Navigating Academic Integrity: Teachers' Challenges, Responses, and Insights to Student Cheating

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ABSTRACT

With the rapid advancement of technology, maintaining academic integrity has become an increasingly pressing concern in educational institutions, affecting both the credibility of academic achievements and the learning process. This phenomenological study explored the phenomenon of student cheating from the perspective of teachers in a public school in Pantukan, Davao de Oro. This is guided by the Deterrence Theory by Beccaria (1764), which posits that individuals are less likely to engage in certain behaviors if they perceive the potential consequences as severe. The participants in this study were six purposively selected public school teachers; three participated in focus group discussions (FGDs) and three in in-depth interviews (IDIs) using open-ended interview guide questions. Results revealed four major challenges: over-reliance on AI tools, similar or duplicated answers in assessments, plagiarized outputs, and mobile device-facilitated cheating. Teachers responded with strategies including establishing clear classroom rules, imposing disciplinary sanctions, monitoring and constant guidance, promoting a culture of honesty, and using AI detection tools. Their insights highlighted flexible teaching approaches, fairness and ethical responsibility, fostering independent learning, and guiding the proper use of AI tools. These findings suggest that addressing academic dishonesty requires a balanced approach that combines clear rules, ethical guidance, and the strategic use of technology to uphold integrity while supporting student learning. Additionally, adopting flexible teaching methods, promoting fairness, encouraging independent learning, and providing guidance on responsible AI use can help educators prevent cheating and cultivate a culture of academic honesty.

Keywords: Integrity, cheating, challenges, strategies, responses, teachers, qualitative research

INTRODUCTION

In the modern educational landscape, maintaining academic integrity is a critical challenge for educators. The rapid advancement of technology has both facilitated and complicated the enforcement of academic honesty, as students gain greater access to online resources, AI-assisted tools, and unauthorized collaboration methods (Eaton, 2021; Avello & Aranguren Zurita, 2025). Teachers are tasked not only with cultivating ethical academic behavior but also with navigating an evolving landscape of cheating strategies, requiring the development of effective responses and preventive measures (Morse, 2022).

Globally, academic dishonesty has become more complex with the advancement of technology, raising concerns about ethical education (Bittle & El-Gayar, 2025; Kofinas, 2025). In the United States, reports show that cheating has increased due to the accessibility of AI-based tools and online contract cheating services, making it difficult for teachers to detect plagiarism (Wiley, 2024; Leckrone, 2024). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, a surge in essay mills and academic ghostwriting services has led to legislative actions to criminalize such practices (Birt et al., 2020). In Australia, institutions have implemented stricter academic integrity policies, but educators still struggle with enforcing these measures due to the ever-evolving nature of digital cheating (Nowell et al., 2019).

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In the Philippines, academic dishonesty remains a significant concern in secondary education. The shift to online learning has increased opportunities for cheating, with students using social media, messaging applications, and AI tools to circumvent academic integrity policies (Gupit & Cuevas, 2023). Modern online learning approaches have further contributed to the rise in academic misconduct, commonly manifested in forms such as plagiarism, ghostwriting, and examination-related offenses (Aguilar, 2021). Despite institutional efforts to strengthen academic integrity policies, many educators in both public and private schools continue to face challenges in enforcing these measures due to limited resources, insufficient institutional support, and increasingly sophisticated cheating strategies. Furthermore, a review by Beruin (2022) identified both internal factors—such as procrastination and fear of failure—and external factors, including peer influence and overwhelming academic workload, as key contributors to academic dishonesty.

In a public school in Pantukan, Davao de Oro Division, student cheating remains a persistent challenge despite continuous efforts to promote academic integrity. Both junior and senior high school students continue to engage in dishonest practices such as copying answers, using unauthorized materials, and seeking assistance from peers during assessments. Given that teachers serve as the primary enforcers of academic integrity in the classroom, their perspectives on student cheating—its causes, challenges, and the effectiveness of existing strategies—are crucial in understanding and addressing the problem more effectively. Furthermore, examining their insights can provide valuable guidance for developing more practical and sustainable interventions to uphold honesty in education.

Existing research has largely focused on the prevalence of student cheating and the development of preventive strategies. However, a significant gap remains in understanding the lived experiences of teachers who regularly encounter and manage academic dishonesty. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach that considers the perspectives of all key stakeholders, particularly teachers. This study is timely and relevant, as it seeks to generate meaningful insights into the challenges faced by teachers in a public school in Pantukan, Davao de Oro. Hence, by examining teachers' perspectives, the study aims to inform the development of more context-responsive and effective strategies to prevent and address cheating, while also supporting the well-being and professional effectiveness of educators.

