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# Strengthening character value based on experiential learning to reduce student academic cheating behavior

Darmiany, Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar, FKIP, Universitas Mataram I Ketut Widiada, Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar, FKIP, Universitas Mataram Khairun Nisa, Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar, FKIP, Universitas Mataram Mohammad Archi Maulyda ⊠, Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar, FKIP, Universitas Mataram Iva Nurmawanti, Pendidikan Guru Sekolah Dasar, FKIP, Universitas Mataram

⊠ archimaulyda@unram.ac.id

**Abstract:** A strong character has a very important role in many aspects of life, especially the academic field. This study aims to test the effectiveness of experiential learning on strengthening character values in reducing student academic cheating. The subjects of this study were a small group of students (38 people). The instruments used in data collection were academic fraud questionnaires and pretest-posttest questions. The data analysis technique used the Mc Nemar Test. The results of the Mc Nemar Test show that the value of Z count> Z table and a significant value> 0.05, or 3.77> 1.96, and 0.809> 0.05, thus the conclusion is that H0 is rejected. This means that the experiential learning strategy can improve the strengthening of student character and reduce academic cheating.

Keywords: Academic Cheating, Character Value, Experiential Learning

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#### INTRODUCTION

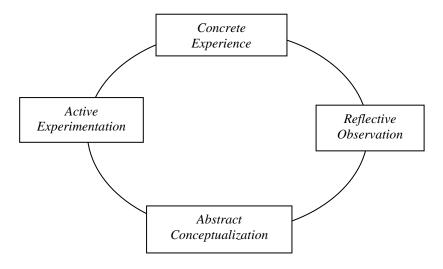
Fraudulent acts in academic situations (academic cheating) are not a new phenomenon in the world of education; we often encounter them in every learning activity in schools from elementary to tertiary levels (Giluk & Postlethwaite, 2015). Fraudulent acts in academic situations (academic cheating) are acts committed by students illegally or dishonestly for a specific purpose, namely, to achieve success and avoid failure in completing academic assignments, especially those related to evaluation or examination of learning outcomes (Jones, 2011; Anderman & Won, 2019). Students who are accustomed to cheating like to depend on the achievement of their learning outcomes on other people or specific means and not on the results of their hard work.

Previous research findings showed that students of 2017 primary school teacher education indicated that they were cheating on exams, reaching 36.8%. Based on the interviews and observations, many students feel unsure of their abilities and think that they will not get good grades without cheating even though they have studied before. If this cheating behavior is allowed to continue, even if it is considered an ordinary thing, it will deteriorate of the morale and character of students in the future (Purnamasari, 2013). It could be that if this is not handled immediately, this nation will give birth to corruptors, con artists, and even become plagiarists and criminals who justify any means for a specific purpose. Singh & Remenyi (2016) said that students who commit academic cheating are more likely to lie in the workplace. In addition, it could also be the phenomenon of someone plagiarizing the work of other people in college because they are used to cheating when they are in elementary school (Isnaini, 2019).

Cheating is an act of cheating in a test through the illegal use of information from outside. Darmiany's (2018) research results regarding the role of self-efficacy in academic fraud found that most FKIP Unram students (PGSD Study Program) have high self-efficacy, but the level of cheating is still relatively high. The data shows that the highest percentage is in the type of cheating behavior during exams (cheating on exams), reaching 36.8%, then plagiarism, and lying about assignments performed by students. The types of academic cheating that were studied included: 1) cheating during exams, 2) plagiarism, 3) outside help, 4) cheating before exams, 5) falsification, and 6) lying about academic assignments.

Experimental research conducted by Winrow (2016) found that students who carried out cheating behaviour with low self-confidencedid not believe the answers they wrote, so they tended to seek approval from other people around them. Therefore, cheating behavior such as cheating is a behavior that these students tend to do. Students who have high self-confidence, on the other hand, always feel confident in the answers they write, so they feel they do not't need other people to help them answer the questions given (Orosz et al., 2015).

