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Research Article

EFFECTS OF SELF-CONFIDENCE AND PEER CONFORMITY ON STUDENTS' CHEATING BEHAVIOR

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Abstract

This study investigates the influence of self-confidence and peer conformity on students' cheating behavior in Islamic Religious Education at SMA Muhammadiyah Tanjung Redeb. Using a quantitative correlational design, data were collected from 79 students selected through simple random sampling from a population of 357 students. Self-confidence, peer conformity, and cheating behavior were measured using validated and reliable Likert-scale questionnaires, and the data were analyzed using multiple linear regression after meeting classical assumption tests. The results indicate that both self-confidence and peer conformity have significant partial effects on cheating behavior, with self-confidence ($\beta = 0.438$, $p = 0.005$) and peer conformity ($\beta = 0.316$, $p = 0.047$) showing positive relationships. Simultaneously, these two variables significantly predict cheating behavior ($F = 11.555$, $p < 0.001$) and explain 23.3% of the variance in students' cheating tendencies ($R^2 = 0.233$). The novelty of this study lies in its integration of psychological and social factors within the specific context of Islamic Religious Education, highlighting how internal self-beliefs and peer dynamics interact to shape academic integrity. These findings imply that educational interventions should not only strengthen students' self-confidence but also cultivate healthy peer norms and social awareness to effectively reduce cheating behavior and promote ethical learning practices.

Keywords: Cheating Behavior, Peer Conformity, Self-Confidence

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INTRODUCTION

Academic integrity remains a persistent challenge in educational systems worldwide. Cheating behavior undermines the credibility of assessment and weakens the formation of ethical character in students (McCabe, 2021). Empirical studies indicate that dishonest academic practices continue to increase alongside academic pressure and performance competition in secondary education (Said et al., 2022). Cheating behavior is commonly defined as intentional actions aimed at gaining unfair academic advantage, including copying answers, unauthorized collaboration, and misuse of learning resources (Pavela, 2021). Such behaviors not only distort learning outcomes but also weaken students' moral development and responsibility (Rettinger, 2023). These realities indicate that cheating is not a marginal issue but a systemic challenge that requires comprehensive educational responses and long-term policy attention.

Psychological factors play a substantial role in shaping students' academic integrity. One of the most influential internal factors is self-confidence or academic self-efficacy, which reflects students' beliefs in their ability to accomplish academic tasks independently (Bandura, 2021). Students with higher self-efficacy demonstrate stronger persistence, better emotional regulation, and lower reliance on dishonest strategies (Doménech-Betoret et al., 2022). Conversely, low academic confidence often increases anxiety and avoidance behavior, which may trigger cheating as a coping mechanism (Putwain et al., 2023). In everyday classroom practice, students often rely on their perceived competence when deciding whether to face challenges independently or seek shortcuts. This dynamic shows that psychological readiness significantly influences students' behavioral choices during learning and assessment.

Self-confidence also shapes ethical decision-making and learning motivation. Learners who trust their competencies are more willing to invest effort rather than seeking shortcuts during assessments (Alhadabi & Karpinski, 2022). Confidence influences how students perceive academic challenges and respond to failure experiences (Zimmerman, 2023). It also affects goal orientation and academic persistence (Sánchez-Ros et al., 2022). Students with healthy self-confidence are more capable of regulating emotions and managing academic stress. Therefore, strengthening balanced self-confidence may contribute not only to academic achievement but also to ethical learning behavior.

In addition to internal factors, social dynamics strongly shape students' behavioral choices. Peer conformity refers to individuals' tendency to adjust attitudes and actions to align with group norms (Cialdini et al., 2021). Adolescents are particularly vulnerable to peer influence because social acceptance becomes a central developmental need during this stage (Steinberg, 2022). When peer groups normalize cheating, students are more likely to imitate such behavior to maintain group membership (Berggren et al., 2023). Social interaction thus becomes a powerful channel through which academic values are transmitted among students. Classroom norms gradually shape what behaviors are perceived as acceptable or unacceptable.