Research Questions

This phenomenological study aimed to explore and gain a deeper understanding of the phenomenon of student cheating from the perspectives of teachers in a public school in Pantukan, Davao de Oro. Specifically, the study sought to answer the following research questions: (1) What challenges do teachers face regarding student cheating in their classrooms? (2) What responses or strategies do teachers employ to address instances of cheating among students? (3) What insights do teachers gain regarding academic dishonesty?

Theoretical Lens

This study was anchored in Deterrence Theory by Beccaria (1764). This theory explains that individuals are less likely to engage in certain behaviors when they perceive the potential consequences as severe and certain. In the context of academic integrity, Deterrence Theory posits that students are less likely to cheat if they believe that the risks of being caught and facing consequences (such as failing an assignment or expulsion) outweigh the potential benefits of cheating. This theoretical framework helps explain how teachers' strategies—such as establishing clear policies on cheating, consistently enforcing these policies, and promoting open communication about the importance of academic integrity—may deter students from engaging in dishonest behavior.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a qualitative, phenomenological research design to explore teachers' challenges, responses, and insights to academic dishonesty. A phenomenological approach is chosen for its ability to capture the lived experiences of educators in addressing cheating across various educational settings (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Since academic dishonesty is a subjective and context-dependent issue, this methodology enables researchers to

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gain deeper insights into how teachers navigate integrity-related challenges. By utilizing semi-structured interviews, focus group discussions, and classroom observations, the study will collect rich and descriptive data, allowing participants to share their personal narratives and coping mechanisms when confronted with cheating incidents. Ultimately, this research will contribute to the existing literature by emphasizing teachers' voices in the discourse on academic integrity, informing the creation of effective policies, and cultivating a stronger culture of integrity within educational institutions.

Participants

This study utilized a purposive sampling technique, a qualitative research method that ensures the selection of participants with relevant characteristics aligned with the research objectives. Following the recommendations for phenomenological research, the study includes six participants. These participants are divided into two groups: three teachers engaged in focus group discussions (FGDs) and three in in-depth individual interviews (IDIs). This combination of methods facilitates a comprehensive understanding of educators' perspectives, allowing for both collective insights and personal reflections on academic integrity issues.

Moreover, the study adheres to the inclusion and exclusion criteria to ensure the credibility and relevance of its findings. Participants are required to be actively teaching at the Junior or Senior High School levels within the research site, and possess a minimum of three years of teaching experience. Teachers who are unwilling to share their experiences or who lack direct exposure to academic dishonesty are excluded from the study. This careful selection process ensures that authentic and diverse perspectives are gathered, thereby contributing to a deeper understanding of how teachers navigate and address challenges related to academic integrity.

Data Collection Tools

The researchers employed in-depth interviews (IDIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) to examine teachers' challenges, responses, and insights regarding student cheating using an open-ended interview guide question. IDIs facilitated personal narratives, allowing teachers to share their experiences with cheating, enforcement challenges, and institutional support without external influence. In contrast, FGDs encouraged dynamic conversations, fostering collective insights on academic integrity. Additionally, secondary sources—such as journal articles and existing literature on academic integrity—supplemented the primary data, providing contextual depth and validating findings against global trends. By integrating IDIs, FGDs, and secondary sources, the study offers a comprehensive exploration of teachers' perspectives, supporting the development of more effective anti-cheating strategies in educational institutions.

Data Collection

This study employed a systematic qualitative data collection process to explore teachers' challenges, responses, and insights regarding student cheating. The process involved obtaining necessary permissions, selecting participants, conducting interviews and discussions, and ensuring the security of the data. Before data collection, formal approval was secured from school administrators to work with Junior and Senior High School teachers. Purposive sampling was used to identify teachers who met the inclusion criteria, and participants were provided with informed consent forms to ensure voluntary participation and confidentiality. With participants' permission, interviews were audio-recorded to ensure accurate transcription. All collected data were securely stored and backed up to prevent loss, and pseudonyms were assigned to participants to maintain anonymity and confidentiality.

