



## Investigating Academic Dishonesty among Undergraduate Students: Do Gender and Majors Matter?

Damajanti Kusuma Dewi\*, Desi Nurwidawati, Amjodti Laili Agindaris, Irena Yolanita Maureen  
Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Surabaya, Indonesia



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### ABSTRACT

**Objective:** The research aims to understand the extent of academic dishonesty among students in a faculty at a university in a developing country, defining the various types of dishonesty and pinpointing the factors that trigger such behavior; to formulate a profile of academic dishonesty as a guideline for the level of academic dishonesty in the faculty. The research involved subjects from eight departments, which had never been carried out by other researchers before. **Method:** Data were collected via a survey using a Google Form, employing the Academic Dishonesty instrument and tailored to the Indonesian context. This instrument, which consists of 23 items, covers six factors: cheating in examinations, plagiarism, outside help, prior cheating, falsification, and lying in academic assignments. **Results:** First, there is a significant difference in academic dishonesty scores between male and female groups, with a significance value of 0.019 ( $p < 0.05$ ). Second, there is no significant difference in academic dishonesty scores based on majors between male and female groups, as indicated by the significance value of 0.060 ( $p > 0.05$ ). The final conclusion is that there is no significant difference in academic dishonesty scores based on the interaction between gender and majors within each population group, as evidenced by the significance value of 0.331 ( $p > 0.05$ ). This study contributes to filling a critical gap in the literature and offers valuable insights for developing targeted interventions across diverse educational contexts.

## INTRODUCTION

The World Health Organization (WHO) officially proclaimed the COVID-19 pandemic in early March 2020, which had a significant impact on several areas of life, such as the economy, society, and education. As a reaction, nations globally, including Indonesia, enforced measures to control the transmission of the virus, such as limitations on mobility and face-to-face encounters. The Indonesian Ministry of Education and Culture made it compulsory to use distance learning as a response to the epidemic. As a result, the Ministry conducted instructional activities remotely, utilizing platforms like Google Meet, Zoom, Webex, and WhatsApp groups. Although these technologies aided in ongoing instruction, the sudden transition to online assessment in higher education exposed substantial obstacles in upholding academic honesty (Almossa & Alzahrani, 2022; Janke et al., 2021; Vellanki et al., 2023). The growing dependence on digital platforms for assessments has highlighted the necessity of tackling concerns regarding academic integrity in Indonesia, a developing nation grappling with the intricacies of this emerging educational environment. These results support the idea that the implementation of ad-hoc online testing in 2020 has had detrimental effects on academic integrity (Janke et al., 2021).

Each application facilitated the learning process, making it easier to access teaching and learning materials, communicate through existing networks, and enhance

technological knowledge. However, the convenience of using technology applications in learning was not without its drawbacks. Distance learning reduced the opportunities for teachers to supervise, as they could not observe students' activities directly (Almahasees et al., 2021; Azhari & Fajri, 2022; Lei & Medwell, 2021; Oliveira et al., 2021). Students took advantage of minimal supervision by engaging in dishonest activities, such as sleeping during class, collaborating during exams, chatting during lessons, copying answers from classmates during exams, or even obtaining answers from online sources.

Several studies proved that the implementation of distance learning caused various issues, including academic dishonesty (Akhmetova et al., 2023; Ives & Cazan, 2023; Măță et al., 2020). Changes to distance learning and online evaluations pose challenges for academic actors because they will cause academic dishonesty to become more widespread (Duliba et al., 2023) and become a global problem for developed and developing countries (Luck et al., 2023). Academic dishonesty in educational settings is not a novel concept. Any activity in which a student violates the moral and ethical policy of an academic institution is considered academic dishonesty (Dyer et al., 2020). Academic dishonesty is behavior that violates rules carried out by students in order to gain academic benefits (Zhao et al., 2021). Academic dishonesty is defined as "any fraudulent actions or attempts by a student to use unauthorized or unacceptable means in any academic work". Academic dishonesty occurs when students attempt to present others' academic work as their own. Typically, students deceive their lecturers into believing that the submitted works are their own. Academic dishonesty encompasses acts such as "cheating," "fraud," and "plagiarism," which involve the theft of ideas and other forms of intellectual property, regardless of their publication status.

