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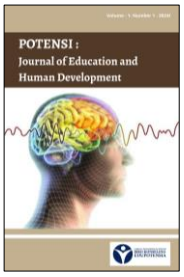

Characteristics and Behavioral Patterns of Academic Dishonesty Among High School Students

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ABSTRACT

This research was motivated by the increasing incidence of cheating behavior among students, particularly at State Senior High School at Tasikmalaya City, which reflects a low awareness of academic integrity. Cheating behavior can be influenced by various factors, such as academic pressure, peer influence, low self-confidence, weak supervision, and a lack of ethical reinforcement within the school environment. The purpose of this study was to provide a general description of students' cheating behavior in terms of rationalization, pressure, and opportunity.This study employed a descriptive quantitative method using a questionnaire as the data collection instrument. The results showed that most students at Tasikmalaya City demonstrated a moderate level of cheating behavior. Students in the moderate category tended to rationalize their actions as a response to academic pressure, while those in the high category exhibited openness to cheating opportunities without considering ethical aspects. On the other hand, students in the low category demonstrated awareness of the importance of academic honesty. A total of 333 students participated in this study. The findings are expected to serve as a reference for schools—especially for guidance and counseling services—in designing preventive and intervention strategies to address cheating behavior that threatens academic integrity and educational quality.

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Introduction

Academic behavior based on integrity serves as the main foundation in shaping learners who are honest, responsible, and prepared to face challenges in education in a healthy manner (Baird, 1980). One of the most common violations of academic integrity found in the school environment is cheating behavior Crown & Spillers, 1998). Cheating is defined as an act of obtaining or providing information dishonestly in an academic evaluation context, such as exams, individual assignments, or homework (Diekhoff et al., 1996). This phenomenon not only reflects a weakness in academic character but also has long-term impacts on the development of students' ethics and morals (Whitley, 1998; Anderman & Murdock, 2017).

Cheating behavior does not appear suddenly it results from the interaction of various internal and external factors (Harding et al., 2004). Psychologically, individuals may rationalize cheating as a way to cope with academic pressure or to maintain self-esteem (Brimble et al.,2005). Pressure from parents, teachers, and peers also increases the likelihood of cheating within the school environment (Nonis & Swift, 2001). Cheating can even develop into a culture if not properly managed by the school (Jordan, 2001). Some students perceive

cheating as something normal and harmless, especially when it is done collectively or to help friends (Murdock et al., 2010). Social group norms also influence students' perceptions of cheating behavior (Stephens & Wangaard, 2013). When students observe their peers cheating without facing sanctions, they may develop the perception that such actions are socially acceptable (McCabe et al., 2001). This indicates that cheating is not merely an individual issue but also a complex social phenomenon (Stephens et al., 2007). In addition, the existence of open opportunities—such as lack of supervision during examinations or weaknesses in the assessment system—facilitates the emergence of dishonest behavior (Ajzen, 1991; Murdock et al., 2010).

Based on preliminary observations at State Senior High School at Tasikmalaya, cheating behavior was found to be relatively high among students, particularly during examinations. Various forms of cheating were observed, ranging from exchanging answers, bringing small notes, to searching for answers online using electronic devices. Some students admitted to cheating because of low self-confidence, fear of getting poor grades, or unwillingness to lose in competition with classmates. These findings strengthen the assumption that cheating behavior is driven by multiple motives, pressures, and available opportunities. This study focuses on describing the general profile of students' cheating behavior at State Senior High School Tasikmalaya City using a descriptive quantitative approach. The profile is examined from three main aspects: rationalization, pressure, and opportunity, which are theoretically believed to be the main factors contributing to cheating behavior (Amigud et al., 2019). *Rationalization* refers to the students' internal reasoning to justify their cheating, *pressure* refers to the perceived academic demands, and *opportunity* refers to the conditions that enable students to cheat (Anderman & Koenka, 2017). By mapping these three aspects, this research is expected to provide a comprehensive overview of the factors influencing cheating behavior among high school students (Miller et al., 2017). In addition, the findings are expected to serve as a basis for schools—particularly for guidance and counseling services—in designing effective preventive and intervention strategies to reduce cheating behavior and foster academic honesty among students (Rettinger & Kramer, 2009).