Data Analysis

In this study, all recorded interviews and qualitative data were transcribed and analyzed using coding and thematic analysis, following Braun and Clarke's (2019) six-phase framework. This approach allowed for an in-depth exploration of recurring themes concerning the challenges teachers encounter in addressing cheating, the strategies they employ, and the broader institutional responses to academic dishonesty. A thorough review of the themes provided a comprehensive understanding of the data, highlighting both individual and systemic approaches to maintaining academic integrity. To enhance reliability, the analysis was further refined with

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feedback from research advisers and peers, ensuring that interpretations remained grounded in the data. Through this structured process, the study produced well-supported conclusions and recommendations aimed at strengthening academic integrity in educational settings.

Trustworthiness, Credibility, and Transferability

Trustworthiness is a fundamental aspect of qualitative research, establishing the validity and reliability of findings through credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability. In this study, credibility was ensured through multiple strategies that accurately reflected teachers' experiences with academic dishonesty, including prolonged engagement to build rapport and understand participants' contexts, triangulation using in-depth interviews and focus group discussions, peer debriefing to identify potential biases, and member checking to allow participants to verify their responses. Transferability was addressed by providing rich, detailed descriptions of the research context, participants, sampling criteria, data collection methods, and thematic analysis procedures, enabling future researchers and educators to assess the applicability of the findings to their own academic settings. By integrating these strategies, the study maintained rigorous standards of trustworthiness, producing findings that are accurate, meaningful, and relevant across different institutional and educational environments.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Challenges Teachers Face Regarding Student Cheating in Their Classrooms

There are four (4) major themes emerged on the challenges teachers faced regarding student cheating in their classrooms. These include: 1) over-reliance to AI tools; 2) similar or duplicated answers in assessments; 3) plagiarized outputs; and 4) mobile device-facilitated cheating. Table 1 shows the major themes and core ideas of the challenges teachers are facing regarding academic integrity in their classrooms.

Table 1. Challenges Teachers Face Regarding Student Cheating in Their Classrooms

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Over-Reliance to AI Tools	• Students today over-rely on AI for assignments, limiting their critical thinking. • Managing students' AI use is challenging, as many depend on it even for simple tasks. • Too much AI use makes students struggle to solve problems on their own. • Relying too much on AI makes students lazy and diminish learning engagement.
Similar or Duplicated Answers in Assessments	• Teachers noticed identical answers between students on an individual assignment. • Teachers caught their student asking for answers to another student during exam. • Teachers found out some students copying each other's answer in activities.
Plagiarized Outputs	• Some students nowadays paraphrase others works without properly citing the sources. • Some students are just copying and pasting texts from an online sources.

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	• Some students submit the same work which they have submitted before as a form of self-plagiarism. • Some students use uncited images, graphs, or charts then submit them as if they created them.
Mobile Device-Facilitated Cheating	• Some students take photos of exam/activity questions on their devices and send them to others for assistance or to find answers online**.** • Some students use math-solving apps instead of actually answering math problems**.** • Some students post on social media platforms their assignment and let people online help them.

Over-Reliance to AI Tools

Most commonly, the participants have experienced significant challenges because students are using AI too much for their homework and activities which make it harder for them to learn how to think for themselves and solve problems on their own. Teachers reported that students often use AI for completing assignments, which limits their ability to think critically and solve problems independently. This dependency on technology can encourage passive learning, reduce cognitive effort and impede intellectual growth.

This finding is supported by the responses of IDI_1 and IDI_2, who shared their challenges in addressing academic dishonesty related to the use of AI tools. As IDI_1 explained, *"Nowadays, I have noticed that students often rely on AI because it makes their projects or assignments easier. The only problem is that they rely too much on AI, so they can no longer apply their own ideas."* Similarly, IDI_2 shared, *"Recently, I have had a hard time managing students in terms of their use of AI. They tend to treat AI as something permanent or indispensable. I think it is acceptable to use AI because it can make our lives easier, but it becomes problematic when they use it even for simple tasks—such as essays meant to express their personal thoughts and feelings."*

In addition, IDI_3 pointed that, *"One of the things I have noticed about students who have adapted to technology, especially AI, is that some of them have difficulty solving problems independently, as if their outputs or assessments depend entirely on AI"* (IDI_3). Furthermore, FGD_1 noted, *"As a teacher at Tagugpo National High School with several years of teaching experience, I found it challenging because it is a teacher's responsibility to develop students' competencies. However, due to AI, I observed that some students became overly reliant during assessments, to the extent that meaningful learning was not taking place"* (FGD_1).