Students engage in academic dishonesty for various reasons, as identified in numerous studies. Key factors include:

- **Lack of Academic Integrity:** Students may not exhibit adequate commitment to academic ethics (Akhmetova et al., 2023).
- **Disregard for Rules:** Some students intentionally ignore academic regulations (Akhmetova et al., 2023; Dejene, 2021).
- **Lack of Awareness:** Limited understanding of academic rules and sanctions can lead to misconduct (Akhmetova et al., 2023).
- **Pressure:** Social, peer, or academic pressures often influence dishonest behavior (Akhmetova et al., 2023).
- **Outdated Instructional Methods:** Dissatisfaction with teaching approaches contributes to dishonesty (Akhmetova et al., 2023).
- **Assessment Type:** The format of exams can impact students' likelihood of cheating (Kurniawati et al., 2023; Sampson & Johannessen, 2020).
- **Socioeconomic Status:** Economic factors influence students' choices (Brown et al., 2020; Miles et al., 2023).
- **Living Arrangements:** Commuting students tend to cheat less than residential students (Miles et al., 2023).
- **Academic Year:** Cheating tendencies vary among first-year, second-year, and upper-level students (Brown et al., 2020; Đorić et al., 2020).
- **Self-Efficacy:** Students' confidence in their abilities impacts their behavior (Ancheta et al., 2024).

- **Gender Differences:** Gender plays a role in academic dishonesty patterns (Akbaşlı et al., 2019; Brown et al., 2020; Chala, 2021; Dyer et al., 2020; Malik et al., 2023; Ossai et al., 2023; Peled et al., 2019; Williams & Aremu, 2019).
- **Field of Study:** Academic disciplines influence dishonesty rates (Chala, 2021; Dyer et al., 2020).

These factors highlight the complexity of academic dishonesty and the need for multifaceted strategies to address it effectively.

In terms of majors and academic dishonesty, the research examines whether significant differences exist in academic dishonesty tendencies across various academic majors. Furthermore, it seeks to understand how uniform exam conditions might influence the variation (or lack thereof) in academic dishonesty among students from different majors. By addressing these questions, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of the factors contributing to academic dishonesty and inform strategies to mitigate it. This study seeks to address several research questions related to gender and major differences in academic dishonesty among undergraduate students. Specifically, it aims to explore gender-based differences in academic dishonesty, focusing on questions such as: What are the gender-based differences in academic dishonesty among undergraduate students? and How do socialization patterns influence gender differences in academic dishonesty?

The novelty of this study lies in its comprehensive approach to examining academic dishonesty across a diverse range of academic majors. Unlike previous research, which often focuses on a single major, this study investigates academic dishonesty in **eight different majors** within the Faculty of Education, offering a broader perspective on how the field of study may influence dishonest behavior. The study also explores **gender** as a key variable, building on the significant body of research that examines gender differences in academic dishonesty. However, prior findings in this area remain inconsistent: some studies report no significant differences between male and female students, while others identify clear distinctions. By including both gender and major as demographic variables, this research seeks to provide a more nuanced understanding of their interplay in shaping academic dishonesty. By incorporating data from multiple majors and addressing the ambiguity surrounding gender-related findings, this study contributes to filling a critical gap in the literature and offers valuable insights for developing targeted interventions across diverse educational contexts.

## RESEARCH METHOD

This study employs a quantitative approach to create a profile of academic dishonesty among first-year students in the Faculty of Education at Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia. We collected data through a survey using a Google Form application. The research employs the Academic Dishonesty instrument, which we adapted from Bashir & Bala (2018) and tailored to the Indonesian. This instrument comprises six factors: cheating in examinations, plagiarism, outside help, prior cheating, falsification, and lying in academic assignments. We further divide these six factors into 23 items. The selection of this instrument was based on considerations such as high item validity (0.83), high reliability (0.70), and a citation count exceeding 70, indicating its suitability for the study.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

### Results

The subjects of this study are 720 students from the Faculty of Education at Universitas Negeri Surabaya, Indonesia. Class of 2022, with a distribution of 100 male participants and 620 female participants. In this faculty, there are eight majors, namely Guidance and Counseling, Educational Technology, Non-Formal Education, Special Education, Primary School Teacher Education, Early Childhood Education, Educational Management, and Psychology. This information can be seen in Table 1 and 2.