Method

Participants

This study employed a quantitative method with a descriptive design. The sample consisted of all 11th grade students Senior High School at Tasikmalaya City, total 333 participants. The sampling technique used was *saturated sampling*, meaning that the entire population was included as the sample because the total number of students was still manageable for comprehensive investigation and considered representative of the population as a whole (Sugiyono, 2016). The use of saturated sampling was relevant for obtaining a general description of students' cheating behavior at a particular grade level, where individuals tend to share relatively similar characteristics (Wanel, 2021). This approach also reduced the potential risk of selection bias that may arise in random sampling techniques (Arikunto, 2013). A large number of participants within one population unit allowed for robust statistical data collection and increased the external validity of the research results (Creswell, 2012). In the educational context, collecting data from all students in the same grade level also enables a comprehensive mapping of behavioral characteristics based on psychosocial aspects such as pressure, rationalization, and opportunity (Mertens, 2010). By involving all 11th-grade students, the researcher expected to obtain more representative data that could accurately describe the trend of cheating behavior within the school environment.

Measure

The instrument used in this study was a closed-ended questionnaire developed based on the theory of academic dishonesty by Haines et al. (1986), which was modified to suit the context and characteristics of high school students. The instrument included indicators of cheating behavior measured from three main aspects: rationalization, pressure, and opportunity. Each statement in the instrument used a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree, or from never to always, depending on the item's context. Example indicators included actions such as bringing hidden notes, copying answers during exams, and collaborating dishonestly on group assignments. In constructing the questionnaire items, the researcher referred to content validity criteria and conducted a preliminary trial with a group of students to test reliability, linguistic clarity, and contextual relevance (Holmbeck & Devine, 2009). Expert validation was also conducted to ensure the alignment of items with the theoretical framework of cheating behavior, providing the instrument with a strong psychometric foundation (Grayson et al., 2009). This instrument was considered suitable for evaluating cheating behavior comprehensively, as it not only measured behavioral frequency but also included psychosocial

factors that may drive dishonest actions (Whitley, 1998). Therefore, the data obtained were not merely descriptive but also exploratory in understanding students' perspectives on cheating behavior.

Procedure

This study was conducted through a series of systematic stages to obtain valid and relevant data on students' cheating behavior. The first stage began with the preparation and validation of the questionnaire, which was developed based on the academic dishonesty theory by Haines et al. (1986). The instrument was modified to fit the context of high school students and underwent expert validation in guidance and counseling to ensure the relevance and clarity of each statement item (Azwar, 2015). After the instrument was finalized, the researcher submitted permission letters to Student Senior High School at Tasikmalaya and the local Education Office to ensure compliance with administrative procedures and uphold research ethics in the educational environment (Creswell, 2012). Once permission was granted, the questionnaire was distributed to all 11th grade students using the saturated sampling technique, in which the entire population was included as the sample (Sykes & Matza, 1957). The distribution was carried out directly in classrooms under the supervision of teachers (Veloo et al., 2013). The researcher provided a brief explanation to the students regarding the purpose and objectives of the study and the procedure for completing the questionnaire, emphasizing honesty and the confidentiality of respondent data (Hoque, 2020). After completion, the questionnaires were collected and checked to ensure that there were no blank or invalid responses (Kongsved et al., 2007). Incomplete or invalid data were excluded from the analysis to maintain result accuracy. The next step was quantitative data analysis using descriptive statistical techniques (Sharifnia et al., 2025). Data from the questionnaire were categorized into three levels of cheating behavior—low, moderate, and high (Hardigan, 2004). Additional analyses were conducted based on gender and the aspects of rationalization, pressure, and opportunity. Throughout the research process, ethical principles were upheld, including maintaining respondent confidentiality, using the data solely for academic purposes, and ensuring that no participant was harmed by the study (Petrova et al., 2016).

