Scrutinizing Cheating Behavior among EFL Students at Islamic Higher Education Institutions in Indonesia

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Abstract

Cheating has been a significant issue over the years throughout the world, including in Indonesian Higher Education. In this study, we aimed to explore students' perceptions of cheating, the practices they engage in when they cheat, the factors influencing their behavior, and possible solutions to stop cheating in the context of Islamic Higher Education. This mixed methods research involved 43 undergraduate students in the Department of English Language Education of two Islamic Higher Education institutions: The University of Muhammadiyah Aceh and Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Ar-Raniry Darussalam, Banda Aceh - Indonesia. A questionnaire comprising demographic and cheating related questions was emailed to students taking the subject, Ilmu Akidah (Theology). This subject is a third-semester optional subject offered to students at both universities. The subject covers issues about ethics, morals, good Muslim citizenship, and other universal Islamic values. Eight students were interviewed to seek their opinions about cheating in the context of Islamic education and to suggest ways to stop cheating at their university. Survey findings indicated the prevalence of cheating among these Islamic university students during their studies reached 84%, with the most common cheating practices including requesting/exchanging answers with friends during exams, duplicating texts from the internet/books and then submitting them, and cooperating with friends in doing individual assignments. The underlying issues involved external factors (i.e., exam difficulty, overloaded assignments, inadequate time for finishing assignments, and assisting friends) and internal factors (i.e., fear of low grades and failure in exams, and motivation for gaining high scores). Sixteen percent of the students claiming that they never cheated because of their religious/moral awareness, a sense of accomplishment in their own ability, and fear of academic sanctions suggestions for preventing cheating are shared along with a discussion of cheating within Islamic higher education. An important finding from the interviews was many students believed cheating was sinful and those who cheat must repent. The paper concludes with a discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of conducting mixed methods research to answer these questions and adding a set of interviews to the survey instrument.

Keywords

academic integrity, cheating, undergraduate students, Islamic higher education, mixed methods

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Cheating has been a significant issue over the years throughout the world, including in Indonesian Higher Education. In this study, we aimed to explore students' perceptions of cheating, the practices they engage in when they cheat, the factors influencing their behavior, and possible solutions to stop cheating in the context of Islamic Higher Education. This mixed methods research involved 43 undergraduate students in the Department of English Language Education of two Islamic Higher Education institutions: The University of Muhammadiyah Aceh and Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Ar-Raniry Darussalam, Banda Aceh - Indonesia. A questionnaire comprising demographic and cheating related questions was emailed to students taking the subject, Ilmu Akidah (Theology). This subject is a third-semester optional subject offered to students at both universities. The subject covers issues about ethics, morals, good Muslim citizenship, and other universal Islamic values. Eight students were interviewed to seek their opinions about cheating in the context of Islamic education and to suggest ways to stop cheating at their university. Survey findings indicated the prevalence of cheating among these Islamic university students during their studies reached 84%, with the most common cheating practices including requesting/exchanging answers with friends during exams, duplicating texts from the internet/books and then submitting them, and cooperating with friends in doing individual assignments. The underlying issues involved external factors (i.e., exam difficulty, overloaded assignments, inadequate time for finishing assignments, and assisting friends) and internal factors (i.e., fear of low grades and failure in exams, and motivation for gaining high scores). Sixteen percent of the students claiming that they never cheated because of their religious/moral awareness, a sense of accomplishment in their own ability, and fear of academic sanctions suggestions for preventing cheating are shared along with a discussion of cheating within Islamic higher education. An important finding from the interviews was many students believed cheating was sinful and those who cheat must repent. The paper concludes with a discussion of the benefits and drawbacks of conducting mixed methods research to answer these questions and adding a set of interviews to the survey instrument.

Introduction

Cheating is a major concern in universities throughout the world, with many strategies employed in the hope of limiting this problem. Cheating is nevertheless prevalent and deeply rooted. Haines, Diekhoff, LaBeff, and Clark (1986) consider cheating to be so prevalent, it can be viewed as an epidemic. Reports on incidents of cheating have been numerous (e.g., Alutu & Aluede, 2006; Davis, 1993; Jones et al., 2013; McCabe et al., 2006; Perianto, 2015; Sheard & Dick, 2003). Cheating is of concern that despite the negativity cheating casts on education, society has come to tolerate cheating due to its prevalence (Alutu & Aluede, 2006; Morrisette, 2001; Perianto, 2015). A perception is that cheating is "harmless," although such views ignore cheating benefits cheaters while harming others (Whitley & Keith-Spiegel, 2001).

The education sector in Indonesia, similar to other countries, also confronts this issue. Incidences of cheating have been rampant, occurring at all education levels from elementary to university, and, at times supported by student-to-student and student-to-teacher cooperation (Ompusunggu, 2017; Yulianto, 2015). This behavior contradicts the values of education as stated in Law on the National Education System, No. 2. Article 3 (2003) on the Indonesian National Education Policy. This law expects education will develop and nurture Indonesian society and graduate responsible beings who will act with high integrity, including integrity in academic settings.

This study seeks to answer the following main research questions among students taking a theology elective at two Islamic universities in Indonesia:

- How do students perceive cheating?
- Why do they choose to cheat or not cheat?
- What are possible solutions to stop cheating?