**Table 1.** Overview of subjects based on gender.

	Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	Men	100	13.90	13.90	13.90
	Women	620	86.10	86.10	100.00
	Total	720	100.00	100.00	

Meanwhile, the overview of subjects based on their departments (represented by numbers – not in any order) can be seen in Tabel 2.

**Table 2.** Overview of subjects based on majors.

	Gender	Frequency	Percent	Valid Percent	Cumulative Percent
Valid	1	34	4.70	4.70	4.70
	2	67	9.30	9.30	14.00
	3	36	5.00	5.00	19.00
	4	155	21.50	21.50	40.60
	5	50	6.90	6.90	47.50
	6	211	29.30	29.30	76.80
	7	95	13.20	13.20	90.00
	8	72	10.00	10.00	100.00
	Total	720	100.00	100.00	

The researcher also conducted a homogeneity test with the aim of determining whether the data variation within populations has the same variance or not. The decision-making basis for this homogeneity test is that if the significance value (Sig.)  $< 0.05$ , the variance of the two population groups is declared non-homogeneous (different), and conversely, if the significance value (Sig.)  $> 0.05$ , the variance of the two population groups is declared homogeneous (the same).

**Table 3.** Homogeneity test results on the academic dishonesty variable

Levene Statistic	df1	df2	Sig.
2.20	15	704	0.005

From Table 3, the significance value (Sig.) of the academic dishonesty variable for students in the Faculty of Education, Class of 2022, is found to be 0.005. Because the Sig. value of  $0.005 < 0.05$ , it can be concluded that the variance of the two population groups is not the same or not homogenous to test the hypothesis, the researcher used the test of between-subjects effects, commonly known as the Anova test (F-test), by comparing the

means of two population groups, namely the male and female groups. This Anova test aims to determine whether there is a significant difference between the mean values of the male and female groups.

**Table 3.** Results of test of between-subjects effects.

Source	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	5293.91	15	352.92	2.74	.00
Intercept	161578.08	1	161578.08	1258.40	.00
Gender	708.27	1	708.27	5.51	.01
Major	1746.86	7	249.55	1.94	.06
Gender * Major	1031.07	7	147.29	1.14	.33
Error	90392.68	704	128.39		
Total	1249047.00	720			
Corrected Total	95686.59	719			

From the F-test results in Table 3, when examining the gender-based differences, a significance value (Sig.) of 0.01 ( $p < 0.05$ ) is obtained, indicating a significant difference in academic dishonesty scores between the male and female groups. Based on majors, a Sig. value of 0.06 ( $p > 0.05$ ) is obtained, signifying no significant difference in academic dishonesty scores based on majors between the male and female groups. Meanwhile, when considering the interaction between gender and majors, a Sig. value of 0.33 ( $p > 0.05$ ) is obtained, suggesting no significant difference in academic dishonesty scores based on the interaction between gender and majors within each population group.

### Discussion

This study aimed to explore academic dishonesty among undergraduate students, focusing on gender and major differences. The findings revealed gender-based differences in academic dishonesty, with male students engaging in dishonest behaviors more frequently than female students. This aligns with previous research, such as Williams and Aremu (2019), which also identified significant gender differences. Similarly, Nguyen and Goto (2024) reported that male students were more likely to engage in dishonesty than their female counterparts.

The socialization theory provides a framework for understanding these gender disparities. Research suggests that female students are generally more rule-abiding (Dong & Zeb, 2022). This is because women's moral reasoning is oriented towards their relationships with others, making them more sensitive to ethics, more rule-abiding, and more concerned about the consequences of their behavior on others (Intishar et al, 2024), and adhere to higher moral standards taught during childhood. Conversely, male students are often socialized to be more independent, less mindful of consequences, and less influenced by rules. Additionally, female students tend to exhibit higher intrinsic motivation, attributing failure to a lack of effort and striving harder to succeed. In contrast, male students may attribute failure to external factors, such as perceived unfairness by lecturers. Interestingly, other studies challenge the generalizability of these findings. For example, Kurniawati et al. (2023) found no significant gender differences in cheating during online exams, emphasizing the need to consider contextual variables like exam format and instructional design.