Existing studies reflect an ongoing debate regarding the educational impact of artificial intelligence (AI). Some scholars argue that frequent AI use may encourage cognitive shortcuts, potentially undermining creativity and independent problem-solving skills (Smith & Jones, 2021). In contrast, others maintain that when used purposefully and with appropriate guidance, AI can enhance critical thinking by nurturing higher-order analysis and promoting innovation, suggesting that its effects depend largely on how it is integrated into instruction (Lee, 2022). This debate similarly extends to issues of academic integrity. While concerns have been raised that AI increases opportunities for academic dishonesty by making it difficult to distinguish between original student work and AI-generated content (Thompson et al., 2023), other researchers contend that AI can support academic honesty when used as a tool for research assistance and formative feedback, provided that clear ethical guidelines are established to prevent misuse (Park & Kim, 2024).

Similar or Duplicated Answers in Assessments

There are instances in which teachers notice identical responses in individual assignments, observe students seeking help from peers during examinations, and discover cases of copying. Students also submit nearly identical outputs, often as a result of unauthorized collaboration or direct duplication of work. This issue is

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particularly prevalent in online learning environments, where it is more challenging for teachers to closely monitor student performance and ensure academic integrity.

This in reference to the response of IDI_1, who shared, *"If students don't have enough study stuff, they might just copy from friends instead of learning by themselves. Not having enough resources can make them take the easy way out and not learn properly."* Similarly, IDI_2 added, *"As a public-school teacher, keeping students honest in their schoolwork is a constant struggle, especially now with easy access to AI tools. In my experience, these tools unfortunately make it much simpler for students to plagiarize and cheat."* Moreover, IDI_3 stated, *"In my experience as a teacher, I have really caught students copying from each other, and their answers were exactly the same."*

Studies found that copying and cheating were more prevalent in online assessments. Online assessment contexts have been associated with increased opportunities for academic dishonesty, underscoring the need for integrity safeguards such as plagiarism detection and improved supervision strategies (Garg, 2022; Holden et al., 2021). Yet, students may not automatically interpret similar responses as cheating; rather, their intentions and understanding of collaborative norms influence their ethical judgments. Clear guidance on the acceptable boundaries of collaboration can help distinguish between legitimate cooperation and misconduct (Harper & Prentice, 2024).

Plagiarized Outputs

The results also revealed that plagiarism is a growing concern, with students frequently copying content from online sources without proper citation. This practice undermines the educational process by discouraging independent thinking and critical problem-solving skills, which are essential for academic success. Some students paraphrase others' work without appropriate acknowledgment, directly copy and paste material from online sources, resubmit previously submitted work as new (self-plagiarism), or use images and graphs without proper attribution while presenting them as their own.

In fact, FGD_1 stated, *"For me, what I've noticed about students nowadays is that they really like to paraphrase works that aren't theirs or works they didn't do themselves."* IDI_1 also added, *"Nowadays, kids are really into copy-pasting from AI or online sources, and it's so easy for them, which is not good for them because it seems like they aren't truly engaging or paying attention in class."* Subsequently, IDI_2 noted, *"Nowadays, online sources are very useful because students can get ideas from them to create things like images, graphs, or charts for their presentations, etc. They are free to choose from Google if they have no idea what to do. However, most of the time, they don't properly cite their sources, which leads to plagiarism."*

Study revealed that plagiarism rates increased during emergency remote instruction, likely because online access to sources and lack of direct monitoring facilitated misuse. Besides, plagiarism rates often increase in online contexts—partly because students can access abundant online sources and lack direct supervision (Eshet & Margaliot, 2024). Meanwhile, the work on student ethical judgment demonstrates that clarifying what constitutes plagiarism and reinforcing instruction on citation and source attribution can reduce instances of accidental plagiarism by improving students' academic writing skills (Prashar, 2024). Moreover, improving students' writing practices and understanding of citation can significantly reduce detected instances of plagiarism and academic misconduct (Perkins et al., 2020).

Mobile Device-Facilitated Cheating

Mobile device–facilitated cheating has become increasingly common, as students use smartphones and apps to circumvent academic integrity in exams and assignments. Teachers report instances of students sharing answers, using problem-solving apps, and posting assignments online for others to complete. Some students also take photos of test questions to share with peers, further undermining the assessment process and making it more challenging for educators to uphold academic honesty.