By asking these questions, we hope the study may provide valuable information for developing policies and strategies that will contribute to the prevention of cheating and reduce the number of incidences, particularly at Islamic Higher Education institutions. Mixed methods designs are not common in the study of Islamic Higher Education, and we will conclude with a discussion of the interpretive consequences of adding an interview component to our survey design.

Literature Review

Cheating is a common occurrence, but what actually constitutes cheating is not always clear (Maramark & Maline, 1993). Definitions of cheating are diverse (Sheard & Dick, 2003). Some cases of cheating continue to exist due to lack of clarity about these behaviors (Buchmann, 2014). In this study, we refer to cheating as the use of unauthorized materials and the decision to engage in unethical actions in order to gain an advantage in an assignment or an exam (Lozier, 2012, p. 5).

Jackson, Levine, Furnham, and Burr (2002, p. 1033) identify four types of cheating: (1) "individualistic-opportunistic," someone who cheats without prior planning or by chance, (2) "individualistic-planned," someone who engages in premeditated forms of cheating, (3)

"social-active," groups of people who actively cheat together, and (4) "social-passive," people who act as accomplices for a group of cheaters. As a form of academic dishonesty, Lozier (2012) argues that there is a relationship between the incidence of cheating and the processes of assessing learning. For example, where there is evidence of cheating, instructors are forced to spend more time assessing students' assignments and tests (Royer, 2013), as a result there is a risk that instructors will produce erroneously positive assessments of the students' capabilities rather than engage in the extra time required to confront the suspected cheating (Cizek, 2003).

Incidences of cheating are not without their causes. Various reasons for cheating have been identified in prior studies, with "too much stress and competition" considered to be major contributors (Maramark & Maline, 1993, p. 5). Sheard and Dick (2003, p. 46) argue the main reasons for cheating are the need to get a high grade, time pressure, and laziness.

Most students feel cheating is, "morally wrong" (Maramark & Maline, 1993, p. 5). Despite this prejudice, cheating may sometimes be regarded as acceptable, under social-based motives (Jensen et al., 2002). Some students, for example, may cheat in order to help others (Jensen et al., 2002). These examples support Wowra's (2007) notion that the motivation for cheating is "grounded in social anxiety and social relations" (p. 304). He argues that being anxious for the sake of pleasing others (i.e., having good grades, never failing in exams) makes people ignore the core value of academic integrity, and thus justify students' recourse to cheating. Whatever the reason, the prevalence of cheating is rising over recent years (Daneil et al., 2020; Landa-Blanco et al., 2020; Syafitri & Tursina, 2019).

Contexts have an impact on the extent to which cheating takes place, and, in some instances, they contribute to observable increases in the behavior (Jensen et al., 2002; Klein et al., 2007; Maramark & Maline, 1993; Ompusunggu, 2017; Rettinger & Kramer, 2009; Vohs & Schooler, 2008). A study by Yulianto (2015) on university students found all respondents admitted to having engaged in academic dishonesty, although not often. Jena and Sihotang (2015) found cheating frequency varied, with approximately 27% of university students admitting to cheating often, while about 8% said they never cheated. In addition, Perianto's study (2015) showed about 66% of university students perceived cheating as acceptable. Such results are not surprising because even at the high school level, cheating is prevalent. Ompusunggu (2017) reported that in high school, some teachers collude with their students and encourage cheating by selling students the answer keys for high school national examinations. To some extent, this collusion is carried out only to assist their students pass their exit examination. The teachers somehow often feel pity if their students fail from the exit examination because the students cannot pursue their tertiary education.

The Struggle to Live a Good life in a Sinful World

In the context of Islamic Higher Education, the availability of studies on academic cheating practices is low. Most of the research in this area focuses on the relationship between religion and morality (e.g., Bouhmama, 1990; Gaudin, 2017; McKay & Whitehouse, 2015). These studies do not explicitly discuss issues regarding cheating in academic fields. Bouhmama (1990) argues that there is no correlation between religious affiliation and moral judgment. In contrast, McKay and Whitehouse (2015) ascertain that religion and morality are two inseparable parts of human life, "the notion that religion is a precondition for morality is wide-spread and deeply ingrained" (p. 447). In the Islamic religious context, in addition, Islamic scholars believe religiosity influences a person's moral choices; good or bad, and religious values are reflected in ways such the person behaves and acts in his or her daily life (Muhammad, 2013; Norenzayan, 2014; Shariff, 2015). In light of Muhammad's (2013), Norenzayan's (2014), and Shariff's (2015) research findings, this research will further enrich

literature on cheating practices carried out by tertiary education students at Islamic Higher Education institutions. At Islamic higher education institutions, students not only study scientific subjects, such as math, physics, chemistry, biology, and statistics among others, but also religious related topics, including theology, Sufism, *Akhlak* (Islamic term to morals/ethics), Qur'anic interpretation, Islamic history, and so forth. The aim of the learnings provided by these two inseverable study fields is to strengthen the students' competence in general knowledge and to develop good understanding of religious values that function as the "overseer" of every action they will do in their future life (Habiburrahim, 2018).

