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## Opportunity as a threat to academic integrity

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**Abstract:** *This study is aimed at determining the factors most responsible for academic dishonesty in the education students as prospective teachers. Within a quantitative research method, 518 students participated as respondents. Findings show that chances/opportunities have direct and significant impacts on academic dishonesty. Opportunity allows students to commit academic dishonesties without being detected. Opportunities may also be due to ignorance of educational institutions and faculty members to the phenomena of academic dishonesty that occur. Actually, the educational institutions and teaching staff have primary authority in creating academic integrity on campus. Therefore, it is important to create some policies that aim to reduce and even eliminate the opportunities of students to commit academic dishonesties. These policies include: types of exam questions or assignments, clear rules concerning the implementation of evaluation of learning outcomes, as well as a firm associations with academic dishonesty, especially on the part of teachers as those who interact directly with students.*

**Keywords:** *opportunity, academic dishonesty, academic integrity*

### 1. Introduction

Academic cheating or academic dishonesty is a behavior that reflects dishonesty in order to obtain academic achievement. Numerous studies have been done on this subject to highlights the natures of academic cheating. The present study is yet another of such studies.

#### Academic Cheating

This behavior can either use the opportunity to view class notes or books at the time of a closed-book written examination, to claim the academic work of others as his own work while working on academic-tasks, and others. This phenomenon occurs in a variety of educational institutions in various parts of the world. Anderman and Murdock (2007)

review the results of research on academic cheating. The results showed that academic cheating occurred in elementary schools (Kanfer & Duerfeld, 1968), middle schools (Anderman, Griessinger, & Wester, 1998; Murdock, Hale, & Weber, 2001), universities (Newstead, Franklyn-Stokes, & Armstead, 1996), even at the post graduate levels (Baldwin, Daugherty, Rowley, and Schwarz, 1996).

At the university level, academic cheating can degrade the academic quality of individual students and educational institutions. If it happens frequently, it will make the academic integrity and credibility of university students individually or institutionally be questioned (Anderman and Murdoch, 2006).

In the national education system in Indonesia, teacher candidates undergo a process of education at the university called the Institute of Education Personnel (LPTK). The purpose of running the LPTK is to produce individuals who work as teachers and other school personnel in institutions of both schooling and non-schooling. However, the condition in the LPTK associated with academic cheating of prospective teachers is quite alarming. A survey of 298 students in one LPTK described the alarming condition (Rangkuti and Deasyanti, 2010). The survey results showed that academic cheating in the exam and students happened quite often (more than twice) during the past year, including: copying the answers from an adjacent student during exams without the knowing of the other students (16.8%), carrying and using forbidden materials or cheat sheets into the exam room (14.1%), and making collusion between two or more students to communicate exam answers with each other (24.5%). Academic cheating was also committed while working on tasks such as presenting false data (2.7%), allowing plagiarism committed by other students (10.1%), copying material for the writing of books or publications another without acknowledgment (10.4%), and changing/manipulating research data (4%).

Based on the survey results above, it is feared that students' dishonesty will influence the environmental conditions of employment. According to Becker et al (2006), students who tend to engage in academic dishonesty will be inclined to perform a variety of dishonesty in the workplace. In other words, students who are cheating in college will likely do frauds in the workplace (Crown and Spiller, 1998; Noris and Swift 2001; in Sieman, 2009).

In connection with frauds that occur in the workplace, including in education, Kane and Staiger, 2002 (in Anderman and Murdock, 2007) found the involvement of educators or teachers in academic cheating in

order to improve the achievement of the participant students on a test system. This phenomenon has occurred in Indonesia during the implementation of national examinations in recent years. The modes of academic cheating by teachers during the implementation of the national exams, among others are by leaking national exam items and answers to students (Ade Irawan, Monitoring Division of the Public Service Indonesia Corruption Watch on [www.forum.unnes.ac.id](http://www.forum.unnes.ac.id)). The goal of teachers who commit fraud is to raise the exam scores of the students so that they can pass the national exam. The conditions in which teachers do academic cheating are contrary to the competence of personality that should be owned by teachers. Competence personality is one aspect of teacher competences in accordance with the Law of the Republic of Indonesia number 14 year 2005 on teachers and lecturers. The competences of teachers referred to in Article 8 of the Law of the Republic of Indonesia include pedagogic competence, personal competence, social competence, and professional competence. Specifically on the competence of a teacher's personality, the items cover nobility, honesty, and capability of being a role model for students and the community.