Results

This section presents the results obtained from data collection involving 333 students of State Senior High School, consisting of 140 male and 193 female students. The findings were derived from the distribution of the cheating behavior questionnaire, which categorized the results into three levels: low, moderate, and high. In general, the description of students cheating behavior at Senior High School at Tasikmalaya shows that, from the total 333 students in the 11th grade, cheating behavior can be classified into three frequency levels: *often*, *sometimes*, and *rarely*.

The "often" category, with a score range of 103–145 (71%–100%), included 24 students (7.21%). This indicates that only a small proportion of students were actively and consistently involved in cheating behavior. These students tended to exhibit repetitive patterns of cheating behavior, driven by habitual factors, high academic pressure, or the availability of opportunities to cheat without significant consequences. The sometimes category, with a score range of 72–102 (50%–70%), represented the largest group—241 students (72.37%). The majority of students in this category engaged in cheating situationally, such as when facing difficult exam questions, lacking preparation, or perceiving opportunities to cheat with minimal risk. The "rarely" category, with a score range of 29–71 (20%–49%), consisted of 68 students (20.42%), who demonstrated a very low tendency to engage in cheating.

Table 1. Overview of Behavior Cheating Students Senior High School at Tasikmalaya City

Category	Range	Range Score	Frequency	Percentage
High	103-145	71%-100%	24	7.21%
Moderate	72-102	50%-70%	241	72.37%
Low	29-71	20%-49%	68	20.42%
	Total		333	100%

Cheating behavior is a violation of academic integrity and is influenced by multiple factors such as rationalization, pressure, and opportunity. *Rationalization* provides moral justification for unethical actions,

pressure creates a strong drive to achieve desired academic outcomes, and *opportunity* provides the chance to cheat without fear of consequences. These factors interact with each other and are reinforced by various conditions, such as the assumption that cheating is "normal," fear of poor grades, and inadequate supervision. The data analysis across the three main aspects—rationalization, pressure, and opportunity—showed that 72.37% of students were in the low rationalization category, meaning they did not tend to justify cheating through personal or moral reasoning. In other words, most students recognized that cheating was unethical and did not attempt to legitimize such behavior.

The academic pressure aspect was found to be very high. As many as 89.8% of students were categorized as experiencing high pressure, indicating that they felt a strong burden to achieve good grades, meet parental and teacher expectations, and compete with peers. This academic pressure was identified as a major driving factor behind cheating, even though students were aware that such actions were wrong. Regarding the opportunity aspect, data revealed that 54% of students were in the low opportunity category and 44% were in the moderate category. This indicates that the supervision system during exams was relatively effective but still not fully able to eliminate opportunities for dishonest behavior. There remained certain gaps that allowed students to cheat, especially in situations with loose supervision or external assistance.

In conclusion, while most students possessed good moral awareness regarding cheating, the combination of high academic pressure and available opportunities remained a risk factor for dishonest behavior. Therefore, appropriate interventions are needed to reduce academic pressure, strengthen supervision during exams, and promote honesty as a core academic value.

Table 2. Overview of Aspects Behavior Cheating Students

Aspects	Category	Range	Frequency	%
Rationalization	High	33-45	23	7.21%
	Moderate	22-32	203	72.37%
	Low	9-21	106	20.42%
Pressure	High	36-50	289	89.8%
	Moderate	25-35	0	0%
	Low	10-24	34	10.2%
Chance	High	36-50	6	2%
	Moderate	25-35	179	54%
	Low	10-25	146	44%

The data also revealed gender-based differences in cheating behavior. The average total cheating score for male students was 88.08 (SD = 15.62), whereas for female students it was 86.83 (SD = 13.43). The F-test value of 0.6 with Sig = 0.04 ($p < 0.05$) indicated a statistically significant difference between male and female students in overall cheating behavior, suggesting that male students tended to display higher levels of cheating than females. Regarding the rationalization aspect, female students scored higher (M = 53.2, SD = 15.88) compared to male students (M = 38.7, SD = 9.37). The significance value of 0.024 ($p < 0.05$) showed a statistically significant difference, indicating that female students were more likely to rationalize or justify cheating behavior. In terms of academic pressure, female students again showed higher scores (M = 62.04, SD = 10.06) than male students (M = 42.18, SD = 39.97). The significance value of 0.000 ($p < 0.01$) reflected a very significant difference, indicating that female students experienced higher levels of academic pressure, which could contribute to cheating tendencies.