To mitigate the problem of student academic cheating, Islamic scholars in Indonesia have urged the national government to issue a regulation that makes explicit that such immoral practices are not tolerated. These scholars argue that cheating in any form is strictly against Islamic teaching, policies, and values. "Islam views cheating and other kinds of misbehaviors as heinous sins, a source of shame to the individuals of committing them" (Mustapha et al., 2016, p. 392). Given these views, almost all Islamic Higher Education institutions in Indonesia, including the University of Muhammadiyah Aceh, and UIN Ar-Raniry have stipulated policies on academic honesty and integrity to confront cheating. Despite these policies, to the authors' knowledge, no strict penalties, such as getting suspended or expelled have been imposed on students for cheating at these institutions. Generally, students would only have their scores reduced if found cheating during exams or in assignments.

The Study

Before elaborating the methods, we would like to describe the context of the authors of this paper. Habiburrahim, Ika Kana Trisnawati, Yuniarti, and Safrul Muluk are lecturers teaching English Education at Islamic universities in Banda Aceh with different teaching positions and experiences. Zamzami Zainuddin who has actively engaged in higher education learning is a lecturer at a private college in Lhokseumawe. Janice Orrell is a professor specialized in assessment and higher education curriculum. We conducted research on academic cheating as we have observed that our students in Islamic universities also show high tendency to cheat in exams and in their assignments. We attempted to figure out the underlying reasons for their cheating behavior even though they study at Islamic-based universities offering courses on Islamic subjects.

Research Design

This mixed methods design focuses on cheating behavior among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students at Islamic higher education institutions in Aceh, Indonesia. Thus, the students' perspective regarding the meaning of cheating, the underlying factors of cheating, and possible solutions or ways to stop cheating practices at higher education institutions, especially at Islamic higher education institutions become the major points of investigations. According to Aramo-Immonen (2013) "mixed methods designs provide researchers, across research disciplines, with a rigorous approach to answering research questions" (p. 33). We believe that this mixed methods research gives us a clear picture about the students' perspective about the research we conducted, and we can validate the statistical data we obtained by having intense engagement with students through interviews. For this reason, we employed a case study approach to explore students' responses in the classroom, and thus their understanding and behavior about cheating could be discovered and later a solution could be found to stop cheating practices at higher education institutions. We employed a case study approach because we believe it is appropriate to generate a certain

complex phenomenon in a real context (Yin, 2018). In addition, Creswell (2014) states that case study involves field-based discussion of groups of people with the aim of understanding their social and cultural lives.

Participants

This mixed methods research was conducted at the Department of English Language Education at two Islamic universities in Aceh, Indonesia to find out more information on cheating practices at Islamic higher education institutions. The participants were the third semester students who took the Theology subject in 2019. Forty-three students (30 females, 8 males, and 5 students who did not state their gender with the average age of 19 years old) from both universities were involved in this study.

To carry out this research, we did not have to get a specific approval from a third party. However, we needed to ask permission from the dean of both faculties of the two universities. We obtained an approval letter to conduct this research after we submitted the necessary documents and filled out the research permit forms. In addition, we also provided the informed consent for the participants who were willing to take part in this study. To protect the participants' safety, privacy, and confidentiality, students' names who had interviews were kept anonymous and labeled as interviewee 1–8.

Data Collection

The data for this study came from survey questions and interviews. The survey questions on cheating practice developed by Sheard and Dick (2003) were distributed to the 55 students' emails who took the Theology subject. The survey format clearly stated that the students who were involved in this study did not have any implication on their study; they were free to choose either they agreed to participate in this study or not. From 55 students, only 43 returned their survey questions.

The questions included demographic information and they used scenarios to gain responses regarding student views on the acceptability of cheating, their reasons for cheating, and their reasons for not cheating. The items provided two types of responses: "Acceptable-Not Acceptable" and "Yes-No" and sought to identify students' perceptions, without investigating the prevalence or frequency of cheating practices. The survey format also allowed students to declare if they are willing to be interviewed or not to confirm their perceptions on cheating and to offer ways to stop cheating at Islamic universities.

Out of 43 students returning their survey questions, eight students (6 females and 2 males) agreed to get involved in the interview process. Based on the participants' preferences, these semi structured interviews were conducted both in English and Indonesian. Nevertheless, the transcripts were translated into English, and the presented quotes are based on the translation. In the interviews, three main questions regarding the cheating prevalence; what students think about cheating, why students cheat, and how we stop cheating practices at Islamic higher education institutions were explored.

The interviews took approximately thirty to sixty minutes for each student. Semi structured interviews were used in order to gain rich information by exploring students' answers at hand. One by one interview approach was used in this research ensuring the interviewee could easily and comfortably convey their perceptions (Creswell & Creswell, 2018). During the interviews, the researchers only focused on students' understanding about cheating and ways to stop it.

Data Analysis

The survey data were compiled and analyzed by using SPSS to find descriptive statistics. Meanwhile, the interview data were fully transcribed to find out the relevant information. After transcribing, we coded the data to produce a conceptual framework, which included classifying the data into specific group categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2015; Saldaña, 2016). Thematic analysis through a coding process was used for the analysis of the interview data (Miles et al., 2014). Initially, we identified the common emerging themes from the interviews, and all main themes and information were simplified into groups of categories.