Empirical evidence indicates that peer pressure significantly predicts academic misconduct across diverse educational contexts (Miller et al., 2022). Students often justify dishonest actions when they observe peers engaging in similar behavior without serious consequences (Zhang & Yu, 2023). Peer modeling also influences students' perception of risk and moral boundaries in academic settings (Schippers et al., 2024). These processes demonstrate that students continuously negotiate between personal values and group

expectations. This pattern suggests that classroom culture plays a decisive role in shaping everyday academic behavior and moral judgment.

The interaction between self-confidence and peer conformity has gained increasing attention in educational psychology. High self-efficacy can function as a protective factor that reduces susceptibility to negative peer influence (Li et al., 2022). Conversely, students with low confidence are more vulnerable to peer pressure and more likely to engage in risky academic behaviors (Karakose et al., 2023). Social reinforcement further amplifies this interaction when peer approval is linked to performance outcomes (Wentzel et al., 2021). These findings illustrate that internal and social factors rarely operate independently in real learning situations. Understanding this interaction is essential for designing effective preventive interventions.

Educational environments and institutional culture also moderate cheating behavior. Schools with strong ethical climates and consistent academic integrity policies demonstrate lower prevalence of misconduct (Bertram Gallant, 2022). Assessment design and feedback practices influence students' opportunity structures for cheating (Bretag et al., 2021). Digital learning environments introduce additional monitoring challenges (Dendir & Maxwell, 2023). Institutional consistency reinforces students' perception of fairness and accountability. When students perceive assessment systems as transparent and fair, they are more likely to rely on effort rather than dishonest strategies. Thus, systemic support is necessary to complement individual and social interventions, as structural weaknesses can undermine even strong personal and peer-level integrity values.

Cheating behavior may also generate long-term consequences beyond academic settings. Early engagement in dishonest practices has been associated with unethical behavior in professional contexts (Harding et al., 2022). Persistent misconduct may weaken students' moral reasoning and responsibility (Nonis & Swift, 2021). Habits formed during schooling often carry forward into workplace behavior, shaping individuals' ethical decision-making in adulthood. These outcomes highlight the importance of early prevention and ethical reinforcement. Educational institutions carry responsibility in shaping students' lifelong integrity, making schools critical sites for character formation, not merely academic instruction. Preventive strategies should therefore begin at the secondary school level.

In religious education contexts, moral values such as honesty, responsibility, and accountability are core learning objectives (Huda et al., 2022). Religious instruction can strengthen students' internal moral regulation by cultivating conscience, self-control, and awareness of moral consequences (Kurniawan et al., 2023). Through religious narratives and moral exemplars, students are encouraged to internalize ethical norms beyond external enforcement, allowing moral behavior to be guided by intrinsic motivation rather than fear of sanctions. However, moral internalization is not a linear process and may be challenged when students experience academic pressure or observe inconsistent ethical behavior in their peer environment. Empirical studies examining cheating behavior within Islamic education remain limited (Rahman et al., 2024), particularly those that explore how internal beliefs interact with social influences. Cultural expectations and peer dynamics may interact differently in faith-based classrooms (Azizah, 2021), where conformity to group norms can sometimes override individual moral convictions. This interaction suggests that religious values alone are insufficient to prevent academic dishonesty without supportive peer norms, strong self-

confidence, and consistent institutional practices. This gap highlights the importance of contextualized research that respects religious and cultural dimensions of learning.

Given these considerations, further investigation is required to understand how self-confidence and peer conformity jointly influence cheating behavior in Islamic Religious Education. Self-confidence determines students' readiness to face academic challenges independently, while peer conformity shapes the social norms that define acceptable behavior in classroom settings. A clearer understanding of these relationships can inform effective character education strategies that address both internal psychological factors and external social pressures (Suryadi et al., 2025). Such evidence is essential for educators seeking to promote ethical learning environments that integrate moral values with academic competence. Localized research helps translate theory into practical intervention that is sensitive to institutional culture and student realities. Accordingly, this study examines the influence of self-confidence and peer conformity on students' cheating behavior at SMA Muhammadiyah Tanjung Redeb.

To summarize the complexity of factors influencing cheating behavior in the context of secondary education, Figure X presents a conceptual model depicting cheating behavior as a surface phenomenon rooted in multiple layers of interacting determinants. This model positions cheating as a visible manifestation of psychological, social, institutional, and moral processes operating simultaneously. Using a layered visual approach, this figure helps explain that academic dishonesty practices do not emerge in isolation but develop through the interaction of internal student factors, peer social dynamics, the educational climate, and religious values that frame learning behavior.