However, for the opportunity (chance) aspect, although female students had a higher average score (M = 50.61, SD = 79.75) compared to male students (M = 38.79, SD = 42.17), the difference was not statistically significant ($p = 0.10$, $p > 0.05$). This indicates that there was no meaningful gender difference in terms of access or opportunities to cheat. Overall, the findings suggest that gender influences specific dimensions of cheating behavior. Male students showed higher overall cheating behavior, whereas female students scored higher in rationalization and academic pressure. Meanwhile, opportunity to cheat did not differ significantly between male and female students.

Table 3. Overview Behavior Cheating Students Based on Gender

Scale	Male		Female		f	Sig
	M	SD	M	SD		
Total behavior cheating	88,08	15,62	86,83	13,43	0,6	.04
Rationalization	38,7	93,87	53,2	15,88	6,12	.024
Pressure	42,18	39,97	62,04	10,06	33,65	0
Chance	38,79	42,17	50,61	79,75	17,16	0.1

Discussion

Cheating behavior among students reflects a complex academic phenomenon influenced by various psychological, social, and environmental factors (Jackson et al., 2006). Based on observations and interviews with students, it was found that most students who engaged in cheating came from groups experiencing high academic pressure—whether from parents, teachers, or competition with peers (Taylor et al., 2002). They felt that academic success was measured solely by grades, making cheating a shortcut to achieving those targets. This aligns with Anderman and Murdock (2017), who state that pressure from the academic environment and high expectations can encourage students to engage in unethical behaviors such as cheating. Students often feel that academic success is solely determined by grades, causing cheating to become an easy route to reach their desired outcomes. Studies by Amigud and Lancaster (2019) and Bretag et al. (2019) reveal that students' perception of the importance of grades often outweighs the importance of integrity, creating an academic culture permissive of misconduct.

Based on the findings, several categories of students are particularly vulnerable to cheating behavior. First, students under high academic pressure, such as those who face strong demands from parents or hold high personal academic goals (Zimmer et al., 2023). This group cheats as a strategy to maintain their performance. Second, students with low self-confidence, who feel incapable of understanding the material and fear failure, thus resorting to cheating as a way to avoid poor outcomes (Kangwa et al., 2024). This is consistent with Rettinger and Kramer (2009), who found that academic anxiety is closely related to cheating tendencies. Derakshan & Eysenck's (2009) Anxiety and Performance Theory states that high anxiety can impair academic performance; in this context, anxious students tend to seek instant ways to avoid failure, such as cheating. Third, highly socially involved students who cheat due to peer influence (Nora & Zhang, 2010). There is also a tendency for cheating to become a normalized social practice in certain groups (Crittenden et al., 2009). Students in such circles frequently share answers or cheat together in order to remain accepted (Topîrceanu, 2017). This is supported by Bandura's (1986) Social Learning Theory, which explains that individuals tend to imitate behaviors accepted within their social environment, including academic dishonesty. If cheating is viewed as an accepted norm, the behavior will continue within that community (Henningsen & Henningsen, 2020). Fourth, opportunistic students who cheat not out of pressure or anxiety, but because they see opportunities and a lack of supervision (Ferguson et al., 2023). Some students admitted they cheated not because they feared poor grades, but because it was easy to do without consequences (Murdock & Anderman, 2006). This concept aligns with the Fraud Triangle Theory introduced by Cressey (1953), which states that academic fraud occurs when individuals experience pressure, opportunity, and rationalization. Recent research by Sari et al. (2025) shows that academic pressure and available opportunities significantly influence cheating behavior among university students, whereas rationalization has no direct significant effect.