### **Negative Impacts of Academic Cheating**

Academic cheating may cause negative impacts on individual perpetrators and also for associated educational institutions. Academic cheating should be a serious concern for educators, learners, and even the general public (Bushweller, 1999; Wilson, 1999, in Mason, 2006). For lecturers as educators, cheating committed by a student leads the process and results of educational assessments to become invalid. Students who commit cheating also make the students who have a loss of academic integrity, such as when the process of selection of job opportunities after completing his education at the university (Bushweller, 1999, in

Mason, 2006). GPA which is owned by the student perpetrators of cheating is invalid despite the high value. For educational institutions, cheating can lead to declining standards of quality of education at the institution in the midst of other educational institutions.

### **Fraud Triangle Model as Academic Cheating**

The model presented by Becker et al (2006), Antenucci et al (2010), and Malgwi and Rakovski (2009) based on the Fraud Triangle theory propounded by Cressey in 1973. They argue that academic cheating is caused by three factors, namely: opportunity, incentive or pressure, and rationalization. When one or more of these factors exist, then the student will be more likely to commit academic cheating. Consequently, academic cheating is strongly influenced by the context. Cheating would be more likely to happen if students feel the opportunities and pressures, then choose to rationalize why cheating behavior is performed.

Opportunity may originate from different sources. Some students think there is a chance to perform academic cheating if lecturers ignore cheating behavior that occurs in actual exams, or do not give any comment about the occurrence of plagiarism in the work task/papers (McCabe & Trevino, 1996). Some other students see an opportunity to commit cheating when there is an offer of academic exam answers from another class who are already carrying out the same exam. In addition, students feel there are opportunities for academic cheating when they see other students doing academic cheating. According to Antenucci et al (2009), opportunities represent the committing of cheating without being detected.

Several other factors associated with classroom learning environment also affect the tendency of students to commit cheating. The pressure is meant to be something that motivates and emerges from within the

individual perpetrators of academic cheating or from others. Most perpetrators of cheating feel a pressure from parents, fellow students, the university, or the provider of job opportunities that require a value or a high GPA. Some other students commit academic cheating because of the desire to be more successful, respected, or influential (Kock & Davison, 2003, in Becker et al, 2006). The pressure that students feel of academic cheating is divided into four components: the demands of employment, social relationships, financial problems, and limited study time.

Rationalization occurs when individuals who will perform an act that is illegal and does not fit the norm try to justify it. Justification is aimed to protect individuals from personal responsibility and not blame by others (Zito, 2009). Individuals will use five categories of rationalization of academic cheating: refusing to take responsibility, refusing to blame, feeling that nothing is harmed, feeling that teachers are incompetent and do not care, and loyalty and friendship.

### **2. Method**

This study involved 518 education students as participants. Of these, 151 participants were men and 367 participants were women. Data were collected using a self-report instrument that included the measurement of research variables (opportunity, pressure, rationalization, and academic cheating).

The research instrument was an adaptation of the instruments used by other researchers with addition of a few statements in accordance with the local context. The instrument to uncover opportunity, pressure, and rationalization was adapted from Becker et al (2006), Antenucci et al (2010), as well as Malgwi and Rakovski (2009). Meanwhile, the instrument for uncovering academic cheating was adapted from Newstead, Frankly-Stokes, and Armsted

