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# The Relationship between Self-control and Academic Cheating among Students in SMA Negeri 5 Surakarta

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## ABSTRACT

*This correlational study aimed to find out the relationship between self-control and academic cheating among students in SMA Negeri 5 Surakarta. Data were collected from 222 randomly-selected 11th-grade students using self-control and academic cheating scales. Product Moment Correlation analysis result showed a correlation coefficient of -0.188, indicating negative correlation between self-control and academic cheating. In other words, students with better self-control tends not to commit academic cheating. This study result serves as a reference for school counselors in developing services to improve students' self-control.*

*Keywords:* self-control academic cheating, senior high school students.

## INTRODUCTION

Education plays an important role in developing an intelligent individual with good character and in ensuring good social life. Through education, individuals learn various knowledge, such as science, social, character education, and positive attitude internalization to ensure students' success in the community. Article 3 of Indonesian Law no. 20 of 2003 on National Education System states that the National Education functions to develop the capability, character, and civilization of the nation for enhancing its intellectual capacity and is aimed at developing learners 'potentials so that they become persons imbued with human values who are faithful and pious to one and only God; who possess morals and noble character; who are healthy,

knowledgeable, competent, creative, independent; and as citizens, are democratic and responsible. It asserts that in the educational context, character plays a central role in developing academically successful generations with noble characters. However, many students are still engaged in unexpected behaviors. One of the unexpected acts committed by students is academic cheating.

A national survey by Rutgers Management Education Center in the USA shows that 75% of 4500 middle school students are involved in academic cheating. In Indonesia, the vice minister of National Education, Fasli Jalal, stated that the Ministry of National Education received more than 900 reports of alleged cheating during the 2010 national examination

at junior and senior high school levels (Susanti: 2011). Academic cheating often occurs during the national examination (Alawiyah, 2015). Mushthofa et al. (2021) reported that 93.5% of senior high school students cheated during the learning process by asking for friends' answers during the exam, using notes during the exam, or browsing the answer on the internet or book during the exam. Some studies mentioned previously are evidence that academic cheating is still common among students.

Travis Hirschi and Gottfredson, as cited in Aroma and Suminar (2012) developed "The General Theory of Crime", which is also known as "Low Self Control Theory", which explains that criminal behavior could be seen from a single dimension, namely self-control. Individuals with low self-control tend to be impulsive, prefer high-risk behaviors, and have a narrow-minded attitude. In the school context, cheating students represent individuals' poor self-control as they are willing to violate the rules without considering the long-term effect. On the other hand, individuals with high self-control tend to be more aware of the long-term effect of misbehavior (Alaydrus, 2017). Furthermore Anderman and Murdock (2011) mention several factors contributing to students' academic cheating, including demographic factors, cultural differences, self-efficacy, impulsive behavior, moral development, and self-control. Academic cheating can be minimized when students possess high self-control.

Supporting Hirschi and Gottfredson's low self-control theory, Pujiana (2012) found that self-control correlates with academic cheating among students in SMK Negeri 8 Jakarta. This finding suggests that higher self-control is associated with lower academic cheating. Self-control reflects one's ability to refrain him/herself from committing behaviors that are not in line with social norms (Gunarsa, 2008). In this regard, Hay and Meldrum (2015) state that individuals with proper self-control tend to delay and evaluate the situation and consequences of their behaviors. Such an individual tends to consider the consequences of an action.

Based on the description above, the present study aimed to find out the relationship between self-control and academic cheating among students in SMA Negeri 5 Surakarta. The result of this study could be the basis for addressing issues of academic cheating through students' self-control.

## METHODOLOGY

This study was conducted in SMA Negeri 5 Surakarta from January to February 2022. As mentioned previously, this correlational study aimed to examine the relationship between self-control and academic cheating among students in SMA Negeri 5 Surakarta. Participants were recruited randomly from a population of 360 11th-grade students (n=222). This study employed a self-control scale to measure students' self-control and an academic cheating scale to measure academic cheating committed by the students. Both instruments were valid and reliable following the product moment and Cronbach's alpha analyses. The instruments were distributed online using Google Forms. The collected data were tested for normality, followed by an analysis using the product moment.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

Normality test should be done prior to performing correlational analysis. It aimed to see whether or not the data were normally distributed.