Based on this phenomenon, as an educator, this academic cheating must receive strict attention and handling because if it is allowed to continue, it will impact future generations and the nation's character. One of the strategies that can reduce student academic cheating is character strengthening through experiential learning-based coaching. Experiential learning theory defines learning as the process by which knowledge is created through the transformation of experiences (experience). Knowledge results from a combination of understanding and transforming experience (Kolb, 1984 in Hariri & Yayuk, 2018). There are two experiential understanding models, namely real experience (concrete experience) and abstract concept (abstract conceptualization). In addition, there are also two forms of experiential transformation models, namely observation reflection and active experience (Anggreni, 2020; Anggreni, 2020). The stages of the experience learning model of learning are a circle as follows:



**FIGURE 1.** Cyclical experiential learning model (Mcleod, 2013)

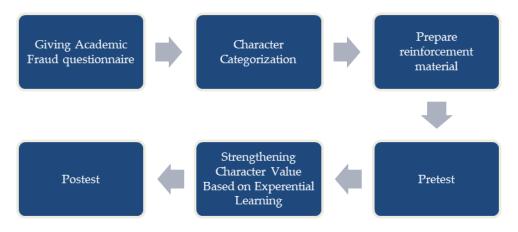
This research is focused on guiding character strengthening in higher education, especially for Elementary School Teacher Education (PGSD) students. Adequate character strengthening guidance is important because it is directed to help students become more aware of themselves, aware of cheating mistakes, responding to the environment, personal development and meaningful behavior in the future. The long-term objective of this study is to produce a guidance model for strengthening the character of prospective teacher students by adopting the experiential learning model developed by Kolb (1984). To simplify the research process, the researcher formulated the following hypothesis:

- *H*<sub>0</sub> Strengthening Character Values Based on Experimental Learning cannot reduce students' fraudulent behavior
- *H*<sub>1</sub> Strengthening Character Values Based on Experimental Learning can reduce students' fraudulent behavior

# **METHOD**

# **Research Design**

In this study, the type of research used is quantitative with the correlation approach. Quantitative research is a process of finding knowledge using data in the form of numbers as a tool to analyze information about what one wants to know (Creswell, 2014). In this study, researchers will provide treatment based on character strengthening strategies based on experiential learning. The research design is as follows:



# **Participant**

The research subjects in this study were 38 students of the Elementary School Teacher Education Study Program (PGSD). This research was conducted at JL. Brawijaya, No.22, Kec. Cakranegara, NTB, Indonesia. Selected students are selected based on the results of filling out a questionnaire on academic fraud that was previously given. Research subjects are selected based on the values of academic cheating that students most often do.

**TABLE 1.** Table of characteristics of research subjects

Propensity for Cheating	Number of Subject	
honesty	11 subjects	
truth	12 subjects	
integrity	7 subjects	
accountability	8 subjects	
Total Number of Subject	38 subjects	
Age's Average	18,5	

#### Material

The instruments used in this research were academic fraud questionnaire and pretest posttest. This fraud questionnaire was given to identify any character that needed to be improved at the action stage. The indicators of academic fraud used in this study:

 TABLE 2. Questionnaire indicators of academic fraud

Aspects of Academic Fraud	Indicator's		
Stating or disclosing facts and	Delivering information in accordance with reality		
the feeling is what it is	Dare to express opinions even though they are wrong		
	Increase / decrease the information provided		
	Acknowledge facts		
	Do not dare to express an opinion		
Admitting flaws and mistakes	Apologize for mistakes		
(admitting fraudulent behavior)	Accept and respect the opinions of others		
	Become a good discussion partner		
	Blame others when he made mistakes		
	Not accepting opinions from friends when discussing		
Refuse to be dishonest	Do not allow friends who want to cheat on exams		
	Chiding friends who cheat on each other		
	Do not spread fake news (hoax)		
	Leaving friends who want to cheat on exams		
	Participate in spreading fake news (hoax)		
Follow the rules	Obey the established rules		
	Not cheating in exams		
	Not cooperating on individual assignments		
	Behave at will on campus		
	Cooperate with each other on individual tasks		
Making honesty a necessity	Be consistent in words and deeds		
	Willing to accept the consequences for being dishonest		
	Be sincere in your duties, commitments, and obligations		
	Reluctant to accept consequences because they are not		
	honest		
	Inconsistency in words and deeds		