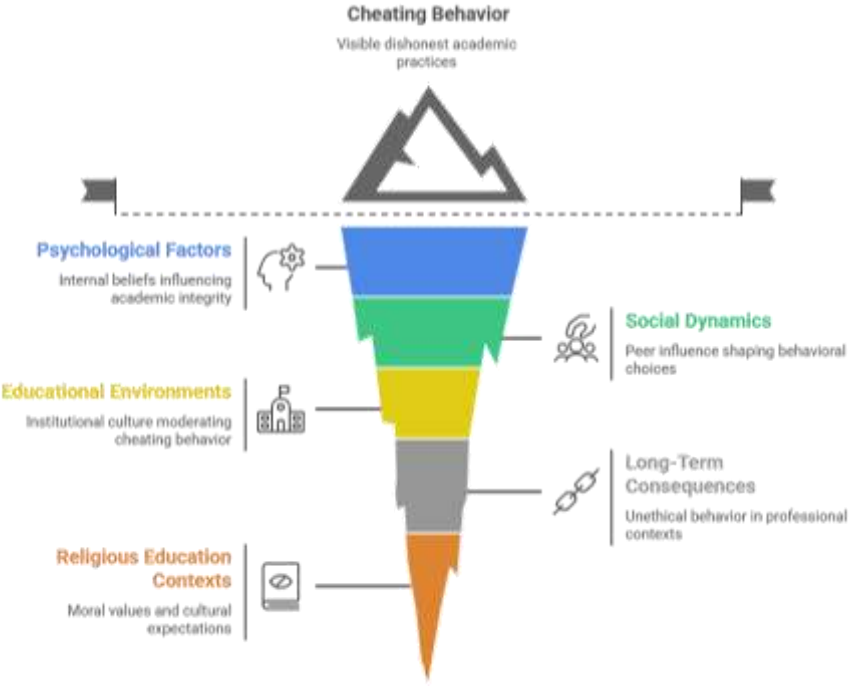

Figure 1. Cheating Behavior: Unvelling the Hidden Depths

Figure 1 emphasizes that cheating behavior cannot be understood as an isolated individual act, but rather as the result of a multi-layered process involving intertwined psychological, social, institutional, and moral factors. This model demonstrates that students' self-confidence serves as an internal foundation that influences their readiness to face academic

demands, while peer conformity functions as a social mechanism that can strengthen or weaken academic integrity through group norms. In the context of religious education, religious values serve as an ethical framework that should guide academic behavior, but their effectiveness depends heavily on interactions with internal factors and the learning environment. Therefore, as depicted in Figure 1, an integrated understanding of the relationship between self-confidence and peer conformity is crucial to explaining the dynamics of cheating behavior contextually. This gap in understanding underlies the need for this study, which specifically examines the influence of these two factors on students' cheating behavior in Islamic Religious Education learning at Muhammadiyah Senior High School Tanjung Redeb.

RESEARCH METHOD

This study employed a quantitative approach with a correlational research design to examine the relationships and effects of self-confidence and peer conformity on students' cheating behavior.

Research Design

The correlational design was chosen because the study aimed to analyze the degree of association and predictive influence between the independent variables (self-confidence and peer conformity) and the dependent variable (cheating behavior) without manipulating the research variables. Such a design is particularly suitable for ethical and behavioral research, where experimental manipulation may be impractical or ethically sensitive. This design is appropriate for testing predictive relationships among psychological and social variables in educational settings (Muthahharah & Fatwa, 2022). Correlational quantitative methods allow researchers to statistically estimate the strength and direction of relationships between variables (Zulham, 2022), thereby providing empirical evidence to support or refute theoretical assumptions regarding students' academic behavior. Additionally, this approach enables the identification of dominant predictors, which is essential for developing targeted preventive strategies in educational practice.

