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### Academic Dishonesty in College Students: Do Religiosity and Self-Control Matter?

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**Abstract:** Academic dishonesty among students in numerous nations is on the rise, and if allowed unchecked, it may be hazardous to a person's personality development and even entry into the workforce. The purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of religiosity and self-control on academic dishonesty in Accounting Education students at the State University of Malang. The purposive sampling strategy yielded a total of 96 samples. The data was gathered using an online questionnaire and analyzed using multiple linear regression in a data processing tool (SPSS). According to the findings of the study, religiosity and self-control had a detrimental impact on student academic dishonesty. This suggests that the higher a student's level of religiosity and self-control, the less academic dishonesty he or she commits, and vice versa.

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## INTRODUCTION

Academic dishonesty is a recurring issue that worsens with time (Bluestein, 2015). Academic dishonesty has long been a concern in the world of education, particularly in universities, and it is prevalent (Sariasih & Tisnawijaya, 2019). More than 60% of undergraduate students in various countries commit dishonesty during their classes (Bacon et al., 2019; Ives et al., 2017). According to 2017 International Center for Academic Integrity statistics, as many as 43% of undergraduate students and 68% of postgraduate students cheated on examinations or written assignments (Witmer & Johansson, 2018). Research in the UK revealed that 50% of students are willing to pay for assignments (Rigby et al., 2015). Meanwhile, 71% of university students in China copied assignments from their colleagues (Ma et al., 2013). Not much different, research by Winardi et al. (2017) At one Indonesian university, 77.5% of respondents admitted to academic dishonesty.

Academic dishonesty that is tolerated will be hazardous to a person's personality development and entry into the workforce. Dishonest conduct typically begins in high school and continues through college,

with long-term consequences in that it can anticipate dishonest behavior in the job (Hodgkinson et al., 2016; Mulisa & Ebessa, 2021). Students who are conditioned to being dishonest will perform poorly at work and may even conduct criminal crimes, demonstrating that academic dishonesty may degrade an institution's image and diminish career opportunities for its graduates (Ferguson et al., 2022; Guerrero-Dib et al., 2020; LaDuke, 2013). Orosz et al.'s (2018) research have also discovered a link between academic dishonesty and a country's level of corruption.

This study is critical since today's children are future employees, and their ethics as students impact their conduct in the future (Peled et al., 2013). Herdian and Lestari (2018) stated that being a good personality stems from honesty, which has been incorporated in one's personality from beginning as a student.

Academic dishonesty is described as any misleading or illegal behavior undertaken in order to obtain sufficient results on exams, papers, assignments, or other evaluations (Miller et al., 2017; Yeşilyurt, 2014). Academic dishonesty is also known as academic misconduct, academic cheating, academic fraud, and misrepresentation, depending on the circumstances (Ismail & Omar, 2017). Forms of academic dishonesty have been widely discussed by previous research. Guerrero-Dib et al. (2020) classified academic dishonesty into four primary categories: plagiarism, collusion, and cheating. Meanwhile, the Academic Dishonesty Scale (ADS) was used to assess academic dishonesty in this study, based on Bashir and Bala (2018) and combining several statement items or questions contained in it with the research results by Anders (2023) and Yalcin et al. (2022). This is relevant to academic dishonesty behavior carried out by students today. The ADS indicators used include Cheating in Examination (CE); Plagiarism (PL); Outside Help (OH); Prior Cheating (PC); Falsification; and Lying about Academic Assignments.

One of the determining elements for someone to act dishonestly is religion. According to the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), a person's conduct is founded on intention, where the purpose to do something is not always translated into actual action, but actual behavior is controlled by the combination of intention and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived behavioral control is thought to be the result of consistently accessible ideas, particularly beliefs about the resources and restrictions that might help or hinder the performance of a certain task (Ajzen, 2015). The desire to cheat is not an action in the context of cheating, but it is impacted by religion as perceived behavioral control. Students with weak religious convictions are more likely to engage in academic dishonest (Woodbine & Amirthalingam, 2013). This is due to the fact that religion has an impact on values, habits, attitudes, and lifestyle (Wright, 2015).

The impact of religion on academic dishonesty has already been examined extensively, but the results have been conflicting. Onu et al. (2021) used a 10-item, unidimensional questionnaire designed specifically to evaluate religiosity, and it indicates that one of the factors linked to academic dishonesty behavior is religiosity. This is consistent with study by Oktaviyani et al. (2022) who said that the level of religiosity predicts a decrease in students' academic dishonesty. Khan et al. (2019) and Nelson et al. (2017) also discovered that religion predicts students' views about cheating activity. In contrast to the preceding studies, Jurdi et al. (2011) said that there is no relationship between religiosity and academic dishonesty. Besides that, Hadjar (2017), using a two-dimensional religiosity scale, investigated the association between religiosity and cheating among Indonesian students and discovered that religion had no influence on academic dishonesty.