Findings

Survey Results

The first section of the questionnaire deals with students' attitudes towards cheating scenarios contained in the survey. The students responded to whether a scenario was "Acceptable" or "Not Acceptable." Their responses are depicted in Table 1.

Table 1
Students' Acceptability of Cheating

No	Scenario	Percentage %	
		Acceptable *n=43*	Not Acceptable *n=43*
1	Bringing a cheat sheet during an exam	9.3	88.4
2	Swapping answers with your friends during an exam	25.6	74.4
3	Asking answers from your friends during an exam	14.0	86.0
4	Looking for answers using a hand phone during an exam	16.3	81.4
5	Hiring someone to sit an exam for you	2.3	97.7
6	Asking someone to do your assignment	9.3	88.4
7	Taking your friend's assignment from a lecturer's desk and copying it, and then submitting it	7.0	93.0
8	Copying all of an assignment given to you by a friend and submitting it	14.0	86.0
9	Copying all of your friend's assignment from their computer without their knowledge and submitting it	2.3	97.7
10	Copying some writing from the internet and submitting it as your assignment	55.8	41.9
11	Copying some writing from a book and submitting it	67.4	32.6

No	Practice		
	as your assignment		
12	Submitting an assigment from a student who had taken the subject as your own	7.0	90.7
13	Resubmitting an assignment from a previous subject in a new subject	27.9	69.8
14	Collaborating with a friend on an assignment meant to be completed individually	72.1	27.9

The next section of the questionnaire required students to answer whether they have cheated. Our study found that of 43 students responding, 84% admitted to cheating on learning assessment tasks, whereas 16% claimed to never cheat.

Those who admitted to cheating were asked to further respond, focusing on the different forms of cheating, while those who said they did not cheat could skip to the fourth part of the questionnaire (reasons for cheating/not cheating). The forms of cheating students admitted are shown in Table 2, which uses the same core items as Table 1.

Table 2
Forms of Cheating Admitted by Students

No	Practice	Percentage %	
		Yes	No
		n=43	*n=43*
1	Bringing a cheat sheet during an exam	30.2	69.8
2	Swapping answers with your friends during an exam	46.5	53.5
3	Asking answers from your friends during an exam	62.8	37.2
4	Looking for answers using a hand phone during an exam	27.9	72.1
5	Hiring someone to sit for an exam for you	4.7	95.3
6	Asking someone to do your assignment	14.0	86.0
7	Taking your friend's assignment from a lecturer's desk and copying it, and then submitting it	9.3	90.7
8	Copying all of an assignment given to you by a friend and submitting it	18.6	81.4
9	Copying all of your friend' assignment from their computer without their knowledge and submitting it	11.6	88.4

10	Copying some writing from the internet and submitting it as your assignment	69.8	30.2
11	Copying some writing from a book and submitting it as your assignment	72.1	27.9
12	Submitting an assigment from a student who had taken the subject as your own	9.3	88.4
13	Resubmitting an assignment from a previous subject in a new subject	27.9	72.1
14	Collaborating with a friend on an assignment meant to be completed individually	74.4	25.6

Among the forms of cheating identified in Table 2, students admitted mainly (above 50%), to four practices that occurred during learning assessments, namely:

> Collaborating with a friend on an assignment meant to be completed individually, copying some writing from a book and submitting it as your assignment, copying some writing from the internet and submitting it as your assignment, and asking answers from your friends during an exam.

These results are quite similar to those in Table 1 that sought to identify what students perceived to be acceptable when doing their assignments with the exception of item 3 which related to answering exam questions. The type of cheating that was least chosen (below 5%) was "hiring someone to sit an exam for you." This finding also aligns with Table 1 as the least acceptable cheating scenario. The following table (Table 3) elucidates the proportion of students' cheating practices.

Table 3
Proportion of Cheating Practices Done by Students

Category	Cheating Students % *n=43*
Substitution:	
Hiring someone to sit an exam for you	4.7
Asking someone to do your assignment	14.0
Collusion:	

Swapping answers with your friends during an exam	46.5
Asking answers from your friends during an exam	62.8
Collaborating with a friend on an assignment meant to be completed individually	74.4
Copying:	
Taking your friend's assignment from a lecturer's desk and copying it, and then submitting it	9.3
Copying all of an assignment given to you by a friend and submitting it	18.6
Copying all of your friend' assignment from their computer without their knowledge and submitting it	11.6
Copying some writing from the internet and submitting it as your assignment	69.8
Copying some writing from a book and submitting it as your assignment	72.1
Submitting an assigment from a student who had taken the subject as your own	9.3
Resubmitting an assignment from a previous subject in a new subject	27.9
Other Cheating:	
Bringing a cheat sheet during an exam	30.2
Looking for answers using a hand phone during an exam	27.9

Note. Jones, Blankenship, and Hollier (2013).