Research Target/Subject

The population of this study consisted of 357 students enrolled at SMA Muhammadiyah Tanjung Redeb, East Kalimantan, Indonesia, during the 2024 academic year, particularly in the context of Islamic Religious Education classes. The sample was selected using probability sampling with a simple random sampling technique. Using the Slovin formula with a 10% margin of error, a total of 79 students were determined as research respondents. This sampling technique ensured that each student had an equal opportunity to be included, thereby improving representativeness and reducing selection bias (Zulham,2022). Conducting the study within the natural school environment strengthens ecological validity and reflects authentic academic behavior (Mardiatmoko,2020).

Research Procedure

The research was conducted through several systematic stages. First, the researcher identified the research variables, namely self-confidence, peer conformity, and cheating behavior. Second, standardized questionnaires were developed and adapted based on relevant theoretical constructs. Third, the instruments were tested for validity and reliability before being distributed to the respondents. Fourth, data were collected through self-administered questionnaires using a Likert scale. Finally, the collected data were processed and analyzed using statistical software to test the proposed hypotheses. This structured procedure ensured

methodological rigor and accuracy of measurement (Audra Meivira et al.,2022). Systematic implementation also minimizes procedural bias and enhances the credibility of the findings (Forester et al.,2024).

Instruments, and Data Collection Techniques

Data were collected using closed-ended questionnaires based on a five-point Likert scale, ranging from strongly disagree to strongly agree. Three instruments were used to measure the research variables: (1) a self-confidence scale, (2) a peer conformity scale, and (3) a cheating behavior scale. Instrument validity was examined using Pearson Product Moment correlation, while reliability was evaluated using Cronbach's Alpha, with a minimum acceptable threshold of $\alpha > 0.60$ (Sugiono et al.,2020). In addition, classroom observations were used to support and triangulate the questionnaire data (Audra Meivira et al.,2022).

Data Analysis Technique

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 25. Prior to hypothesis testing, classical assumption tests were conducted, including normality, linearity, multicollinearity, and heteroscedasticity, to ensure the adequacy of the regression model (Mardiatmoko,2020). The hypotheses were tested using multiple linear regression analysis. The t-test was used to assess the partial effects of self-confidence and peer conformity, while the F-test evaluated their simultaneous influence on cheating behavior (Muthahharah & Fatwa,2022). The coefficient of determination (R^2) was applied to estimate the proportion of variance in cheating behavior explained by the independent variables (Zulham,2022).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Of the 15 statement items for the Self-Confidence variable (X_1), 14 items (P1–P14) were deemed valid based on the Pearson Product–Moment analysis, as their calculated r values exceeded the critical r value of 0.221 and their significance levels were below 0.05, indicating that these items are appropriate for accurately measuring the Self-Confidence construct. Item P15, by contrast, was excluded from subsequent analyses because it did not meet the validity criteria, as its calculated r value was lower than the critical r value and its significance level exceeded 0.05. For the Peer Conformity variable (X_2), the analysis revealed a similar pattern, in which 14 of the 15 items (P1–P14) were valid, whereas item P15 was invalid and therefore not included in the data analysis. For the Cheating Behavior variable (Y), all 15 statement items were declared valid. The calculated r values for these instrument items ranged from 0.365 to 0.721, all of which were higher than the critical r value of 0.221 and had significance levels < 0.05. These results indicate that the instruments used for all three variables are capable of accurately measuring the intended constructs (Sugiono et al., 2020; Audra Meivira et al., 2022; Arsindi et al., 2020)..

Based on the reliability test using Cronbach's Alpha coefficient, the reliability values for each variable were as follows: Self-Confidence (X_1) $\alpha = 0.729$, Peer Conformity (X_2) $\alpha = 0.749$, and Cheating Behavior (Y) $\alpha = 0.841$. Good questionnaire consistency is indicated by internal reliability values for each item exceeding the minimum criterion of 0.60. Consequently, the instrument items accurately reflect the factors under investigation, ensuring the accuracy of the collected data and enabling more comprehensive analysis. Therefore, the research instruments meet reliability standards and are suitable for use during the data processing and hypothesis testing phases (Anggraini et al., 2022; Forester et al., 2024).