TPB argues that behavior is directly determined by individual intentions and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Self-control is referred to as perceived behavioral control (Curtis et al., 2018). Self-control is the ability to control one's attention, emotions, and conduct when confronted with temptation (Duckworth & Gross, 2014). Self-control relates to a person's belief that he or she will be able to overcome certain practices, such as academic dishonesty (Błachnio, 2019; Smith, 2004). Academic dishonesty on the part of students is the first step toward committing a crime in the future. Curtis et al. (2018) found self-control influences plagiarism as an act of academic dishonesty. Ali (2020) found a significant relationship between demographic variables, one of which is self-control and academic dishonesty. This is in line with research by Cochran et al. (1998) asserting that students with higher levels of self-control are less involved in cheating. However, Bolin (2014) and Williams and Williams (2012) said that the impact of the self-control variable on academic dishonesty was insufficient.

Given that study results are still varied, an examination of academic dishonesty is required. As a result, the purpose of this study is to investigate the impact of religion and self-control on student academic dishonesty. Meanwhile, the contribution of this research is that it will serve as a source of literature for other researchers who discuss the variables of this research, and it is hoped that it will provide knowledge and understanding about religiosity and self-control, which are predictors of students' academic dishonesty.

## LITERATURE REVIEW AND HYPOTHESES

### *Theory of Planned Behavior*

The Theory of Planned conduct (TPB) attempts to define the link between attitudes and conduct (Ajzen, 1991). The Theory of Reasoned Action (TPB) is an extension of the Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA). The distinction between these two theories is that the TPB considers both perceptions and real control over the conduct under discussion (Ajzen, 1985). The main factor in the TPB is a person's intention to carry out a behavior, which is influenced by three components: (1) attitude towards the behavior (beliefs about certain behavior and its consequences); (2) subjective norms (normative expectations from other people about behavior that are important to the actor); and (3) perceived behavioral control (perceived difficulty or ease of carrying out the behavior) Ajzen (1991) in Meng et al., (2014).

Although no exact statistics on the actual prevalence of academic dishonesty is available, it is considered that perceived behavioral control (religiosity and self-control) is a valid predictor of behavioral intention, and intention is an indicator of action (Beck & Ajzen, 1991). The TPB is the best and most effective instrument for researching complicated phenomena like ethical/unethical decision making or academic dishonesty (Meng et al., 2014; Winardi et al., 2017).

### *Academic Dishonesty*

Academic dishonesty is defined as any act of cheating in order to gain a desired outcome on a test, term paper, homework assignment, or other kind of learning evaluation (Miller et al., 2017). Academic dishonesty is defined as a student's effort to utilize illicit techniques to evaluate their knowledge and abilities Yeşilyurt (2014) Research on academic dishonesty has been investigated in numerous disciplines at universities such as engineering, psychology, health, law, etc., including accounting (Błachnio, 2019).

Ampuni et al. (2020) stated that dishonesty entails breaking established rules based on one's level of knowledge and purpose at the time of the activity. Cheating, plagiarism, forging, lying while requesting an extension on assignments, manipulating marks given by lecturers, and obtaining and offering improper help in tasks are examples of academic dishonesty among students (Bacon et al., 2019).

### *Religiosity*

Alwi (2014) stated, religiosity is described as how much information a person has, how strong one's views are, how obedient a person is in the application of worship and religious norms, and how much a person values his religion. Religiosity is the strengthening of a person's religion, which includes spiritually motivated symbols, beliefs, values, and conduct (Rahmawati, 2016). This power is a complicated blend of a person's knowledge, sentiments, and religious deeds (Astogini et al., 2011). Religious knowledge is a type of cognition that is achieved via religious education and science in a methodical, philosophical, and scientific manner (Ridwan & Diantimala, 2021). Because religious engagement may bring solace, purpose, and hope during times of struggle, it is a major predictor of behavior, including academic dishonesty (Abdel-Khalek, 2014). This is in line with Horwitz (2021) and Mathras et al. (2016) who found that religion has an impact on a person's conduct as well as numerous aspects of life happiness and well-being.