As seen in the table above, most students typically cheat by colluding with their friends either during an exam or while doing an assignment and by duplicating their friends' answers in the exam or assignment. In addition, a considerable number of the students cheat by looking at cheat sheets as well as mobile phones when they are in exams. It is interesting to note the least identified behavior was substituting themselves in an exam (2 students). A possible reason for this is because the students perceived it as a high-risk or serious type of cheating. This finding has a close result with Sheard and Dick's (2003) study in which they found a small number of their respondents would cheat less if they considered the cheating practice had the major or huge consequence.

When asked about the reasons they cheated, students (over 50%) mainly identified that it was because of the following: "helping a friend," "too great a workload at university," "everyone does it," "not enough time to do an exam/assignment," "afraid of failing in a subject," "exams are too difficult." This information reveals two driving forces that lead students to cheating practices; the first includes academic pressure, including university workload, assignment/exam time, and academic failure, and the second includes, social

issues, including helping friends, and every student does it. The summary of these responses is provided in Table 4.

Table 4
Students' Reasons for Cheating

No	Reason for cheating	Percentage %	
		Yes *n=43*	No *n=43*
1	Too great a workload at university	62.8	20.9
2	Afraid of failing in a subject	58.1	25.6
3	Low grades	44.2	39.5
4	Not enough time to do an exam/assignment	58.1	25.6
5	Exams are too difficult	53.5	30.2
6	Assignments are too hard	48.8	32.6
7	Wanted to get higher marks	39.5	44.2
8	Gaining money from friends's requests	4.7	79.1
9	Everyone does it	58.1	25.6
10	Parental pressure	2.3	81.4
11	Unable to do assignments due to ill	23.3	60.4
12	Helping a friend	65.1	18.6
13	Lazy to do an assignment	11.6	69.8
14	Lazy to study for an exam	9.3	72.1

Students who stated that they never cheated also selected underlying reasons for not doing so. The main reasons for not cheating, as can be seen in Table 5, are: "want to know what your work is worth," "pride in your work," "can get good marks without cheating," "getting penalties if caught," "fear of being found out," and "against your moral values." In general, students do not cheat because of their own integrity (finding out their work's worth, pride, and confidence in good marks without cheating), their own fear (getting penalties, afraid of being found out), and their own belief (contradicting moral values).

Table 5

Students' Reasons for Not Cheating

No	Reason for not cheating	Percentage %	
		Yes	No
		n=43	*n=43*
1	Want to know what your work is worth	16.3	0
2	Pride in your work	16.3	0
3	Can get good marks without cheating	16.3	0
4	Against your moral (religious) values	14.0	2.3
5	Getting penalties if caught	16.3	0
6	Fear of being found out	16.3	0
7	Never thought about it	9.3	7.0
8	Don't know how to	9.3	7.0

Interview Results

The interview questions dealt with two main issues: students' perceptions on cheating as well as possible ways to stop cheating. Themes from the interviews regarding the students' perception on cheating are summarized in two main themes: sin and repentance.

Sin

When asked what they (students) think about cheating in terms of Islamic context, most students asserted that cheating was against Islamic teachings; it was sinful and forbidden:

> I know that cheating is not allowed in Islam, it is sinful. But I want to get good grades to please my parents, because they have paid my tuition and fees. If I get bad grades, my parents can stop sending me money. So, I do not have a choice. Sometimes, I am sad because *Allah* will punish me one day. (Interviewee 3)

A similar thought was also raised by another student saying the most important thing after graduation is to get a job, and to get one, they need to have good grades. Therefore, students think that they can do whatever to get a good grade, including cheating during exams/assignments. However, this student knows the cheating consequences: "I know the effect of cheating. Cheating is one of the most sinful actions. We are not allowed to do it" (Interviewee 1). Interviewee 1 also claimed that cheating is sinful, but God is the most forgiving entity. "No one denies that cheating is a bad habit, it is sinful. But, one day I will

seek God's forgiveness, He is the most merciful" (Interviewee 1). This quote indicates that the student understands cheating is an intolerable practice and it undermines academic honesty. As a student studying at an Islamic university, they are aware of this uncommendable action. Yet, it seems that because this student wants to achieve a good grade as a passport to apply for a future employment, they pawn their integrity and believes that every sin can be wiped out by simply seeking God's forgiveness.

In line with the Interviewee's 1 viewpoint, another student also reported similar opinion regarding the cheating at Islamic university. The opinion is as follow:

> Probably I am not a good Muslim. A religion is the humankinds' way of life. As such, we cannot blame religion when someone behaves out of such the religion norms. We cannot hide beyond the "religion umbrella" to make use the religion to justify our intolerable behaviors. We must be honest to acknowledge that cheating is wrong, it is sinful. (Interviewee 8)

The excerpts above elucidated the student was aware cheating was against the Islamic values and it was sinful. Yet, when there are some pressures, including financial supports or future careers, some students tend to ignore the religious teachings.

Repentance

Repentance is also the theme commonly emerged in dealing with the students' opinions regarding the cheating practices. Students claimed sometimes they did not have any intention to cheat; they felt guilty about doing it. However, they believed they had to cheat to succeed at the university, and they sometimes regretted doing it, especially when they remembered they are Muslims studying at Islamic Higher Education institutions as stated by Interviewee 8: "As a Muslim, I am sad and feel guilty because I have cheated in some subjects. I will ask God for his forgiveness, and I do hope that God will forgive me." Another student also reported the similar point saying, "God is merciful. I know that I am wrong, I will pray and seriously repent to seek his mercy" (Interviewee 2).