Table 1

*Normality Test*

Variable	Sig.
Self-control	0.980
Academic cheating	

The normality test was done using Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test (K-SZ). Data were considered normally distributed when the p-value was higher than 0.05. The normality test result exhibited a significance value of 0.980 (> 0.05), meaning that the data were normally distributed. The normality test was done using Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test (K-SZ). Data were considered normally distributed when the p-value was higher than 0.05. The normality test result exhibited a significance value of 0.980

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Tabel 2  
*Correlation Test*

Variable	Sig.
Self-control	-0.188
Academic cheating	

As shown in the table above, the Pearson product-moment coefficient was -0.188 with a p-value of 0.000 (< 0.05): Sig. 2-tailed). This result shows that self-control is correlated with academic cheating. As the coefficient was negative, it indicates that self-control is negatively related to academic cheating among SMA Negeri 5 Surakarta. This negative relationship means that students with higher self-control will less likely commit academic cheating. On the other hand, the lower the students' self-control, the higher the possibility of students engaging in academic cheating. The study result indicated that self-control is significantly related to academic cheating. Students with lower self-control have a higher possibility of committing academic cheating, while those with higher self-control have a lower possibility of engaging.

Senior high school students are in adolescence period. In the Indonesian context, Sarwono (2013) argues that unmarried individuals 11-24 years of age are considered adolescents.

This period is a transition stage from childhood to adulthood. Individuals have a number of developmental tasks during this transitional period (Ardi, Ibrahim, & Said, 2012). According to William Key (as cited in Syamsu Yusuf, 2014), the developmental tasks include developing interpersonal communication skills, interactions with peers and other people individually or in a group, and strengthening self-control based on life values and principles. As asserted previously, Individuals need to improve their self-control based on life principles and norms to prevent themselves from committing normatively unacceptable behaviors (Nurhaini, 2018).

Anderman and Murdock (2011) group four types of cheating: individual-opportunistic cheating, i.e., to change one's own answer

when being asked to check their work. Independent-planned heating, i.e., using notes during the exam or bringing a completed answer instead of writing it during the exam period. Social-active cheating, i.e., copying others' answers. Social-passive cheating, i.e., allowing others to copy one's own answer. Interviews with three students were conducted in January 2022, and revealed that they engaged in cheating activities at school. The interview revealed that they cheated because they lacked an understanding of the materials. They stated that the long-distance learning method during the pandemic was responsible for their lack of understanding. The cheating was in the form of copying friends' works, using notes during the exam, and browsing the answer on the internet during the exam.

Self-control is a process in which individuals refrain from committing misbehaviors in order to achieve competing goals (Milyavskaya, Saunders, and Inzlicht n.d.: 2021). Students who manage to refrain from cheating could be considered to have good self-control in their effort to achieve their academic goal. Hirschi (as cited in Titisari, 2017) stated that individuals with low self-control tend to exhibit misbehaviors. In the same vein, this study found a relationship between self-control and academic cheating, where

students with higher self-control exhibit less academic cheating, whereas students with lower self-control tend to have a higher possibility of engaging in academic cheating during their learning process.

Berk (in Gunarsa, 2008) views self-control as an individual's ability to restrain temporary temptation that contradicts social norms. Having good self-control, students would be able to behave according to social norms (Gunawan, 2017). Academic cheating violates the norm and regulations. Copying others' works, seeing others' answer during the exam, receiving forbidden helps when doing the assignment, and helping others to cheat, are among the form of cheating behaviors that should not be done with any reason. Students'

honesty is paramount during the effort to achieve their academic goals.

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This study also supports Santrock (2003), who stated that adolescents' misbehaviors (including academic cheating) represent the individual's failure to develop sufficient behavioral self-control. In the same vein, Gunarsa (2008) states that students with adequate self-control could control harmful behaviors that contradict social norms. According to Dejene (2021), academic cheating is an attempt to help oneself or others improve in a dishonest manner. Students' academic cheating is harmful both for the perpetrators and other individuals. Academic cheating may threaten students' competence at school (Sorgo et al., 2015). The problem emerges when higher education uses scores as the basis for student admission, as potential and intelligent students may have the same score as dishonest students. The study by Heriyati and Ekasari (2020) states that academic cheating can cause various problems, including the degraded academic quality of the perpetrator and the school. Similarly, Fitria (2019) states that academic cheating may affect higher-level admission, as dishonest students with high scores may benefit from their cheating results, while honest students are in disadvantageous positions. Therefore, it is necessary for students to have good self-control to prevent them from cheating. Individuals with good self-control would be able to control temptations stemming from themselves (Rosalinda & Satwika, 2019) and

prevent themselves from negative behaviors, thus reducing the possibility of academic cheating.

It could be concluded that students' self-control is related to academic cheating. As the relationship was in the negative direction, it means that the higher the students' self-control, the lower the possibility of committing academic cheating, and vice versa.

## CONCLUSION

Students' self-control plays important role in affecting one's behavior, including academic cheating. This study found that self-control significantly relates to academic cheating among students in SMA Negeri 5 Surakarta. Students with higher self-control tend to exhibit a lower possibility of engaging in academic cheating activities. On the other hand, the lower the students' self-control, the higher the possibility of students engaging in academic cheating. School counselors are recommended to design a service intervention for students in order to improve their self-control and minimize academic cheating.

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