After that, the researcher will give pretest and posttest questions about strengthening character values based on Experiential Learning. The purpose of given the

pretest and posttest questions is to measure the success of the treatment given. 2 experts validated both the academic fraud questionnaire instrument, the pretest and posttest scores. The first expert is a lecturer at the PGSD Study Program who has a basis in educational psychology, and 1 lecturer in the Department of Counseling Guidance Education. The results of expert validation show that the academic, pretest, and posttest fraud instruments are feasible to be used in research.

#### **Procedure**

The research stage begins with giving a questionnaire of academic fraud to students as prospective research subjects. Based on the results of this questionnaire, it was found 4 aspects which were the cheatings most often committed by students. After these four aspects were selected, the research subjects who tended to commit fraud were given training and provision (treatment) related to academic cheating among students. Before training and debriefing, pretest questions were given and posttest questions were given after the treatment. The questionnaire results were analyzed descriptively, while the results of the pretest and posttest scores were analyzed statistically.

### **Data Analysis**

The results of the pretest and posttest score data will later be statistically tested. To see the success of the action, the researcher tested the data using the Mc Nemar Test data analysis. The Mc Nemar Test is a correlation test used to see changes in the data of a group before and after treatment (Abzalov, 2016). To simplify the analysis process, researchers used SPSS software with the criteria for acceptance of the hypothesis that H0 is rejected if the  $Z_{count} < Z_{table}$ .

#### RESULT

## **Academic Fraud Questionnaire**

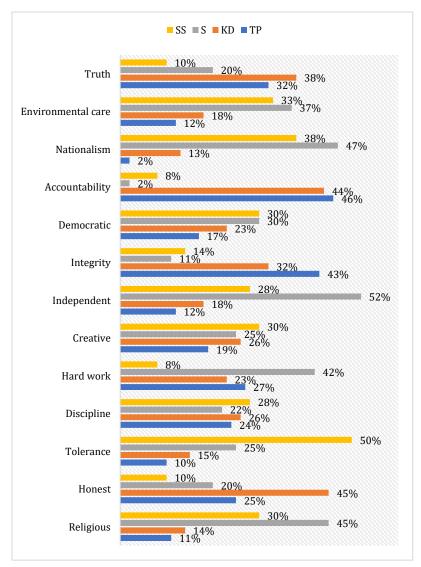
The questionnaire in this study was intended to identify a picture of academic fraud associated with strengthening the character needed by students using an academic fraud questionnaire. For this purpose, this was done by surveying students in 9 classes of SI PGSD FKIP Unram students. In the character questionnaire which includes two domains, namely (1) the academic cheating domain consists of aspects of academic cheating and (2) the character domain consisting of character aspects, from each question item 4 alternative answers are given, namely SS (very often), S (often), KD (sometimes) and TP (never). For analysis, the four alternative answers are grouped into two categories of assessment, namely the combination of SS and S means no problem, and the combination of KD and TP means that they have problems in character.

Based on the needs analysis carried out through a survey, it was determined that there were four types of characters needed. These four types of character are used as the basis for the orientation of EL-based character strengthening, namely, honesty, truth, integrity, and accountability. In **Figure 2**, it can be seen that the number of students who provide answers to the question items is KD and TP categories, students experience problems in characters, especially the four types of characters, seen more than 45%, so for the four types of characters students need to be strengthened so that they can have good character according to the demands of the teaching profession.

