2018). The science of fake news. *Science*, 359(6380), 1094–1096.

Lee, S. S. (2021). Moral pragmatism and ethical flexibility in contemporary society. *Journal of Contemporary Philosophy*, 15(2), 45–60.

Lewandowsky, S., Ecker, U. K. H., & Cook, J. (2017). Beyond misinformation: Understanding and coping with the “post-truth” era. *Journal of Applied Research in Memory and Cognition*, 6(4), 353–369.

McIntyre, L. (2018). *Post-truth*. MIT Press.

Nyhan, B., & Reifler, J. (2015). The effect of fact-checking on elites. *American Journal of Political Science*, 59(3), 628–640.

Putnam, R. D. (2000). *Bowling alone: The collapse and revival of American community*. Simon & Schuster.



Rachels, J., & Rachels, S. (2019). *The elements of moral philosophy* (9th ed.). McGraw-Hill Education.

Rini, D. S., & Nugroho, Y. (2020). Post-truth politics and moral disengagement in digital society. *Jurnal Ilmu Sosial dan Ilmu Politik*, 24(2), 101–115.

Sari, R. K., & Gilang, M. I. (2023). The normalization of lying on social media: Flexing culture and symbolic validation. *Journal of Cultural Communication*, 4(2), 110–123.

Setiawan, T. P. (2020). Integrity crisis in the era of information disruption. *Journal of Integrity Studies*, 8(3), 201–215.

Sudrajat, H. (2021). Moral pragmatism in modern social life. *Journal of Social Ethics*, 2(1), 12–25.

Tandoc, E. C., Lim, Z. W., & Ling, R. (2018). Defining “fake news”. *Digital Journalism*, 6(2), 137–153.

Taylor, C. (1989). *Sources of the self: The making of the modern identity*. Harvard University Press.

Utami, W. (2024). Shifting values of honesty among Indonesia’s digital generation. *Journal of Socio-Humanities*, 11(1), 88–102.

Wardle, C., & Derakhshan, H. (2017). *Information disorder: Toward an interdisciplinary framework*. Council of Europe.

Waisbord, S. (2018). Truth is what happens to news. *Journalism Studies*, 19(13), 1866–1878.

Zamroni, A. M. (2022). Strategies of deception in the post-truth era: An ethical review. *Indonesian Journal of Philosophy*, 5(1), 36–44.

Zuboff, S. (2019). *The age of surveillance capitalism*. PublicAffairs.