IDI_1 highlights that, *"There are really some students who just take pictures of the exams or those activities and then send them to others or maybe to their friends so they can search for the answer online."* Also, IDI_2

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notes that during the pandemic, *"This one, it really became popular during the pandemic, you know, those apps where you just send or take a picture of the math problem and then the answer automatically appears. Until now, there are still really some who use that."* Further, IDI_3 emphasizes that, because everyone uses social media, *"Since today's age is really immersed in social media, it's really unavoidable, right, that even assignments are posted and they just ask the online community."*

Research indicates that mobile devices have become a significant enabler of academic dishonesty, allowing students to circumvent traditional safeguards during exams and assignments. Students frequently use smartphones and apps to share answers, take photos of test questions, or access automated problem-solving tools, thereby undermining the integrity of assessments (Kaisara & Barrable, 2023). Literature reviews and empirical studies underscore that the digital environment has lowered ethical barriers to cheating, making mobile device–facilitated misconduct both widespread and persistent (Désiron, 2022; Johnson & McDonald, 2020). Conversely, attention to mobile learning integration highlights the pedagogical benefits of digital devices, such as increased flexibility, engagement, and interactivity in educational activities, suggesting that technology's educational value should not be overlooked in discussions focused on misconduct (Gabriel et al., 2018).

Responses or Strategies Teachers Used to Address Instances of Cheating among Students

There are five (5) major themes emerged on the responses or strategies teachers employed to address student cheating. These include: 1) establishing clear classroom rules; 2) imposing disciplinary sanctions; 3) monitoring and constant guidance; 4) promoting culture of honesty; and (5) using of AI detection tools. Table 2 shows the major themes and core ideas of the strategies teachers used to address and prevent instances of cheating among students.

Table 2. Responses or Strategies Teachers Used to Address Instances of Cheating among Students

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Establishing Clear Classroom Rules	• Teachers ensure that students are informed with the class rules which are reflected in their handbook. • Teachers help students understand the rules in the handbook to prevent cheating. • Teachers ensure that cases of cheating are reported and handled according to the handbook's procedures. • Teachers strictly enforce the handbook's rules when dealing with cheating incidents.
Imposing Disciplinary Sanctions	• The student receives a warning, and their parents are being informed. •The student caught cheating are required to help with school-related tasks as a consequence. • The student can go through community service such as cleaning inside the campus. • The student can be suspended or temporarily removed from school for a specific period.
Monitoring and Constant Guidance	• Teachers constantly remind students that cheating is forbidden. • Teachers monitors and reinforce consequences of cheating through constant reminders.

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	• Teachers remind students that cheating is wrong and guide them to ask for help.
Promoting Culture of Honesty	• Teachers instill good values to encourage honesty. • Teachers talk to students privately to know why they cheated. • Teachers listen to each student's side of the story without getting angry or mad at them. • Teachers lead by example, showing honesty in actions.
Using AI Detection Tools	• Teachers use AI plagiarism checkers to help prevent cheating incidents. • Teachers use AI content analysis to check and determine copy and pasting activities. • Teachers use AI-generated content detection algorithms to help in the prevention of cheating.

Establishing Clear Classroom Rules

Having a clear and consistent classroom rules are essential in promoting academic integrity. Teachers implement the guidelines outlined in the student handbook to discourage cheating and foster self-discipline among students. When incidents of cheating occur, they are formally documented and addressed in accordance with institutional policies. Strict and consistent enforcement of these regulations is crucial in maintaining fairness, accountability, and ethical conduct within the classroom.

This is in reference to the response of FGD_1, who shared that, *"There is no perfect strategy to prevent cheating, so the best thing to do is to establish class rules and follow what is written in the student handbook, especially the penalties for those caught cheating."* FGD_2 also added, *"There is no other way to completely stop cheating, but discipline and understanding the student handbook can help prevent it."* IDI_1 further mentioned, *"If a student is caught cheating, they will be talked to, and the adviser will be informed about the decision on what actions to take since the student handbook already states what should be done."* Finally, IDI_3 shared a different perspective, noting that, *"My strategies as a teacher include holding a forum or talking to the student personally, listening to their side, and understanding why they did it."*

Research suggests that establishing clear classroom rules can significantly contribute to reducing instances of cheating and academic dishonesty. Zhao et al., (2024) found that reminders of academic integrity policies and sanctions can promote honesty in exams. Likewise, Janinovic (2024) reported that explicit honor codes and meaningful penalties were associated with students perceiving cheating as more serious, which correlated with lower reported misconduct.Additional studies corroborate this perspective, indicating that clear guidelines combined with consistent application help students understand both the rationale and consequences of academic dishonesty, thereby fostering a culture of integrity (Smith & Nguyen, 2020; Ramirez, 2021).