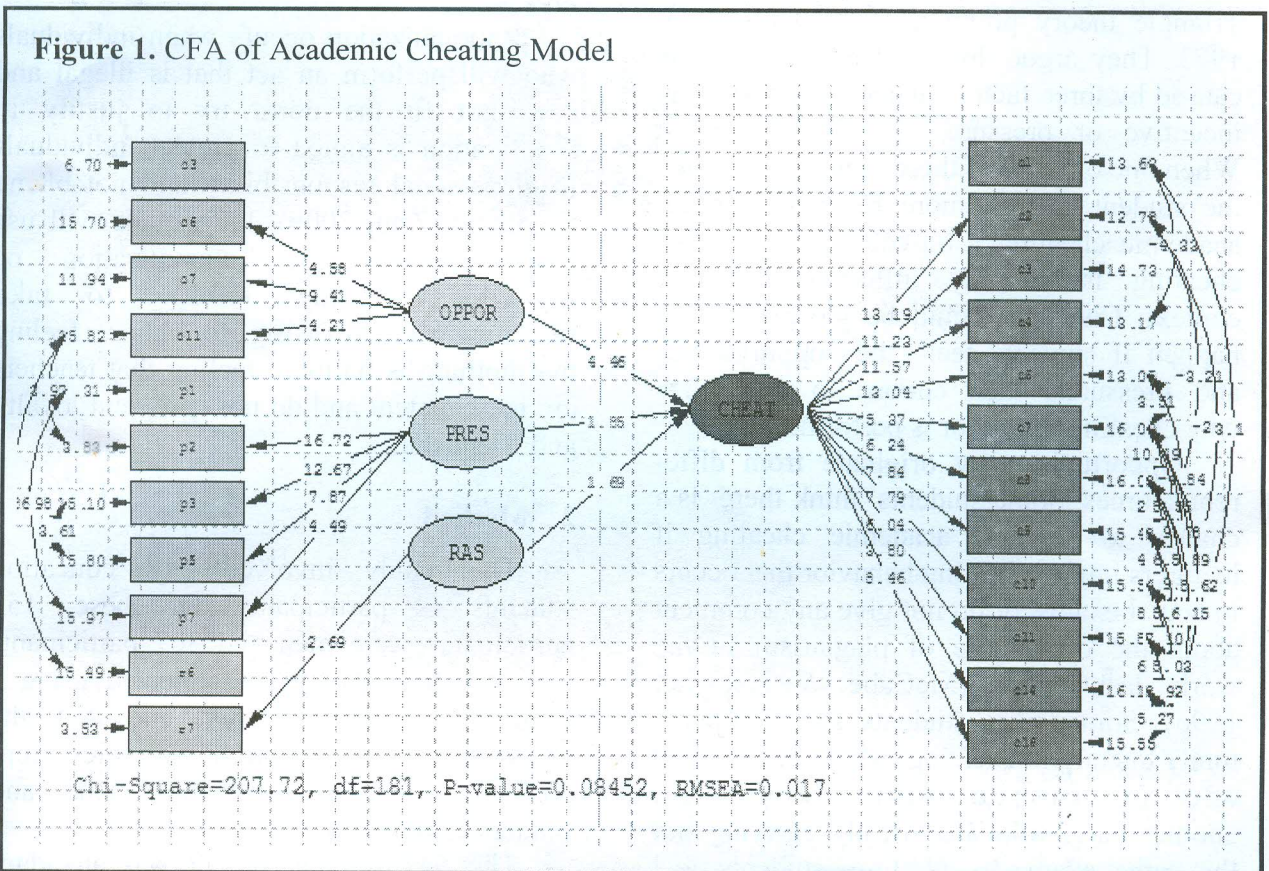
(1996), also with addition of several items by the researchers based on the theoretical basis and input from several parties about the forms of academic cheating that occurred among the students.

The data analysis technique used to test the hypothesis and model testing was Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) with a Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA). This technique allowed researchers to test hypotheses about the relationship between

the latent variables and the observed variables.

### 3. Findings and Discussions

The testing model for academic cheating used the three exogenous variables (opportunity, pressure, and rationalization) and one endogenous variable (academic cheating). The figure below represents the results of the analysis model that uses an item or indicator selected.