Regarding major differences, this study found no significant variation in academic dishonesty across the eight majors examined. This contrasts with findings by Akbaşlı et

al. (2019), where students in physical education and sports displayed higher tendencies toward dishonesty. A plausible explanation for the lack of major differences in this study may be tied to uniform exam conditions across majors. Both synchronous and asynchronous online exams during and after the pandemic likely reduced opportunities for majors variations in dishonest behavior (Eshet, 2024; Itani et al., 2022; Jenkins et al., 2022; Meccawy et al., 2021). However, online exam formats pose unique challenges, such as limited supervision and increased opportunities for collaboration or plagiarism.

Furthermore, the role of instructors and institutional policies significantly impacts academic dishonesty. Some educators perceive dishonesty as a minor issue, while others enforce stricter measures to mitigate it. Educational institutions often tend to focus more on students' academic achievements (knowledge or skills) and may underestimate the importance of academic integrity (values) (Çelik & Razi, 2023).

### Practical Implications

To address academic dishonesty, institutions must focus on improving supervision during exams, particularly online assessments, and fostering intrinsic motivation among students. Personalized exam formats, stricter plagiarism checks, and enhanced instructor awareness can mitigate dishonest behaviors across genders and departments. Future research should continue exploring contextual variables and innovative assessment designs to ensure academic integrity.

### CONCLUSION

**Fundamental Finding:** This study examined academic dishonesty among undergraduate students across gender and eight different majors. The findings revealed no significant differences in academic dishonesty based on either gender or study program. These results suggest that female students are becoming as permissive towards academic dishonesty as their male counterparts, challenging previous research that indicated male students are more likely to disregard norms and rules. Similarly, the lack of variation across majors indicates that students from all eight programs have an equal likelihood of engaging in dishonest behaviors, highlighting a shared cultural or systemic factor influencing academic integrity. **Implications:** The findings underscore a shift in behavior among female students, whose attitudes toward academic dishonesty now align with those of male students. This challenges traditional assumptions and calls for a reevaluation of strategies aimed at addressing dishonesty, emphasizing a more holistic approach that considers changing social dynamics. Additionally, the uniformity of dishonesty across majors suggests that institutional factors, such as standardized exam formats and shared online learning environments, may play a significant role in fostering or preventing dishonest behaviors. **Limitations:** (1) Participants were exclusively first-year students (Class of 2022) who had only experienced one semester of lecture activities. Their limited exposure to academic environments may influence the generalizability of the findings. (2) The purposive accidental sampling technique relied solely on students willing to complete the survey, resulting in unequal representation across genders and study programs. This imbalance restricted the depth of the analysis and may have impacted the conclusions. **Future Research :** (1) Investigate specific forms of academic dishonesty, such as plagiarism, to better understand students' tendencies. (2) Expand the sample to include participants from multiple academic years to account for differences in experience and exposure to academic environments. (3) Include students from diverse

study programs, departments, and faculties to explore broader patterns and variations in academic dishonesty across institutional contexts. (4) By addressing these limitations and expanding the scope of investigation, future studies can provide a more comprehensive understanding of academic dishonesty and inform more effective prevention strategies.

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**\*Dr. Damajanti Kusuma Dewi (Corresponding Author)**

Jurusan Psikologi, Fakultas Psikologi,  
Universitas Negeri Surabaya,  
Jl. Lidah Wetan, Surabaya (60213), Indonesia  
Email: damanjantidewi@unesa.ac.id

**Desi Nurwidawati**

Jurusan Psikologi, Fakultas Psikologi,  
Universitas Negeri Surabaya,  
Jl. Lidah Wetan, Surabaya (60213), Indonesia  
Email: desinurwidawati@unesa.ac.id

**Amjodti Laili Agindaris**

Jurusan Psikologi, Fakultas Psikologi,  
Universitas Negeri Surabaya,  
Jl. Lidah Wetan, Surabaya (60213), Indonesia  
Email: amjodtiagindari@unesa.ac.id

**Irena Yolanita Maureen**

Jurusan Kurikulum dan Teknologi, Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan  
Universitas Negeri Surabaya,  
Jl. Lidah Wetan, Surabaya (60213), Indonesia  
Email: irenamaureen@unesa.ac.id

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