#### **Pretest-Posttest**

To determine the level of ability and management of student behavior before implementation and after implementation, the categorization of the level of ability to

realize the importance of honest behavior and managing honest / implementing behavior is used based on the average score obtained by students before (pre-test) and after (post-test). In this activity, the number of subjects involved was 38 students. The following are the results of the Mc Nemar Test that have been carried out based on the data obtained.



Source: Research Data Tabulate

FIGURE 2. Tabulation results of the student academic fraud questionnaire

Next, look for the Z table value (Z distribution table) with a confidence level of 5%, because we are using a 2-sided test, 5% divided by 2 equals 2.5%. So, the area of the normal curve is 50% - 2.5% = 47.5% or 0.475. So that we get the Z-table value on the two-sided test for the area of 0.475, the Z table number is about 1.96. From the results of the calculation of Z count> Z table and a significant value> 0.05,or 3.77> 1.96 so **that H<sub>0</sub> is rejected** (Ramsay & Silverman, 2015).

The rejection of  $H_0$  is a sign that strengthening character values based on Experiential Learning can reduce students' fraudulent behavior. Apart from the results above, the researcher also recorded an increase in the number of students in non-statistical data. In table 2 below, the percentage of the number of subjects show positive results.

**TABLE 3.** Pretest-posttest strengthening character value based on experiential learning

Before Reinforcement	After Reinforcement	
	Troubled	Not Troubled
Troubled	3	28
Not Troubled	0	6

**TABLE 4.** Statistical table

Before Reinforcement & After Reinforcement		
N	38	
Exact Sig. (2 -tailed)	$.809^{ m b}$	

a. McNemar Test

**TABLE 5**. Decreasing student academic cheating behavior

Rating Level	Category	Pretest	Posttest
0%-20%	Bad	21%-40%	0%-20%
21%-40%	Pretty good	41%-60%	21%-40%
41%-60%	Good	0%-20%	61%-80%
61%-80% 81%-100%	Excellent	0%-20%	80%-90 %

Judging from acquiring average score before the strengthening strategy is implemented, the level of ability to realize the importance of student honesty in learning in the poor category is 41% -60%. After the EL-based character strengthening strategy is carried out, students are in sufficient and excellent to achieve 61% -80%. Thus, it can be concluded that there is an increase in the level of understanding, and students realize that honest behavior is fundamental/essential to be applied in students' daily lives.

#### DISCUSSION

Individuals who have character and can apply them well must be committed to studying and applying in everyday life various types of characters, such as the types of characters found in needs analysis, people who have various characters such as honest characters, for example, will be able to understand the importance of honesty (Jeynes, 2019). This aspect teaches students how they feel and realize how important it is to unify words and deeds in the life they experience. It is because there is an opportunity to find out the causes and aspects of the emergence of dishonesty and its effect on the activities undertaken (Marini et al., 2018). Furthermore, the results showed that of the 9 classes that were the study population, it did not seem that there were any differences between classes. Thus, this study as a sample in strengthening the character was chosen by random sampling of one class of students used as the sample.

The first large-scale research on cheating that occurs in higher education was conducted by Jeynes (2019). The study included more than 5,000 students from 99 colleges in the United States and found that 75% of respondents had been involved in one or more incidents of academic fraud. Cheating usually occurs because of pressure; pressure can arise from within yourself or other parties (Yusuf & Apriliyanti, 2020). Cheating, of course, will not be possible if there is no opportunity. From the research conducted by Marini (2018), the opportunity for students to commit academic fraud can be since the lecturer is not maximal in controlling or supervising the exam. Darmiany's research results (2016) found that other factors that can encourage students to commit fraud are rational thinking, for example, an attitude of justification for these actions because other students are also doing the same thing. In addition, the ability to commit fraud is needed because students who are less skilled at cheating will have feelings of worry, so that they can allow these students to fail to commit fraud.