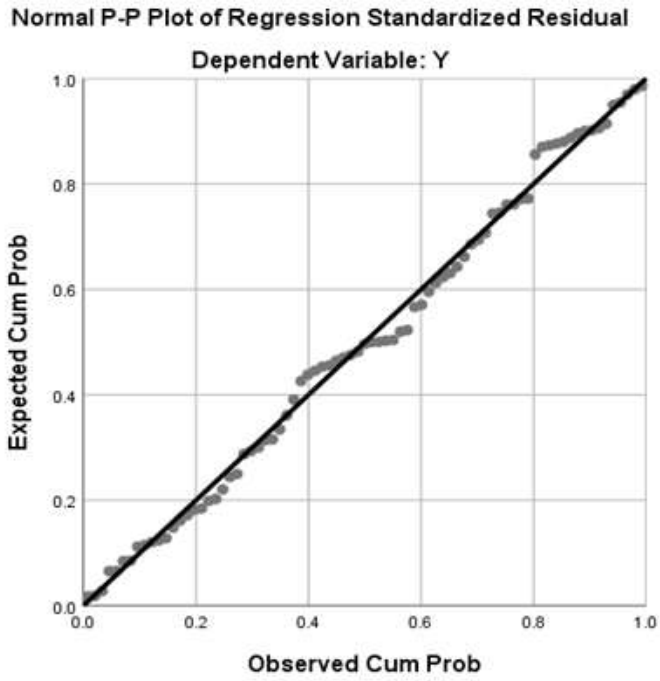

Figure 2. Normal P – P Plot

The Standardized Regression P–P Plot shows that the residual points are distributed closely around the diagonal line and follow a clear and consistent pattern. This distribution is in line with the standardized residual output and indicates that no substantial deviation from the normal distribution is observed. Therefore, it can be concluded that the residual data satisfy the normality assumption. The fulfillment of this assumption suggests that the estimated regression coefficients are unbiased and statistically reliable. Consequently, the significance tests and confidence intervals derived from the regression model can be interpreted with greater accuracy and confidence. This result strengthens the overall validity of the regression analysis used to examine the influence of self-confidence and peer conformity on students' cheating behavior.

The results of the linearity test indicate that the relationship between self-confidence and cheating behavior satisfies the linearity assumption. The linearity significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05) demonstrates a statistically significant relationship between the two variables. In addition, the significance value for Deviation from Linearity of 0.133 (> 0.05) indicates that no meaningful deviation from a linear trend is present. Under these conditions, linear regression analysis can be applied with confidence. This finding confirms that changes in self-confidence are associated with proportional changes in cheating behavior across the observed range of data. Therefore, the model specification based on a linear functional form is appropriate for further inferential analysis.

The relationship between peer conformity and cheating behavior satisfies the linearity assumption, as indicated by the results of the linearity test. A statistically significant relationship is evidenced by the Linearity significance value of 0.000 (< 0.05). In contrast, no deviation from the linear trend is observed, as shown by the Deviation from Linearity significance value of 0.300 (> 0.05). Therefore, it can be concluded that the linearity assumption for the relationship between these two variables is met, allowing linear regression

analysis to be appropriately conducted. This result indicates that increases in peer conformity are consistently associated with proportional increases in cheating behavior, rather than irregular or threshold-based effects. Such a pattern supports the theoretical assumption that peer influence operates gradually through social normalization processes, where repeated exposure to group norms steadily shapes students' behavioral decisions. Consequently, the linear relationship strengthens the validity of using peer conformity as a predictor of cheating behavior within the proposed regression model.

According to the multicollinearity test, the Self-Confidence (X_1) and Peer Conformity (X_2) variables have tolerance values of 0.774 and VIF values of 1.293. Tolerance values above 0.10 and VIF values well below the upper threshold of 10 indicate the absence of a strong correlation between the independent variables. This means that X_1 and X_2 can be used as reliable predictors in multiple regression analysis, as the regression model is free from multicollinearity problems.