### *Self-Control*

Self-control is the capacity to override or adjust one's inner responses, as well as to refrain oneself from unpleasant behavior (impulses) (Tangney et al., 2004). Self-control is required to govern one's thoughts and emotions, resist temptation, make decisions, and transition from one task to another (Baumeister et al., 2007). Self-control may be defined as behavioral control activities as well as the capacity

to organize, guide, regulate, and steer kinds of behavior that can lead to favorable outcomes (Aviyah & Farid, 2014). Someone with strong self-control can do chores efficiently while also performing well academically (Moon et al., 2020; Zettler, 2011). This is supported by Tangney et al. (2004) who stated that persons with great self-control have higher values, adjustment, interpersonal skills, and relationships, as well as a more ideal emotional existence than others.

According to TPB, a person's behaviour is dependent on intentions, which are impacted by three factors: attitudes, norms, and perceived behavioral control (Ajzen, 1991). Perceived behavioral control is thought to be the result of consistently accessible ideas, particularly beliefs about the resources and restrictions that might help or hinder the performance of a certain task (Ajzen, 2015). In the context of cheating, the intention to cheat is not an action, but is influenced by religiosity as perceived behavioral control. This is supported empirically by research of Bernardus et al. (2020) which revealed that the psychological characteristic that strengthens the intention-action relationship is locus of control. Based on the meta-analysis result by Coursey et al. (2013), religiosity and internal locus of control have a considerable link. Individuals with a strong religiosity will have a larger internal locus of control than those with a low religiosity (Iles-Caven et al., 2020).

Woodbine and Amirthalingam (2013) stated that students with low religious convictions are interested in committing acts of academic dishonesty. Onu et al. (2021) found that religiosity is one of the variables associated with academic dishonesty behavior. This is validated by research conducted by Khan et al. (2019) and Nelson et al. (2017) that revealed that religiosity is a predictor of students' attitudes towards academic dishonesty behavior. Besides that, Oktaviyani et al. (2022) the level of religiosity predicts a decrease in students' academic dishonesty. The following research hypothesis can be derived from the foregoing explanation.

H<sub>1</sub>: Religiosity has a detrimental impact on academic dishonesty among students.

TPB considers that individual goals and perceived behavioral control directly influence behavior and that psychological traits can modify it (Ajzen, 1991). Flores et al. (2020) and G. Zhang et al. (2019) also said that a person's psychological characteristics are not the only locus of control and personality, but also self-control. This is in line with research by Curtis et al. (2018) which says that perceived behavioral control is synonymous with self-control. The ability to govern one's attention, emotions, and actions in the face of temptation is referred to as self-control (Duckworth & Gross, 2014). Self-control refers to a person's belief that he or she will be able to overcome certain behaviors, including academic dishonesty, and organize, guide, regulate, and steer types of behavior that can lead to beneficial outcomes (Błachnio, 2019; Smith, 2004; Aviyah & Farid, 2014). Someone with strong self-control can do tasks efficiently while also performing well academically (Moon et al., 2020; Zettler, 2011).

This is supported by findings from research by Ali (2020) and Curtis et al. (2018) concerning the presence of a strong association between self-control and academic dishonesty. Where this is supported by Cochran et al. (1998) who stated that students with higher levels of self-control are less involved in cheating. Błachnio (2019) and Błachnio et al. (2022). It was also shown that self-control is a key predictor of academic dishonesty and is adversely connected with it. The following hypothesis may be derived from the preceding explanation.

H<sub>2</sub>: Self-control has a negative effect on student academic dishonesty

## METHODS

This study took a quantitative approach using an explanatory research design, assessing the impact of the independent variable (religiosity and self-control) on the dependent variable (academic dishonesty).

## Data Types and Sources

The subjects in this study were active students from the Accounting Education Study Program at the State University of Malang who had engaged in academic dishonesty during their studies. Purposive sampling was utilized in research, which means that samples were taken with certain considerations or criteria in reference (Sugiyono, 2016). According to Muhajirin and Panorama (2017), Because the precise population size in this study was unknown, the Bernoulli method was employed to calculate the sample size, which resulted in a sample size of 96 respondents. This study relied on primary data gathered via a questionnaire issued online using Google Form. The instrument's first section offered generic information about the respondents. The questionnaire included a list of 35 statements on variables X and Y that were graded on a 4-point Likert Scale (strongly disagree; disagree; agree; and strongly agree).

## Measurement

The research instrument used was 10 statements from 5 indicators on the religiosity variable. This indicator is The Centrality of Religiosity Scale (CRS) compiled by Huber and Huber (2012), which includes the intellectual dimension; ideological dimension; dimensions of public practice; private practice dimensions; and dimensions of religious experience. A total of 15 statements for the self-control variable come from 6 indicators which are the Self Control Scale compiled by Tangney et al. (2004). The indicators referred to include, among others, achievement and task performance; impulse control; arrangement; interpersonal relationships; moral emotions; and related personality features. Meanwhile, the academic dishonesty variable consisted of 15 statements. A total of 6 indicators used were compiled by Bashir and Bala (2018) where the statement in it is a combination or addition of several research results by Anders (2023) and Yalcin et al. (2022) related to acts of student academic dishonesty that are relevant to the current situation. These indicators include, Cheating in Examination (CE); Plagiarism (PL); Outside Help (OH); Prior Cheating (PC); Falsification; and Lying about Academic Assignments.