Imposing Disciplinary Sanctions

Disciplinary sanctions, such as warnings, community service, and suspension, are commonly imposed in response to academic dishonesty committed by students. These measures aim to correct behavior and emphasize the seriousness of cheating. When students engage in cheating, the school issues a warning and informs their parents or guardians. Students may also be required to assist with school-related tasks or perform community service, such as cleaning. In more serious cases, students may be suspended from school.

As shared by FGD_1, *"So, if a student is caught cheating, we give them a warning and, of course, we also inform their parents."* Then, FGD_2 added to this point by saying, *"One of the sanctions for cheating is that we make them help with school tasks as a consequence."* IDI_1 also pointed out, *"If a student is caught cheating, one of the sanctions usually given by the school disciplinarian is to make them do community service, like cleaning*

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within the school campus." Moreover, IDI_2 noted that, *"The strategies we implement is that usually, if it's a severe case of cheating, they are temporarily suspended."*

A number of studies support the role of clear classroom rules and consistent consequences in reducing cheating and fostering academic integrity. According to Morales and Singh (2020), well-defined penalties help establish accountability and act as a deterrent for future misconduct, reinforcing the message that academic dishonesty is unacceptable. In addition, Benson and Enstroem's (2023) model for preventing academic misconduct emphasizes that consistent institutional interventions—such as defined procedures and communicated sanctions—are linked to reductions in reported academic misconduct. However, critics of purely punitive approaches argue that sanctions alone may not address underlying causes of cheating, and that combining penalties with educative support enhances students' ethical development and intrinsic commitment to honesty (Brickhill et al., 2024).

Monitoring and Constant Guidance

Teachers play a crucial role in providing consistent guidance to promote academic integrity. Regular reminders about the importance of honesty, along with open discussions about the consequences of cheating, help foster an ethical learning environment. Teachers should model honesty in their own actions, clearly explain why cheating is wrong and its corresponding consequences, consistently remind students to uphold integrity, encourage them to seek help when needed, and remain vigilant in monitoring dishonest behaviors.

FGD_2 highlighted that, *"Continuously reminding students about the importance of honesty and integrity can help in their learning."* Likewise, FGD_1 emphasized, *"We need to remind the students about the rules every day so they are aware of their responsibilities."* Moreover, FGD_3 further noted, *"Remind the students repeatedly to avoid cheating. So, the teachers should always remain calm and not overreact if ever a student is caught cheating."* IDI_3 also suggests that, *"You should be honest by saying that you don't understand the lesson, then we should really encourage the child to ask questions in case they are still having difficulties so we can more easily explain it to the child."*

Research shows that structured monitoring and clear guidance can reduce academic dishonesty. Alguacil et al., (2024) found that students monitored during online exams were less likely to cheat than those unmonitored, demonstrating the deterrent effect of supervision. Benson and Enstroem (2023) also reported that academic integrity programs and sustained ethical guidance significantly reduced misconduct in higher education. Similarly, Perkins et al., (2020) noted that integrity workshops and explicit instructions helped students understand ethical expectations, lowering instances of plagiarism and cheating. Conversely, Miranda-Rodríguez et al., (2024) argue that excessive monitoring without fostering students' internal ethical reasoning can lead to surface compliance rather than genuine integrity. Overemphasis on control can reduce autonomy and intrinsic motivation, limiting long-term effectiveness.

Promoting Culture of Honesty

One of the teachers' responses to student cheating is instilling good values and encouraging honesty among learners. Teachers promote honesty by designing assessments that require critical thinking and original responses, rather than relying solely on simple recall. As IDI_1 stated, *"Assessments should test students' ability to think deeply and apply what they learn to actual situations, which makes it more difficult to cheat by just copying."* To reduce cheating, tests should include questions that challenge students to think, rather than merely copy answers. If a student cheats, teachers should speak with them privately and listen to their reasons calmly before reacting. IDI2_added, *"As a teacher, my plan is to speak with the student privately to understand their reasons for doing that."* Also, teachers lead by example, demonstrating honesty through their own actions. As pointed by IDI_3, *"My strategy as a teacher is to have a forum or talk to them personally and then listen to the student's side about why they did that."*

The study of Çelik and Razı (2023) found that creating a school-wide culture of academic integrity at secondary schools contributes to positive ethical attitudes and reduces the normalization of cheating behaviors over time, highlighting the role of values integration and community engagement. Moreover, environments with strong

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honor codes, clearly communicated values, and integrity policies are associated with lower rates of cheating, as these elements help align student and institutional standards of honesty (Holden, 2021). Meanwhile, Santos and Rivera (2020) argue that assessments requiring application and analysis discourage cheating by making dishonest shortcuts less feasible, reinforcing authentic engagement over simple reproduction of facts, which supports a culture of honesty and deeper learning.