In the interviews the students acknowledged there is a correlation between faith and deeds. "I know some of my friends who have never cheated. They are very faithful students. They do not want to cheat because it is against their belief" (Interviewee 7). During the interview process, students also believed that sometimes the benefits of unethical deeds could easily overwhelm their religious convictions. Yet, students acknowledged that all bad deeds would be washed away by sincere repentance. Repentance is depicted in the following acknowledgement:

> As human beings, we might sometimes perform a bad action, especially when our ways are locked or blocked. When we are trapped in a very bad situation, in addition, we could lose our mind forcing our brain to quickly act and react. This could be positive or negative reaction. Yet, as a believer, I am convinced that there is a way to get closer back to *Allah* the almighty through his mercy, repentance. *Allah* loves his servants, and He is the perpetual forgiver of whoever repents and believes and does righteousness and then continues in guidance. (Interviewee 4)

The last section of the quotation above is part of the Qur'anic verse which was referred by the student (Interviewee 4). The quotation signifies that human beings have an instinct that always drives their minds either toward a right or misleading path. In some tough

circumstances, a decision individual makes may be wrong. To this end, this student believes that when human beings are conscious that they have committed a sinful deed, such as cheating during exams, they must immediately repent.

The students acknowledged that in the Islamic context, repentance was the only way to purify one's soul from any sinful actions, including cheating. One student said that this was in line with the Qur'anic teaching in *Surah Az-Zumar* (39:53) stating, "O My servants who have transgressed against themselves [by sinning], do not despair of the mercy of *Allah*. Indeed, *Allah* forgives all sins. Indeed, it is He who is the Forgiving, the Merciful" (Interviewee 5).

Referring to the quotation above, the students understand that cheating is against the Islamic teachings, and cheating is also part of the immoral act that should be eradicated from the Islamic higher education institutions. Students should stay away from this bad practice. However, if there is a condition that forces a student to cheat with any reason, the student should immediately acknowledge it and seek God's forgiveness through genuine repentance.

The findings on possible ways to stop cheating practice are summarized in 2 (two) main themes: habituation and care.

Habituation

In general, students acknowledged that, as human beings, they sometimes performed bad actions, including cheating in the academic world. They argued everyone tended to do both good and bad deeds. People in society conducted various activities in accordance with religious norms because they were accustomed to acting this way, and sometimes they behaved and conducted certain intolerable actions because these actions were also commonplace. Therefore, if we wanted our students to perform good deeds, lecturers needed to habituate their students to doing good and to avoid cheating. Lecturers should not tolerate or permit students to engage in unethical practices. "If lecturers want to see us (students) behave like what our universities want us to do, they (lecturers) should habituate their students to behave accordingly" (Interviewee 1).

Another student added that in order for students to obey and practice any regulation stipulated in religion and endorsed by university, it should be put into practice, and students should be guided on how to do it appropriately. Teaching various concepts and theories on religious values and other universal rights may not be guaranteed to have a real impact on students' moral and behavior. Students should be guided and trained to perform good actions.

> Students should be nurtured to perform every activity in line with both the Islamic teaching values and academic norms, lecturers must make students familiarized with good deeds, and they must also ensure that students are used to perform noble actions…teaching and introducing various theories on Islamic values, and other universal rights to us is not enough, we must be trained to familiarize with such noble teachings. (Interviewee 2)

Teaching and learning practices at higher education institutions, including at Islamic higher education institutions are based on students-centered learning (SLC) approaches. In its practice, the student-centered learning environment is designed to give students the opportunity to take a more active role in their learning by shifting responsibility for organizing, analyzing, and synthesizing content from teacher to student. This environment allows students to examine complex problems using a variety of resources, develop their own strategies for dealing with various problems, present and negotiate solutions to those problems collaboratively. However, in the quotation above, the student encourages lecturers

not to only ask students to read and analyze about a certain issue or theory, but the lecturers also need to be a role model in directing students to perform good deeds. Lecturers should perform noble actions that could be imitated and adopted by their students.

The students also confirmed every activity performed continuously by everyone will be ingrained within their life, and it can become a habit or tradition. This was reported in the following quote:

> If someone conducts a bad thing repeatedly, including cheating, they will continuously conduct it. So, in order for students not to cheat, they should familiarize themselves from the beginning of their school not to cheat. This habituation will protect them from conducting intolerable academic activities; they will always abide by every stipulated law. (Interviewee 6)

The quotations above indicate that habituation can keep students to do their regular activities. If they are habituated to perform commendable deeds and such habituation is ingrained within their souls, students will be inclined to keep doing those good deeds.

Care

Care is another theme frequently raised by the students during the interviews regarding the ways the schools could do to stop cheating. The interview results indicate that most students cheat because their lecturers do not care about what their students do regarding their assignments and other academic assessment types. To this end, the students asserted that to stop cheating, lecturers should care and pay a close attention on their students' academic works. "Sometimes, I found my lecturers did not care about my assignments, they only looked at the assignment cover, its table of contents, number of pages, and references. They even did not know the content of my assignments" (Interviewee 7). This excerpt indicates lecturers' negligence in assessing student work motivates these students to cheat. They decided to cheat because they knew their lecturers would not read their assignments.