## Analysis Technique

The instrument had been subjected to validity and reliability testing to ensure that it was both valid and reliable. The Pearson Correlation kind of correlation was tested using a data processing tool (SPSS). The instrument is regarded to be valid if the significance level is  $< 0.05$  (Ghozali, 2021). As for the reliability test, the instrument is said to be reliable if the Cronbach Alpha value is  $> 0.7$  (Sugeng, 2020). Following a reliability test, it is possible to determine that the instrument is dependable. This is due to the fact that the Cronbach Alpha value for religiosity is 0.906 ( $> 0.7$ ), 0.853 ( $> 0.7$ ), and 0.950 ( $> 0.7$ ) for self-control and academic dishonesty, respectively. However, the validity test findings revealed that 5 statement items in the self-control variable were invalid, thus these statement items were not utilized or were eliminated.

Multiple linear regression techniques were used in this study to evaluate the hypothesis and the direction of the association between two or more independent variables and the dependent variable (Sugeng, 2020). A classical assumption test was required prior to data analysis to assess the quality of the multiple linear regression model and to reduce the occurrence of biased data. The traditional assumption tests used included the normality, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity tests. The One-Sample Kolmogorov Smirnov Test was used to determine normalcy. The computed Sig value was 0.085, which was larger than 0.05, indicating that the data was normally distributed. The multicollinearity test results indicated a tolerance value of 0.991, which was larger than 0.10, and a VIF value of 1.009 ( $< 10.00$ ), indicating that the data does not exhibit multicollinearity. The heteroscedasticity test findings revealed that the significant values for the religion and self-control variables were 0.881 and 0.099 ( $> 0.05$ ), respectively, implying that these two variables were free of heteroscedasticity and may be analyzed

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows that the regression coefficient was negative, indicating that the direction of influence of variable  $X_1$  and  $X_2$  on Y was negative. Besides, the Constant value ( $\alpha$ ) reached 76,248, and  $X_1$  and  $X_2$  value were ( $\beta$  / regression coefficient) 0,344 and 0,977, so the regression equation can be written:

$$Y = \alpha - \beta_1 X_1 - \beta_2 X_2$$

$$Y = 76,248 - 0,344 - 0,977$$

According to respondent data, students' levels of religiosity ranged from mild to high. Meanwhile, student self-control was rated as medium. As a result, the level of student academic dishonesty was determined to be in the low category. This supported the prior finding that religiosity and self-control had a strong negative effect on academic dishonesty.

**Table 1. Regression Coefficient Test Results**

Variable	Unstandardized coefficient B	Standardized coefficient Beta	Sig.
(Constant)	76,248		0,000
Religiosity	-0,344	-0,114	0,016
Self-Control	-0,977	-0,878	0,000

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Table 2 show that computed F value was 188.804, which was more than the F table (3.094). In the meanwhile, the Sig. was 0.000, which was less than 0.05. As a result, the regression model may be used to predict academic dishonesty variables, or in other words, religion and self-control variables had an impact on academic dishonesty

**Table 2. Hypothesis Test Results**

Model	Df	F	Sig.
Regression	2	188,804	0,000

Based on previous research findings, it was discovered that religiosity had a negative impact on academic dishonesty. This suggests that the lesser a student's level of religiosity, the greater the level of academic dishonesty they conduct. In contrast, the higher a student's level of religiousness, the lower their level of academic dishonesty. The findings of this study backed up the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), which states that "actions are controlled by intentions, but not all intentions are carried out; some are abandoned entirely, while others are revised to fit changing circumstances" (Ajzen, 1991). The desire to cheat is not an action in the context of cheating, but it is impacted by religiosity as perceived behavioral control. Bernardus et al. (2020) mentioned that locus of control is a psychological feature that increases the intention-action link. The impact of religiosity on academic dishonesty is mainly focused on the locus of control. This is consistent with the study by Coursey et al. (2013) that claimed that there is a link between religiosity and internal locus of control. Individuals with a strong religiosity will have a larger internal locus of control than those with a low religiosity (Iles-Caven et al., 2020).