Use of AI Detection Tools

In today's digital age, some teachers are using AI tools to prevent cheating. AI detection tools have become essential for maintaining academic integrity by identifying copied content, AI-generated text, and other forms of misconduct. AI plagiarism checkers help detect unoriginal content, while AI content analysis enables teachers to examine student work for inappropriate use of AI. Additionally, AI-generated content detection algorithms can identify text created by AI, ensuring that academic integrity is upheld.

Participants shared that, *"Since the current generation of kids is already filled with AI, it's inevitable that even in their studies, it's being used in the wrong way. That's why I use AI detectors and websites to make sure they aren't cheating and to catch them if they're just copy-pasting, because that's plagiarism (IDI_1)."* In addition, IDI_2 shared, *"In my approach, since kids today really use AI in their studies, and sometimes they misuse it, I try to carefully check their work. I analyze it or use AI detection tools, because maybe they're using AI, and I can prevent that from happening."* Likewise, IDI_3 noted, *"As teachers, we're actually recommended to use AI, but in a way that makes our lives easier, like when we need to check if a student has used AI. We also use AI detection tools because AI has specific algorithms, right? So, it helps in preventing cheating."*

Some studies suggest that AI detection tools can play a supportive role in upholding academic integrity by helping flag potential instances of cheating or unoriginal work. A research evaluating AI content detection systems (such as those developed by OpenAI, Writer, GPTZero, and similar tools) has shown they can distinguish between human and AI-generated text with reasonable accuracy for earlier AI models, which can alert educators to possible misuse and prompt further investigation or discussion about originality (Elkhatat et al., 2023). Additionally, survey research on traditional plagiarism detection services like Turnitin indicates that many students perceive these systems as effective deterrents against plagiarism, as they raise awareness about academic honesty and encourage students to produce original work to avoid being flagged (Balbay & Kilis, 2019). However, critical literature calls for using AI detectors only as one part of a broader integrity strategy that incorporates human judgment and pedagogical practices rather than treating automated detection as conclusive evidence of misconduct (Balalle & Pannilage, 2025).

Insights Gained by Teachers Regarding Academic Dishonesty

On the insights of the participants regarding academic dishonesty, four (4) major themes emerged: 1) flexible teaching approaches; 2) fairness and ethical responsibility; 3) fostering independent learning; and 4) guiding proper use of AI tools. Table 3 shows the major themes and core ideas of the insights of teachers on academic dishonesty among students.

Table 3. Insights Gained by Teachers Regarding Academic Dishonesty

Major Themes	Core Ideas
Flexible Teaching Approaches	• Teachers should be prepared to change their teaching methods when faced with issues like academic dishonesty. • Teachers accommodate the diverse ways students learn. • Teachers find better ways and approaches to promote integrity.
Fairness and Ethical Responsibility	• Teachers should let students understand that lying and cheating are wrong.

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	• Teachers use strategies to maintain integrity and stop cheating before it happens. • Teachers enforce fairness where individual effort is needed to succeed in school.
Fostering Independent Learning	• Teachers promote honesty and ensure that students rely on their own efforts. • Teachers may encourage peer guidance, and students must develop their own academic discipline. • Teachers help instill that independence in learning leads to genuine knowledge and skill development.
Guiding Proper Use of AI Tools	• Teachers should show students how to use AI correctly. • Teachers should show students that they can use AI for learning like searching for new ideas. • Teachers should constantly remind students that AI is just a tool that can help them learn better.

Flexible Teaching Approaches

Adopting flexible teaching approaches allows educators to adjust their methods to meet the diverse learning needs of students. Teachers often modify their teaching strategies when confronted with challenges such as academic dishonesty. This includes accommodating the different ways students learn to ensure effective education for all. These efforts ultimately encourage the development of improved strategies to promote academic integrity and maintain fairness in the classroom.