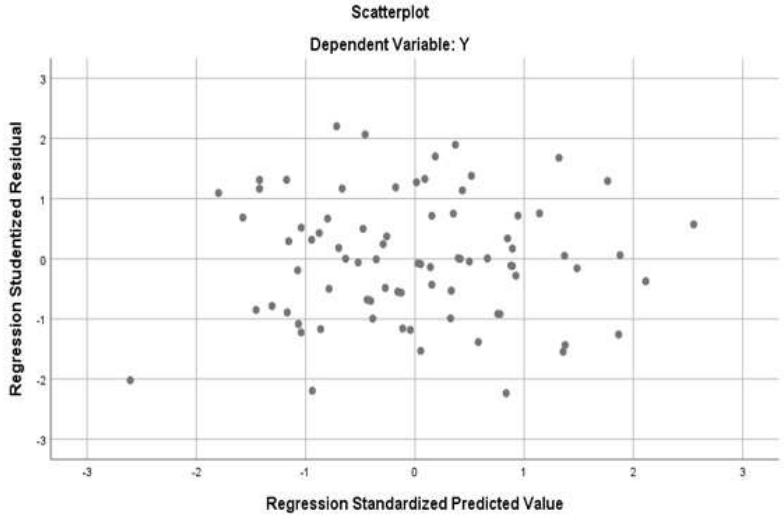

Figure 3. Scatterplot for the Heteroscedasticity Test

Based on the scatterplot of standardized residuals plotted against the predicted values, the residual points are randomly dispersed without forming a systematic pattern, such as a curved distribution or a funnel-shaped widening and narrowing. This random dispersion indicates that the assumption of homoscedasticity is fulfilled, meaning that the variance of the residuals remains constant across all levels of the predicted values. The absence of heteroscedasticity suggests that the regression model does not suffer from biased standard errors, which could otherwise lead to incorrect statistical inferences. In addition, no extreme residual values are observed outside the range of −3 to +3, indicating the absence of influential outliers that might disproportionately affect the regression coefficients. Together, these findings confirm that the regression model meets the homoscedasticity requirement and is statistically appropriate for further inferential analysis of the relationships between self-confidence, peer conformity, and cheating behavior.

With a t-count of 2.873 and a significance value of 0.005 (< 0.05), the t-test results indicate that Self-Confidence (X_1) has a statistically significant effect on students' cheating behavior. This finding suggests that variations in students' levels of self-confidence are associated with changes in their tendency to engage in cheating. Likewise, with a t-count of 2.023 and a significance value of 0.047 (< 0.05), Peer Conformity (X_2) also shows a significant

effect, indicating that social pressure or the tendency to follow the group can influence cheating behavior. Consequently, each of these factors contributes to students' propensity to cheat. The analysis further reveals that students' cheating behavior is strongly influenced by their level of self-confidence. With a significance level of 0.005 (< 0.05), the regression coefficient for self-confidence is 0.438, indicating that students' propensity to cheat is substantially associated with their degree of self-confidence. In other words, students are more likely to engage in cheating when they possess higher levels of self-confidence.

These results are consistent with the argument proposed by Zainfree et al. (2025), which states that self-confidence is one of the internal factors that determine cheating behavior. Students with high self-confidence may feel more assured of their abilities; however, in certain situations this may also make them less cautious and less compliant with academic rules. Students with excessive self-confidence tend to believe they can control situations, including during academic evaluations, which may lead them to disregard norms of academic honesty. Theoretically, this finding can be explained through Lauster's concept of self-confidence. Self-confidence is understood as an individual's belief in their own ability to act and make decisions. Individuals with high levels of self-confidence are generally less anxious and more willing to take action. However, as explained by Lauster in the studies of Kusnadi et al. (2021) and Damayanti & Merdiaty (2024), excessive self-confidence is not a positive attitude because it can cause individuals to become less objective, less cautious, and more prone to impulsive behavior.

This study reveals that self-confidence plays a complex role in shaping students' academic behavior. Balanced self-confidence can foster academic achievement, but when it becomes excessive, it may increase the likelihood of cheating. Therefore, schools need to provide guidance and support to ensure that students' self-confidence develops in a healthy manner and remains aligned with the principles of honesty in learning. The results also show that students' level of peer conformity plays an important role in cheating behavior. The multiple linear regression analysis produced a coefficient of 0.316 with a significance value of 0.047 (< 0.05), indicating a positive effect. In other words, students who tend to align their attitudes and behaviors with those of their peer group are more likely to engage in cheating.