b. Binomial distribution used

The reasons cited by students about their causes of academic cheating are considered to influence the emergence of academic cheating behavior. Pressure, opportunity, rationalization, and capabilities are the reasons and factors that influence academic fraud known as the fraud diamond dimension. The fraud diamond initiated by Wolfe and Hermanson in 2004 is a development of the fraud triangle concept, which contains three factors, namely pressure, opportunity, and rationalization and becomes a fraud diamond with the addition of one factor, namely capability (Havet, 2014). Their opinion is based on the idea that cheating cannot be done if the individual does not have the ability. The ability to question is the ability to identify opportunities, execute opportunities, cover up so that fraud is not detected, and influence others to commit fraud.

In the practice of implementing character strengthening, it begins with exploring the positive and negative experiences of students involved in five stages, so that it will assure for a sense of trust so that communication transactions are effective (Yusuf & Apriliyanti, 2020). The expectation behind paying attention to positive and negative experiences in the five stages is the general expectation: "The student will maintain a positive relationship with the lecturer, he will tell about the problems / positive and negative experiences he has experienced. Furthermore, students formulate plans for improvement / solutions, then they will develop new perspectives, and will transfer the new learning outcomes into everyday life" (Havet, 2014). The expectations for each stage are described below:

- Stage 1: Students feel facilitated and begin to realize what is expected of them.
- Stage 2: The more conducive atmosphere, students feel comfortable and "open" to convey positive and negative experiences related to academics' irregularities, besides disclosing his strengths and available resources to solve the problem at hand.
- Stage 3: Students begin to discuss new directions, new thoughts, feelings they want, and behaviors they want to change.
- Stage 4: Students will re-test their goals and start moving towards new life stories and new deeds through confronting gaps, facing new challenges. Creative problem solving is important here.
- Stage 5: If stages 1-4 are successful, it is hoped that students will demonstrate experiences, changes in behavior according to the character they should have, thoughts, feelings according to character and apply them in daily life outside of research activities.

Based on hypothesis testing, it is known that the Z value is 0.05, or 3.77> 1.96. These results indicate that the strengthening of character values affects on student academic cheating behavior. Students feel that reinforcing of the character values taught makes them feel guilty if they commit further academic fraudulent behavior. This study is in line with Tsoni & Lionarakis (2015) research and Ransome & Newton (2018) which state that giving insight into character values has a positive effect on academic fraud. However, this study is consistent with Sheard et al. (2017), which states that strengthening character values affects academic cheating behavior, especially among students.

It is because some students do not feel pressured about taking exams; students understand the lecture material and their parents' financial ability who can pay for college. The second hypothesis testing shows that the opportunity variable does not affect on student academic fraud behavior. This shows the higher the chance for students to commit fraud but does not influence students to commit academic fraud. This study contradicts Busch & Bilgin (2014) research, which states that opportunity has a positive effect on academic fraud and this research is consistent with the research of Ransome & Newton (2018) which results in that opportunity has no effect on academic fraud. This is due to the tight supervision at the time of the exam so that there is no opportunity to cheat.

Students prefer to be honest because of the firmness of sanctions if they are caught cheating, and students are not allowed to choose their seat at the time of the exam.

This opinion is supported by the idea that students who have rationalization characteristics tend to think that what they are doing is natural, whether good or bad. This study is in line with Tsoni & Lionarakis (2015) research which states that rationalization has a positive effect on academic fraud and is not in line with research conducted by Sheard et al. (2017) does not affect on academic fraud. Students feel innocent when cheating and students feel they are used to academic cheating.

Students who commit dishonesty tend to act to commit fraud. This research is supported by Darmiany (2016), who state that ability has a positive effect on academic fraud. However, this study is not supported by O'Connor & Evans (2019) whose research results state that ability does not have a positive effect on academic fraud. It happens because the respondents in this study are accustomed and already proficient at cheating, so that in this study the ability has a positive effect on student academic cheating behavior. Based on the fifth hypothesis test, it was found that the variable greed did not affect on student academic cheating behavior.

