



Personality as a Moral Regulator of Illicit Stimulant Use Attitudes

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Introduction

As the popularity of using illicit ADHD medications as a means of cognitive enhancement rises, so does a moral debate. Whether or not the use of these prescriptions are considered “cheating” and therefore justly prohibited is a very complex question. Research suggests that a variety of personality factors can help us understand what drives people to make these moral judgments about stimulant usage and those who partake in it.

This research asked the question of how personality factors shaped moral judgments as a whole, but specifically in terms of whether or not stimulant-based cognitive enhancement is considered cheating. This research also seeks to elaborate on the notion of “cheating”, and further explore the battleground of this moral debate.

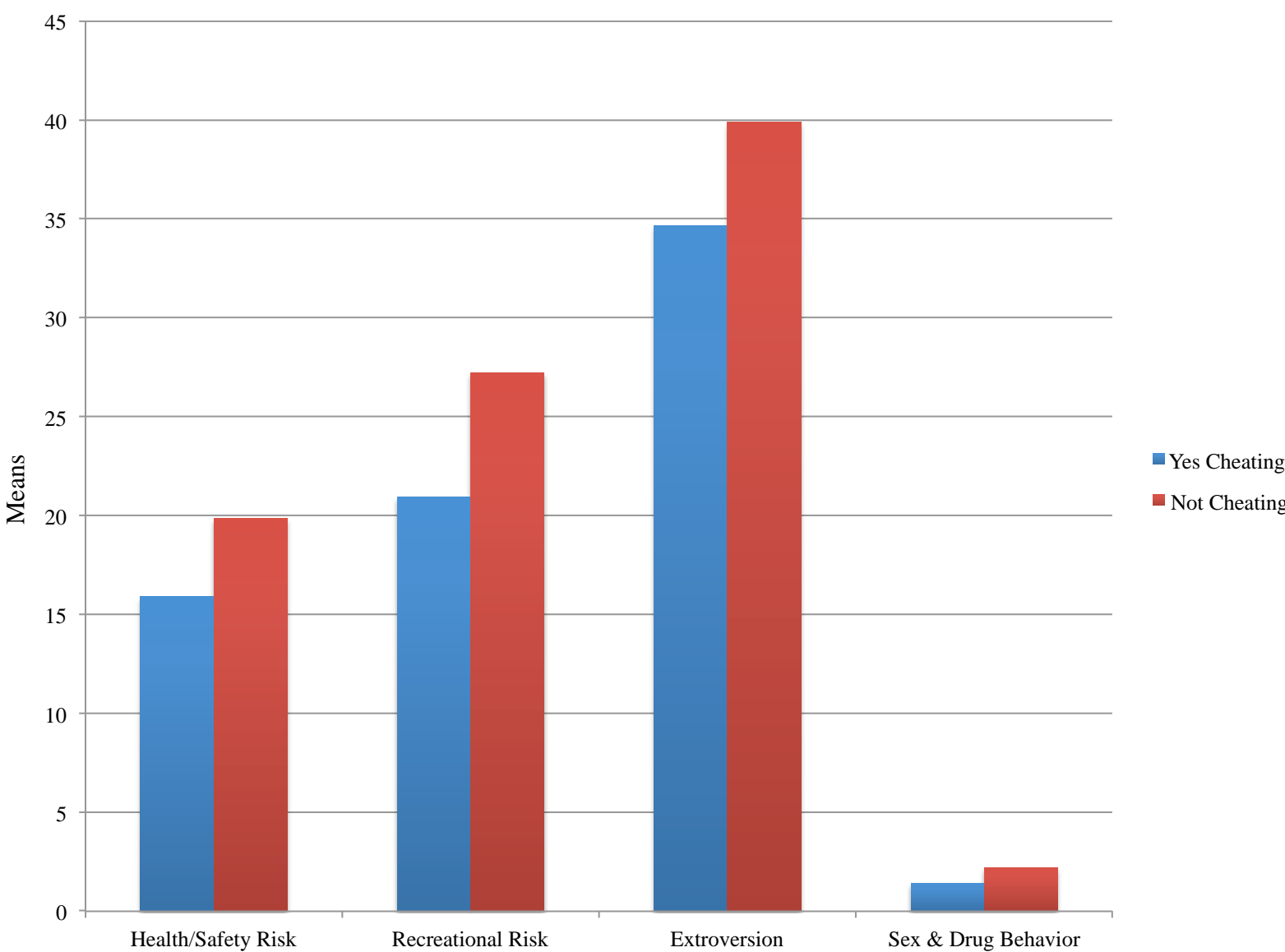
I hypothesized that traits such as extroversion and risk-taking would be correlated with increases in stimulant drug use, and show less stringent judgment on moral scenarios.



Methods

- Survey:
- Moral Dilemmas in areas of Fairness, Loyalty, Authority, Liberty, Social Norms, Sanctity, and Care
 - “How morally wrong is this behavior?”
 - “How confident are you in your answer?”
 - Personality Measures:
 - DOSPERT Risk
 - Behavioral Risk Reporting
 - Balloon Task
 - Extroversion
 - Self-Esteem
 - Demographic information
 - Includes attitudes/predictions about usage

Results



Graph shows means of different personality measures based on whether or not students thought the use of illicit stimulants in the classroom was cheating

Health and Safety Risk: $t=-2.069$, $p=.047$
Recreational Risk: $t=-2.963$, $p=.005$
Extroversion: $t=-2.861$, $p=.006$
Sexual & Drug Use Behaviors: $t=-4.632$, $p=.00$

Predicted Usage and Motivation Data:

Mean Predicted Peer Usage: 25.88%
Mean Predicted Friend Usage: 14.66%

Top 3 Potential Motivations for Using Illicit Stimulants:

1. To do better in school (n=69)
2. To keep up with work (n=54)
3. For social purposes (n=28)
3. To stay up later (n=28)

Top 3 Arguments for why Usage is Cheating:

1. It hurts our student body/academic integrity (n=41)
2. It's morally wrong (n=40)
3. They aren't working as hard as the rest of us (n=26)
3. It's against the rules (n=26)

Top 3 Arguments against Usage as Cheating:

1. They still have to do the same work (n=17)
2. It's their own choice (n=13)
3. They still have to take tests (n=11)
3. It's not morally wrong (n=11)

Conclusions

- Differences in whether or not people considered the illicit use of stimulants as cheating weren't significantly related to their moral choices in areas of fairness, loyalty, authority, care, liberty, and social norms.
- The more extroverted and risk-prone a student is, the more likely they are to say that the illicit usage of stimulant drugs in the classroom is not cheating.
- Students didn't choose any of the potential reasons for usage that mentioned competition or keeping up with their peers.
- More students considered the illicit use of stimulants as cheating than not.
- The students that considered usage cheating justified it with a strong group-mentality, showing concern about harming the integrity of their entire community and institution.
- The students that didn't consider usage cheating did so through an individual focus and explaining how it didn't affect them.



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