These findings can be explained through Solomon Asch's theory of conformity (in Elza, 2025), which states that individuals tend to adjust their attitudes and behaviors to match the group, even when doing so contradicts their personal judgments, in order to gain social acceptance and avoid rejection. In the school context, pressure from peers can encourage students to follow group behaviors, including cheating practices, especially when such behavior is perceived as normal or becomes an unwritten norm within the peer environment. Overall, the findings indicate that cheating behavior is strongly influenced by students' tendency to conform to their classmates. Students who exhibit high levels of conformity are more likely to prioritize peer acceptance and social connection over academic integrity, demonstrating that peer pressure has a substantial impact on students' behavior in the classroom, particularly in increasing the incidence of cheating.

Based on the F-test findings in the ANOVA table, the obtained F value was 11.555 with a significance level of 0.000 (< 0.05). This result indicates that students' cheating behavior is significantly influenced by self-confidence and peer conformity simultaneously. In other words, within the multiple linear regression model, these two independent variables jointly explain the variance in students' cheating behavior. This finding suggests that cheating

behavior emerges from the interaction between internal psychological readiness and external social pressure rather than from a single isolated factor. Students with lower self-confidence may be more vulnerable to peer norms that tolerate dishonest behavior, while strong peer conformity can amplify cheating tendencies even among students with adequate academic ability. Therefore, the combined effect highlights the importance of addressing both personal and social dimensions when designing preventive interventions. This result reinforces the theoretical assumption that academic misconduct is a multidimensional phenomenon shaped by the interplay of individual beliefs and group dynamics within the learning environment.

Based on the output results, the coefficient of determination (R^2) is 0.233, indicating that Self-Confidence (X_1) and Peer Conformity (X_2) jointly account for 23.3% of the variance in students' Cheating Behavior (Y). The remaining 76.7% is explained by other factors that were not included in this study. This finding confirms that both independent variables play an important role, although a substantial proportion of the influence still originates from external variables outside the model. This result indicates that cheating behavior is a multifactorial phenomenon that cannot be fully explained by psychological and social variables alone. According to the findings, students' cheating behavior is meaningfully influenced by peer conformity and self-confidence, which together contribute 23.3% of the total variance. This study implies that both peer pressure and students' self-confidence have a combined effect on cheating behavior. Students with high self-confidence may be more assured of their abilities, yet they may also be more inclined to cheat when they feel pressured to conform to their social environment.

This finding is consistent with Lauster's theory of self-confidence, which emphasizes the role of self-confidence in individual decision-making and action (Kusnadi et al., 2021; Damayanti & Merdiaty, 2024), as well as Solomon Asch's theory of conformity, which states that individuals tend to follow group behavior in order to gain social acceptance (Elza, 2025). The interaction between these two theoretical perspectives suggests that personal confidence does not always function as a protective factor when social pressure is strong. Instead, the social context can override individual beliefs, leading students to compromise ethical standards despite adequate self-assurance. These findings highlight the importance of balanced guidance that simultaneously strengthens students' self-confidence and develops social awareness in order to reduce cheating behavior in the learning context.

CONCLUSION

The results of this study reveal that levels of self-confidence and peer pressure significantly influence students' tendency to engage in cheating. Partially, self-confidence contributes to cheating tendencies, in which higher levels of self-confidence can increase the risk of such behavior (Zainfree et al., 2025; Kusnadi et al., 2021; Damayanti & Merdiaty, 2024). Meanwhile, peer conformity encourages students to align themselves with their group, including in cheating practices (Septianingsih et al., 2025; Elza, 2025). Simultaneously, these two factors account for 23.3% of students' cheating behavior, indicating that the interaction between internal factors and social pressure plays an important role in academic behavior. These findings underscore the need for balanced guidance that strengthens students' self-confidence while fostering social awareness in order to reduce cheating behavior and support the implementation of honesty values in learning.

DECLARATION OF AI AND AI ASSISTED TECHNOLOGIES IN THE WRITING PROCESS

In the course of preparing this work, the author employed Google Gemini assistance for language refinement, academic paraphrasing, and plagiarism detection to ensure that the content was original and free from duplication. Following the use of this tool, the author conducted a thorough review and revision of the material, thereby accepting full responsibility for the accuracy, integrity, and authenticity of the publication.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

Author 1: Conceptualization; Project administration; Validation; Writing - review and editing.
Author 2: Conceptualization; Data curation; In-vestigation.
Author 3: Data curation; Investigation.

DECLARATION OF COMPETING INTEREST

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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