The results suggested that the ideology component has the greatest frequency among the five dimensions of religiosity utilized in the study questionnaire. Hamdani et al. (2022) found that according to his findings, students with a high level of religiosity are less likely to commit academic infractions. As many as 85.4% of respondents firmly agreed that there is God and that they are accountable for whatever they do in the world, making them cautious in their conduct, even academic dishonesty. This conclusion

might be explained by the fact that the material offered in religious education contributes to moral and behavioral growth (Manea, 2014). Because students get a greater knowledge and responsibility for doing good and wrong, morals and conduct formed in religiosity lessen intents to engage in unethical and dishonest actions (Oktaviyani et al., 2022). Religious values will grow; if students' religiosity is high, it may be assumed that their actions will have a moral perspective (Ariani & Ismi Islami, 2022).

This supports Khotimah et al. (2022) and Onu et al. (2021) who argued that religiosity is one of the variables that is related and has a negative influence on academic dishonesty. Khan et al. (2019) and Nelson et al. (2017) further claimed that Students who participate in religious activities typically have excellent academic integrity and behave in a good and ethical manner because they are aware of what is right and wrong in every action. This is due to the fact that religiosity effects a person's conduct as well as numerous dimensions of life pleasure and well-being (Horwitz, 2021; Mathras et al., 2016).

Based on the research findings, it is concluded that self-control has a detrimental impact on academic dishonesty. This showed that the higher the amount of student self-control, the lower the level of academic dishonesty. In contrast, the lower the student's self-control, the greater their academic dishonesty. These findings corroborated the TPB hypothesis, which contended that individual intentions and perceived behavioral control directly influenced behavior and can be influenced by psychological characteristics (Ajzen, 1991). Self-control is one of a person's psychological qualities (Flores et al., 2020; G.Zhang et al., 2019). To bridge the gap between intentions and behavior, adding self-control to the TPB model involves strengthening one's real behavioral control over behavioral intentions (Yu et al., 2022). In the context of academic dishonesty, perceived behavioral control in the TPB refers to a person's belief that he can engage in academic dishonest behavior, whereas self-control refers to a person's belief that he can refrain from engaging in academic dishonest behavior.

The 'impulse control' indication is the self-control indicator with the greatest frequency of the other six indicators. As many as 76% of all respondents agreed to consider first before acting, especially in problems affecting their future. This is consistent with Hertindha et al. (2023) who claimed that People with strong self-control prefer to pause and thoroughly contemplate the consequences of their actions before acting. Self-control refers to a person's belief that he or she can overcome certain tendencies and is capable of organizing, guiding, regulating, and directing types of conduct that can lead to beneficial outcomes (Aviyah & Farid, 2014). Someone with strong self-control can do duties efficiently while also performing well academically (Moon et al., 2020; Zettler, 2011).

This finding also supports Ali (2020) with the notion that there is significant relationship between self-control and academic dishonesty. Błachnio (2019) stated that Academic dishonesty is negatively correlated with self-control. Curtis et al. (2018) found that Plagiarism as an act of academic dishonesty is influenced by self-control. This is also in line with Cochran et al. (1998) who argued that students with higher levels of self-control are less involved in cheating. This finding strengthens Błachnio et al. (2022) who believed that *self-control is a significant predictor of academic dishonesty*.

## CONCLUSION

The research results demonstrated that religiosity and self-control contributed to lowering students' inclination to commit academic dishonesty. The substantial negative impact suggested that the stronger the religiosity and self-control, the lesser the student's inclination to commit academic dishonesty. The variables religiosity and self-control are two of the psychological qualities that exist in a person's personality, thus they can be included in perceived behavioral control in the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB). So, it may be inferred that the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), specifically the perceived behavioral control component, can explain the impact of religiosity and self-control on academic dishonesty.

This study solely focuses at the variables of religiosity and self-control that are part of one component of the Theory of Planned Behavior (TPB), namely perceived behavioral control as a deciding factor in academic dishonesty. Other factors from the TPB's two components (attitude toward the conduct and subjective norms) are likely to be added in future study as predictors of academic dishonesty among students. This is also due to the fact that there is a 20% chance that other variables impact students' actions of academic dishonesty. Even though the research findings indicated that the level of academic dishonesty

among Accounting Education students at the State University of Malang is in the medium to low range, it is anticipated that institutions may continue to enhance their academic integrity. One effort that may be taken is to expand initiatives to improve religiosity in higher education, as well as to organize and develop a decent framework that will generate honest graduates. Aside from that, Accounting Education students, as prospective teachers, should have an honest demeanor at all times. As shown by the studies above, religiosity and self-control can impact honesty, therefore a steady level of religiosity and self-control is required to act in line with current standards, including being honest.

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