A study by Bujaki et al. (2022) reveals that in the context of remote assessments, opportunities to cheat increase due to ineffective monitoring mechanisms, reinforcing the "opportunity" element of the Fraud Triangle. This suggests that poorly supervised learning environments heighten the likelihood of academic dishonesty. There are also groups of students who consistently uphold academic integrity and refuse to cheat despite high academic pressure (Chiang et al., 2022). These students generally possess strong intrinsic motivation, confidence in learning, and family support that emphasizes the importance of honesty. According to Olafson et al (2013), students with deep understanding of academic ethics and high moral values are less likely to engage in academic misconduct, including cheating. Cheating behavior is defined as obtaining academic advantages illicitly by copying or using unauthorized external sources during exams or assignments (Amigud & Lancaster, 2019). McCabe and Treviño (1993) refer to cheating as a form of academic misconduct that can undermine educational integrity. According to Whitley (1998), forms of cheating include looking at a peer's answers during an exam, using unauthorized notes or devices, plagiarizing assignments or essays, and using third-party services to complete academic tasks.

Based on the Fraud Triangle Theory (Cressey, 1953), three main factors cause individuals to engage in academic misconduct: pressure, opportunity, and rationalization. Pressure occurs when students feel compelled to achieve high grades due to demands from parents, teachers, or peer competition (Taylor et al., 2002). Opportunity arises when loose supervision or easy access to information emboldens students to cheat. Rationalization occurs when students justify their actions with statements such as "everyone does it" or "the material is too difficult. (Djaelani & Mokoginta, 2022)" Ajzen's (1991) Planned Behavior Theory also explains that permissive attitudes toward cheating, supportive social norms, and low perceived risk of being caught influence cheating behavior. Cheating behavior has several key characteristics. Academic pressure is a dominant factor, as many students view cheating as a way to avoid poor grades due to high expectations from parents and teachers (Keller & Kiss, 2025). Moral awareness is also lacking, as some students do not view cheating as a serious issue due to limited education about academic integrity (Murdock & Stephens, 2007). Peer influence also plays a role; when cheating is normalized in a social group, students tend to follow along (Nora & Zhang, 2010). Additionally, the use of technology makes cheating easier, such as using phones or smartwatches to look up answers during exams (Wong et al., 2017). Some students develop more covert cheating strategies, such as writing small notes or using coded signals with friends.

According to Anderman & Murdock (2017), cheating has negative consequences extending beyond academics to character formation. Students who habitually cheat tend to lose work and study ethics. Moreover, cheating leads to poor mastery of the material, affecting future academic performance (Putarek & Pavlin, 2020). Psychologically, cheating can cause anxiety, guilt, or fear of being caught. Habitual cheating may continue into professional life, such as workplace fraud or corruption (Crittenden & Hanna, 2009). Addressing cheating requires a multi-level approach. Schools must improve exam supervision and reinforce academic honesty to cultivate a culture of integrity (Celik & Razi, 2023). Teachers should diversify assessments, students should use effective study strategies, and parents should offer support without excessive pressure to discourage cheating (Cizek, 2003). According to Parent Role Theory (Eagly & Wood, 2012), balanced parental support can reduce excessive pressure and promote healthier learning approaches. Given the multiple factors influencing cheating Senior High School at Tasikmalaya City, preventive efforts must be comprehensive. Collaboration among schools, teachers, parents, and students is needed to instill academic honesty. If cheating becomes normalized, it will not only undermine educational quality but also shape individuals who lack integrity later in life.