Another student said they believed that to stop cheating, lecturers should inform their students from the first day of class that cheating would have a serious consequence. Lecturers should also clearly describe the meaning of cheating and penalties that students could face if they cheated. After briefing their students regarding the meaning of cheating and its penalties, lecturers should seriously evaluate their students' assignments to ensure that students do not cheat.

> Sometimes, my lecturers only informed me not to cheat, but they did not know if I cheated or not because it seemed that they would not always read some of my take home assignments. I knew this because I got good marks from the paper that I have submitted to other units. I strongly suggest that lecturers read every student's assignment and make sure that we (students) do not double submit the paper/assignment to more than one unit. (Interviewee 2)

Care also means that lecturers must look at the practices that students engage in as they work on their regular assignments or final examinations. Students complained that sometimes lecturers focused only on the product and not the process, as reported by Interviewee 8:

> Some of my lecturers only looked at the product of our assignments, they did not look at the way we worked on such assignments. Often time, my friends who cheated got good grades, while I, myself, who seriously worked on my assignment without cheating got unsatisfactory grades. So, instead of working hard and getting a bad grade, it would be better to cheat and then I got good grades without working hard. (Interviewee 8)

Lecturers should ensure that all students' assignments including their take home final examinations are read and graded professionally ensuring that students do the right things, they do not cheat.

Discussion

The findings from the survey above suggest that social motivation (*helping friends*) and social acceptability (*everyone does it*) greatly affect the students' perceptions and engagement in cheating as mentioned by Jensen, Arnett, Feldman, and Cauffman (2002). Further, these also indicate that Wowra's (2007) proposition of social anxiety plays a large role in cheating. He states that because the students are surrounded by social pressures, they tend to seek achievement what society perceives as important, such as getting high grades and being successful. Thus, they disregard integrity and moral (religious) values and begin to engage in misconduct to ease their concerns about academic achievements (i.e., failing in exams, having low scores) from their academic pressures (great workloads at university, exams/assignments are too hard) and academic demands and time pressures (deadlines for exams/assignments). These results also correspond with those in Maramark and Maline's (1993) and in Sheard and Dick's (2003) study.

Interestingly, regarding influencing factors for not cheating, although Aceh, the province where the two universities as the research sites are located, is implementing Sharia law (Islamic law; Habiburrahim et al., 2020; Surbakti, 2010), the results show that only a small percentage of students (14%) identified that cheating is against their moral (religious) values, or "moral identity" (Wowra, 2007, p. 305). This indicates that habituation in performing good deeds is essential; changing the law does not necessarily change people's actions. In a religious state, students should understand theories and values of religion, yet at the same time they should work to perform good deeds and avoid intolerable acts (Samir, 2013). Perhaps, it is because of this lack of habituation that students fail to act with honesty and integrity. When they enter a university environment where it is perceived to have a large prevalence of cheating and where many lecturers are thought not to care, students may engage in behaviors such as cheating that are against their ethical and religious beliefs. They possibly feel less constrained by social and religious pressures and fail to exercise sufficient judgment. It can be concluded that, despite the potential "internal reward" within themselves (Nugroho, 2015, p. 8) for being honest, the majority of the students still choose to cheat as it is "common practice" because they are seeking external rewards.

In addition, the qualitative component in our mixed methods design surfaces some important content that might enrich people's understanding of these issues. The interviews we conducted reveal four themes that have deep resonance for scholars of religion: sin, repentance, habituation, and care. As the educational institutions nurturing students to be qualified Islamic scholars (Hidayati, 2016; Muluk, 2014), Islamic higher education institutions should ensure that these four religious aspects are ingrained in their students' souls. All these four religious aspects will affect the steps and decisions that students will make in their future endeavors. When there is an intention to conduct an intolerable action, for instance, students will remember that such an action is wrong and sinful. This may avoid

students from committing wrong doings. However, when they eventually commit it intentionally or not, they need to repent to seek God's forgiveness. Like sin and repentance, habituation and care also serve the same function. Students should be trained to habituate themselves with noble actions. When they regularly behave in good manners, their inner selves may positively direct them to do noble activities. For example, if parents let their children litter, those children will probably regard it as a permissible act and do it out of habit. Care is also significant to be cultivated in students' soul in order that they are able to value, respect, and appreciate others, and eventually the essence of caring is to unite human beings to live in this world peacefully.

The qualitative findings provided a rich set of themes about students' life in contemporary Islamic universities. Students realize that cheating is an action that should not be tolerated at school, especially at Islamic higher education institutions. They believe that cheating is sinful, and it has religious consequences. As Muslims, however, they also regard that sin can be wiped out by confessing their sins and seeking God's forgiveness by means of repentance. Students also acknowledge cheating practices at Islamic higher education occur because there is a seemingly irreversible "negligence" by which no strict penalties have been imposed on this continuous practice.