The higher the greed, the students are less likely to commit academic cheating. This study is in line with research conducted by Orosz et al. (2015) and it is inconsistent with research conducted by Anderman & Won (2019). This is because students who have good GPAs are satisfied with what they have got with honest behavior and students are not stingy about sharing knowledge with friends and they are not afraid of being rivalled. This study concludes that necessity does not affect student academic cheating behavior. Academic fraud is one of the problems that has been said to be entrenched among students. Even though this behavior is an inaccurate action in getting success in the academic field. Bandura's social learning theory says that moral behavior (honesty or cheating) will emerge because it is shaped by cognition and the environment. This means that someone will take action influenced by a person's attitude or beliefs about their subjective behavior and norms. Individuals learn by observing others. Where learning is not only influenced by the strength within a person, but also by the environment. Social learning theory emphasizes that environments are exposed to someone by chance, where those environments are often chosen and changed by that person through their own behavior.

This shows that the increasing need for these students, the occurrence of academic cheating will decrease. This study contradicts the research of Boger & Eng (2010) and is consistent with research conducted by Giluk & Postlethwaite (2015) which states that need does not affect academic fraud. Students who have more study time are less likely to commit academic cheating because they feel confident about what they have done. Studying during lectures is a necessity not a compulsion to get a good GPA. This shows that the higher the disclosure, the lower the academic cheating. This research contradicts research conducted by (Jones, 2011). However, this study is consistent with research conducted by Sheard et al (2017) which stated that disclosure has a negative effect on academic fraud. It is because disclosure is most feared by students who commit fraud, with the disclosure of students who are proven to have committed fraud.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the results of the research that have been done, the researcher can conclude the following points: (1) This study produces data that describes the effect of treatment in the form of strengthening character values on academic cheating behavior among students. (2) Experential learning-based character strengthening activities are proven to reduce academic cheating behavior committed by students. This is also supported by researchers' results where, most students have reduced their academic cheating abilities after strengthening activities. (3) The character values that are lacking among PGSD Unram students are honesty, truth, integrity and accountability. (4) The activity of demonstrating

daily activities can be an effective self-reflection material for students to reduce fraudulent academic behavior.

As a follow-up to the conclusions, the researchers formulated the following recommendations: (1) Experiential Learning-based strengthening of character values activities can be scheduled regularly at the end of the semester (once every 6 months). This activity will maintain student understanding so as not to commit academic cheating. (2) Experiential Learning theory model can be integrated in Semester Learning Plan (RPS) to minimize the development of academic cheating behavior among students.

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# **PROFILE**

**Darmiany** is a lecturer in department of primary school teacher education, the faculty of teacher training and education, Universitas Mataram. She is also an internal reviewer for research

proposals and community service at the Universitas Mataram. In addition, she is active in research projects in the field of child counseling and child psychology.

**I Ketut Widiada** is a lecturer in department of primary school teacher education, the faculty of teacher training and education, Universitas Mataram. He is also the editor of the journal Basic Education (PenDas) PGSD Study Program, Universitas Mataram. In addition, he is active in research projects in the field of character education

**Khairun Nisa** is a lecturer in department of primary school teacher education, the faculty of teacher training and education, Universitas Mataram. She is also the editor of the journal Basic Education (PenDas) PGSD Study Program, Universitas Mataram. In addition, she is active in research projects in the field of character education.

**Mohammad Archi Maulyda** is a lecturer in department of primary school teacher education, the faculty of teacher training and education, Universitas Mataram. He is also an editor at IRDH Publishing in the book publishing division. In addition, he is active in research projects in the field of basic mathematics skills in NCTM.

**Iva Nurmawanti** is a lecturer in department of primary school teacher education, the faculty of teacher training and education, Universitas Mataram. In addition, she is active in research projects in the fields of elementary mathematics learning and Basic Educational Psychology.