Cheating behavior can be analyzed through four main aspects: rationalization, pressure, opportunity, and cheating behavior itself, as explained by Haines et al. (1986). Each aspect contains contributing factors that influence students' decisions to commit academic dishonesty, whether consciously or unconsciously (Murdock & Stephens, 2007). This analysis focuses on how these factors shape students' mindsets and actions in the high school context. Rationalization refers to psychological mechanisms individuals use to justify deviant behavior, including cheating, so it aligns with their moral values (Tsang, 2002). In students, rationalization may arise as a justification for academic misconduct due to pressure, lack of understanding, or the need to maintain academic performance (Murdock & Stephens, 2007). According to Murdock and Anderman (2006), students who justify cheating as something "necessary" or "commonly done by others" are more likely to engage in academic dishonesty. This is supported by Cressey's (1953) Fraud Triangle Theory, which identifies rationalization as one of the three primary components driving dishonest behavior. Bandura's (1986) Social Learning Theory adds that rationalization can be reinforced by permissive social environments. Students who see peers cheating without consequences tend to perceive such behavior as acceptable. Whitley (1998) also notes that students who view cheating as their only way to pass or maintain their GPA more easily rationalize the behavior. According to Fishbein and Ajzen's (1975) Theory of Reasoned Action, behavior including cheating is strongly influenced by attitudes and subjective norms that individuals rationalize internally. Thus, rationalization in cheating behavior is rooted not only in personal values but also influenced by environmental perceptions and academic demands (Murdock & Stephens, 2007). This is evident from the many students who view cheating as reasonable, especially when facing difficult subjects or demanding teachers.

The pressure aspect refers to psychological factors that drive students to cheat due to internal or external demands. Pressure may come from family, teachers, the education system, or the students themselves who aim for high achievement. According to Rettinger and Kramer (2009), students with high academic anxiety are more prone to cheating as a coping mechanism. Many students admitted cheating because they did not want to disappoint their parents or fall behind peers (Taylor, 2002). Academic pressure is also discussed by Anderman and Murdock (2007), who found that education systems emphasizing results rather than learning processes tend to increase cheating. Murdock and Miller (2003) reinforce that students under high pressure often prioritize achievement over integrity. From the perspective of Bandura's (1986) Social Cognitive Theory, environmental pressures may lead students to seek instant solutions such as cheating, especially when behavioral models around them support such actions. Students with low self-efficacy, according to Schunk and Pajares (2002), are more likely to feel overwhelmed and seek shortcuts like cheating. Crittenden & Hanna (2019) found that social

pressure to achieve, combined with limited understanding of academic ethics, increases cheating tendencies. The opportunity aspect is a key factor in academic dishonesty. In the Fraud Triangle (Cressey, 1953), opportunity exists when conditions allow individuals to commit misconduct without fear of being caught or punished. In schools, opportunity may involve weak exam supervision, technology enabling access to information, or inattentive teachers. Whitley (1998) argues that students who feel inadequately supervised are more likely to cheat (Maskova et al., 2024).

Research by Wong et al (2017) suggests that smartphones increase opportunities for undetected cheating. Anderman and Midgley (2004) state that predictable or unvaried exam formats also create loopholes for cheating strategies. Some students admitted taking advantage of such gaps, such as sitting near knowledgeable peers or sharing answers through coded cues. According to Ajzen's (1991) Planned Behavior Theory, perceived behavioral control including the belief that cheating can be easily done increases the likelihood of cheating. Thus, the greater the opportunity and the smaller the perceived risk, the more likely students are to cheat (Bertram et al., 2015). Based on research findings, several indicators significantly contribute to student cheating (Yu et al., 2017). The highest-rated indicator was "If the questions are easy, I will not cheat," indicating that students tend not to cheat when they perceive exam items as manageable. This suggests that item difficulty strongly influences students' decisions to cheat.