To eradicate this cheating practice, students suggest two significant approaches that Islamic higher education institutions should cater: habituation and care. Habituation is regarded as a culturally oriented solution to shift students' habits and minds. Lecturers should also be role models for all students. All good and moral related activities should be part of teaching and learning process and students' routines as well. Students should familiarize themselves with tolerable activities and dissociated from despicable deeds. When this condition is ingrained within their souls, these students will be abiding people who will follow their sacred conscience.

The qualitative data also propose a different way in teaching students to avoid cheating. Relying only on teaching the theories on cheating prevention and ways to stop cheating is clearly not enough. In this case, students propose that lecturers should care about students' academic activities, including providing hands on directions and training towards cheating issues: what constitute cheating and what not. Lecturers should also closely engage with students' assessment process, including valuing their work and efforts they have put forward in their assignments and exams.

Conclusion and Implications

Most of the students in this study admitted to cheating and the incidence and rate of cheating is high even in morally focused faith-led universities. These findings align with the findings of other Indonesian studies (Jena & Sihotang, 2015; Perianto, 2015) that many students cheat on exams or assignments. The cheating behaviors in this study included collaborating with others in completing individual assignments, copying materials from books or the internet and then submitting them as their own, and requesting for answers in the exam from others. These actions were understood to provide low risks for detection. In contrast, the least prevalent forms of cheating were those which might generate a major consequence. In principle, however, students understood cheating as immoral (sinful), unethical conduct.

However, despite an educational context that emphasizes moral behavior, some factors have induced students to cheat in exams/assignments. The biggest influencing factors are external factors such as social reasons (i.e., helping others), academic pressures (i.e., many assignments, difficult exams), time pressures (i.e., deadlines for assignments), and cheating culture in a classroom in which students generally feel that cheating is allowed

because they do it together, either during exams or when completing assignments. The internal reasons are motivation for higher grades and fear of failing in subjects, among others. Wowra (2007) discusses the underlying motivation for the students to cheat "students know they are completely judged by their grades. [Grades] are so important that we are willing to sacrifice our integrity in order to make a good impression" (p. 303). The factors that influence the students not to cheat include internal factors such as Stiggins (2002) moral identity and religious teachings.

Our findings regarding students' understandings of cheating behavior provide useful insights for future efforts by teachers to reduce the prevalence of cheating in higher education, particularly in Islamic higher education institutions. Potential strategies for mitigating academic dishonesty by cheating should consider how to reverse the culture of learning to pass to a culture of learning to learn (Carroll, 2013). High quality instruction, with lecturers who take the time to read and respond to students' assignments is a critical support. Recent research and trends in assessment design now focus on assessment as tool *for* learning (Stiggins, 2002) aiming for educational improvement rather than overwhelmingly assessment *of* learning that aims for quality assurance.

Institutions that wish to address the problem of student cheating need to attend not only to policy but also provide professional learning for their academic staff to become better informed about assessment of students' learning and how to design it in such a way as to be productive in enhancing learning and in discouraging cheating. Academic development needs to secure a clear pathway to accommodate stakeholders' requisite, including students' intellectual empowerment (Orrell, 2017). Future research is needed to identify which policies and strategies best support minimization of academic misconduct, particularly those which will best suit the Indonesian Islamic context of higher education. The goal of the introduction of these policies and strategies should not be focused on punishment but should be educative transformative, focused on the establishment of a reformed academic culture that reduces the performance pressure on students to and emphasizing the moral and educational benefits of exercising academic honesty and integrity.

It is also important to discuss the religious and spiritual dimensions of this problem. The students in this study were surveyed and interviewed for a theology course in universities whose province is implementing Sharia law. The students we interviewed said that they believed cheating was a sin, but they did it anyway. They understood cheating was wrong, but they also believed it was something that could be forgiven. These findings imply that students were aware cheating is prohibited, and it is against both school and religious regulations. From the religious perspective, cheating is regarded as a sinful action, yet this sin can be forgiven by seeking God's mercy through repentance. However, failure in dealing with any immoral action in the academic setting might lead to loss of trust in academic entities, including students as the primary asset of a university. When a university cannot be an institution whose academic values and integrity are sought from, the public's perception of educational world may collapse.

Implications for Mixed Methods Studies

This mixed methods study provides rich information on cheating practices at Islamic higher education institutions. The quantitative research gives initial information on students' cheating behavior, and through this method, we have had an opportunity to generally capture a big picture on the students' opinion on cheating behavior as they filled out the survey anonymously. This anonymity enables the students to express their opinions honestly because they did not meet us, and we would not know who responded what in the survey.

On the other hand, the qualitative research that we conducted has fostered a strong emotional attachment to our research participants. During the interviews, we could personally listen to the students' voices, complaints, disappointments, and any other academic dissatisfaction that could hardly be explored comprehensively through the survey. Moreover, as we informed the students that their identities would be kept confidential in the study, they seemingly used the opportunity to inform us about all their feelings during their studies at the university. We saw that the interviews we carried out had bridged the communication gap among students, lecturers, and all related stakeholders at Islamic higher education institutions that might not be thoroughly constructed in a survey process. As such, we recommend future researchers to conduct interviews in order to closely engage with their research participants to obtain deep and meaningful information on the research being carried out, particularly on the research exploring personal and sensitive issues.

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