Meanwhile, the results of the analysis (output) of the LISREL structural equations among the three exogenous variables and one endogenous variable with respect to the structural matrix of coefficients of exogenous variables can be seen below.

GAMMA

	Pres	Oppor	Ras
CHEAT	0.40 (0.09)	0.08 (0.04)	0.69 (0.41)
	4.46	1.85	1.69

As can be seen, the variable of opportunity has a significant direct influence on academic cheating. Meanwhile, the variable pressure and rationalization do not have a significant direct effect on academic cheating. The T-value for opportunity of academic cheating behavior is pointed by 4.46. The T-value for pressure of academic cheating is pointed by 1.85. The T-value rationalization of academic cheating behavior is pointed by 1.69. Meanwhile, the gamma coefficients of structural or exogenous variables are opportunity (0.40), pressure (0.08), and rationalization (0.69). Thus the exogenous variable of opportunity has a significant influence on academic cheating, while the variables of pressure and rationalizations do not have a significant effect on academic cheating.

This study shows that the model of academic cheating based on the Fraud Triangle theory can be used. Among the three variables used as exogenous variables, the variable that plays a direct and statistically significant effect is the opportunity variable. Meanwhile, the variables pressure and rationalization are not found to be significantly related to academic cheating. These findings suggest a significant role in the occurrence of an opportunity variable on academic cheating. As mentioned by Antenucci et al (2009), opportunities represent the phenomenon of commit cheating without being detected. When there are no clear rules about academic cheating, students can consider it as an opportunity that allows for academic cheating. Additionally, things that can become opportunities for academic cheating are an academic atmosphere that is less attractive, the faculty who are less satisfactory in terms of students' intellectual and academic tasks, and less obvious purposes (Pulvers & Diekhoff, 1999, in Zito, 2009). This condition will be exacerbated by the absence of a clear punishment for perpetrators of student academic cheating or indifference of the lecturers and academic

institutions concerning the phenomenon of cheating. In the end, academic cheating may just become a habit that becomes part of student's behaviors. Therefore, it is necessary to anticipate situations that increase opportunities of academic cheating.

It is a fact, however, that the factor of opportunity to commit academic cheating is often misused within the development of information technology. In this case, students who have IT awareness more than lecturers in terms of the numerous possibilities of the use of information technology development may misuse it as an opportunity to do academic cheating. Misuse of information technology can occur in situations of exams in class or while doing tasks outside the classroom.

In test situations in the classroom, there are research results that show the abuse of information technology to conduct academic cheating among students (Rangkuti & Wahyuni, 2010). Some students do illegal ways to obtain answers to exam questions using a calculator or cell phone. Both tools are used to store course materials so that it can be read during exams. There are even students who do the 'browse' in exams to obtain answers. This condition requires the attention of the faculty by 'sterilizing' students from materials that can be used as a cheating tool in the exam. Thus, test results obtained illustrate the students' real abilities.

In the situation outside the classroom, academic cheating perpetrators may perform abuses using a variety of information available on the Internet. When students feel that professors or faculty members do not understand the Internet, they will tend to commit academic cheating in the form of plagiarism from the Internet (Shraw et al., 2007; in Zito, 2009). Increased Internet usage among college students also leads to a behavior of 'copy-paste' information without the necessary processing. Scholars believe that the increased use of computers and the

Internet, 'copy-paste' academic cheating increases dramatically (Hafner, 2001; Wilson, 2001, in Roig and Caso, 2005).

#### 4. Conclusion

The results of this study indicate a significant role variable of opportunity of academic cheating. Therefore, the need is apparent to create a policy that minimizes the chances of academic cheating. Clear and firm academic regulations and in anticipation of academic cheating need to be created, disseminated, and implemented. Academic regulations include procedures for exams, a test or assignment, the use of certain software to detect plagiarism, and the sanctions applied to perpetrators of academic cheating.

Further research about academic cheating models needs to be done, particularly by expanding the types of research variables that can provide positive implications for the anticipation of academic cheating, not only on educational student population but also on other students or learners in general.

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