The second indicator was "Cheating is not considered a serious violation," showing that some students perceive cheating as not significantly violating norms (Green, 2004). This perception may be shaped by school environment, established habits, or lax enforcement of sanctions (Way, 2011). The third indicator was "Cheating occurs when under pressure," indicating that academic pressure and high score expectations are major triggers for academic dishonesty. Students under high pressure whether self-imposed or due to peers and parents—are more vulnerable to using cheating as a shortcut (Taylor et al., 2002). The fourth indicator was "Cheating is seen as a survival strategy," suggesting that students view cheating as a way to remain academically competitive (Murdock & Anderman, 2006). Students lacking confidence in their abilities or feeling left behind academically tend to resort to cheating for good grades (Taylor et al., 2002). The fifth indicator with a high percentage was "Lack of supervision during exams," revealing that opportunity and environmental conditions strongly influence cheating (Ellis et al., 2014). In poorly supervised situations, students are more likely to cheat because they perceive a low risk of being caught (Bertram et al., 2015). The sixth indicator was "Mismatch between taught material and exam questions," showing that students are more likely to cheat when they feel unprepared due to inconsistencies between instruction and assessment (Ellis et al., 2020). The next indicator was "Heavy workload and limited time," indicating that students overwhelmed by tasks and tight schedules are more vulnerable to cheating, viewing it as a practical solution (Galloway, 2012). Another indicator was "Sitting close to friends," suggesting that proximity to knowledgeable peers increases temptation, especially when supervision is lax (Chui et al., 2021). Another factor was "Inability to understand the material," indicating that students who struggle with comprehension are more likely to cheat (Awdry & Ives, 2021). This highlights the need for effective teaching methods and better learning strategies. The indicator "Fear of being labeled stingy or unwilling to share" also contributed, showing that peer pressure may push students to allow others to copy their work even when aware of potential consequences (Hamarus & Kaikkonen, 2008).

These findings align with recent studies showing that cheating among students is more strongly influenced by environmental factors such as academic supervision and social norms than by demographic attributes like gender (Ehrmann & Ludes, 2025). McEvoy & Welker (2000) found that fear of academic failure is the primary reason students cheat, with 77% of respondents reporting that academic pressure drives them to do so. Peer influence is also crucial, as students tend to imitate peers who cheat to maintain social acceptance (Nora & Zhang, 2010). Peer dishonesty has been shown to strongly correlate with cheating behavior, and from a motivational perspective, students driven by extrinsic goals—such as high grades or social recognition—are more likely to engage in academic dishonesty than those motivated intrinsically (Murdock & Anderman, 2006). This suggests that focus on outcomes rather than learning processes motivates students to seek shortcuts like cheating. In addition, perceptions of risk and sanctions also shape students' decisions (Apel, 2013). Chow et al. (2021) note that male students tend to have higher tolerance for cheating and lower risk perception than female students (Bertram et al., 2015). However, Fadilla et al. (2024) found no significant difference between males and females regarding cheating behavior in Indonesia, reinforcing the argument that environmental and psychosocial factors outweigh demographic variables. Thus, recent findings conclude that cheating behavior is primarily triggered by academic pressure, social norms, and learning motivation type, rather than demographic factors like gender (Murdock et al., 2001). Efforts to reduce cheating should focus on creating an academic environment that supports integrity, increasing students' understanding of honesty, and developing learning motivation centered on mastery rather than outcomes (Krou et al., 2021).

Conclusions

This study revealed that cheating behavior among 11th-grade students Senior High School at Tasikmalaya City was still relatively high. The majority of students (72.37%) were in the moderate category, followed by 7.21% in the high category and 20.42% in the low category. These findings indicate that cheating has become a relatively common practice within the school environment and is generally performed situationally, especially when students face academic difficulties or find opportunities to cheat without significant consequences.

Analysis of the three main factors—rationalization, pressure, and opportunity—showed that most students did not morally justify cheating (low rationalization). However, they still engaged in such behavior due to high academic pressure and the presence of opportunities that made cheating possible. The pressure aspect was found to be the most dominant, with 89.8% of students categorized as experiencing high academic pressure. Meanwhile, the opportunity aspect revealed that although most students were in the low category, the supervision system still required improvement to close potential gaps that allow cheating to occur. Additionally, differences in cheating behavior were observed based on gender. Male students tended to have higher overall cheating scores than female students, whereas female students scored higher on rationalization and pressure aspects. However, there was no significant difference in the opportunity aspect between genders.

In conclusion, cheating behavior is not solely the result of a lack of moral awareness but is largely influenced by a combination of academic pressure and enabling conditions within the school environment. Therefore, preventive interventions are needed through structured and continuous guidance and counseling services. Such efforts are essential for instilling honesty, managing academic pressure, and reducing opportunities for students to engage in dishonest behavior. With appropriate approaches, schools can foster a culture of academic integrity and create a healthy educational environment.

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