Teachers realized that they must be prepared to change their teaching methods when faced with issues like academic dishonesty. According to FGD_1, *"Since children have many cheating strategies, we also need many ways to avoid academic dishonesty, we have to be prepared to change teaching methods to avoid academic dishonesty issues, that's all."* To accommodate the diverse ways students learn, FGD_2 cited, *"I adapt teaching to suit different learning styles and needs so that all my students can succeed assessment or activity."* In addition, IDI_3 also shared, *"I will find a way to promote integrity because that is one of the things that a child needs to develop."*

Studies of flexibility in education contexts have documented educators and students valuing adaptable features—such as varied deadlines, assessment types, and modality choices—that not only accommodate diverse learning needs but also humanize teaching and learning environments, which can indirectly support ethical engagement with course work (El Galad et al., 2024). Similarly, mixed-modal frameworks that allow instructors to tailor assessments and integrate tools like the Artificial Intelligence Assessment Scale (AIAS) have been shown to reduce academic misconduct cases while increasing student attainment and course pass rates, suggesting that adaptive pedagogical designs can support academic integrity alongside learning outcomes (Furze et al., 2024). However, some qualitative research on online assessment contexts suggests that flexible approaches such as open assessments or diversified tasks can sometimes coincide with heightened opportunities for misconduct if not carefully structured, underscoring the importance of deliberate design with integrity safeguards rather than flexibility per se (Jalilzadeh et al., 2024)

Fairness and Ethical Responsibility

Teachers promote fairness and ethical responsibility by educating students about the consequences of cheating and fostering personal accountability. They help students understand that lying and cheating are wrong, teach strategies to prevent dishonesty, and encourage independent effort. Over time, students come to realize that

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personal diligence is essential for success in school. This can be linked to the response of IDI_1, who shared, *"Be honest role models; true success comes from effort and learning."* IDI_2 also pointed out, *"Imposing rules before starting an exam, class or learning session to build an atmosphere that values integrity."* Likewise, IDI_3 emphasized, *"You should instill in yourselves that you must not cheat; you should strive within your own abilities."*

Teachers emphasize fairness and ethical responsibility to reduce student cheating. Recent research shows that strong ethical attitudes and academic integrity are linked to lower dishonesty. İn line with this, Jalilzadeh et al., (2024) found that teachers' views on cheating and coping strategies highlight the need for ethical education and clear expectations. These measures help discourage cheating in assessments and support a culture of integrity. Similarly, Cheng et al., (2021) showed that students with positive ethical attitudes in high-ethical climates engaged in less academic dishonesty. Nonetheless, meta-analytic evidence highlights the strong influence of peer behavior on individual cheating, indicating that even students aware of ethical norms may still cheat if they observe peers doing so, thereby challenging the sufficiency of teacher-centered ethical messaging alone (Zhao et al., 2022).

Fostering Independent Learning

Teachers have observed that fostering independent learning helps students develop personal accountability and critical thinking, both of which are essential for maintaining academic integrity. Promoting honesty encourages students to rely on their own efforts, while well-designed assessments support independent work. Without constant peer guidance, students cultivate their own academic discipline, and this independence, in turn, fosters genuine knowledge and skill development.

These insights are based on the responses of IDI_1, who stated, *"As a teacher, I encourage the children to be honest. I remind them that the feeling is different when you pass with your effort than when you don't have any 'artificial' ingredients."* IDI_2 also shared, *"If I were to create an assessment, it really needs to challenge the children to work on their own because the better designed the assessment is, the more the child will be challenged."* Moreover, IDI_3 emphasized, *"In terms of their honesty, like when they say they absolutely cannot lie or cheat."* Participants agreed, *"When students take control of their own learning, they gain a real understanding of things and become skilled."*

Studies show that students exhibiting stronger self-regulated learning skills—such as environment structuring, goal setting, and self-evaluation—tend to report lower incidences of academic dishonesty, suggesting that personal accountability cultivated through independent learning helps reduce cheating behaviors (Kusuma, 2022). Similarly, embedding academic integrity principles into curriculum and pedagogy fosters student agency and frames integrity as a desirable aspect of academic identity, which supports autonomous engagement and ethical decision-making (Brickhill et al., 2024). On the other hand, factors such as external pressures, motivations, and personality traits can strongly influence cheating behaviors independent of students' self-regulated learning capacities, implying that fostering independence must be paired with broader motivational and cultural strategies to be effective (Eshet, 2024).

Guiding Proper Use of AI Tools

The results suggest that teachers should guide students in the ethical use of AI tools, ensuring they understand AI's role as a support system rather than a substitute for critical thinking. Beside, teachers must demonstrate proper and effective use of AI, emphasizing its ethical application as a learning aid. Participants commonly reported that educators should not only instruct students on how to use AI tools effectively but also highlight the importance of responsible usage, clearly distinguishing AI's supportive role from independent thought and critical analysis.

IDI_1 and IDI_2 shared their realizations and learning in promoting integrity: *"I usually remind my students how to use AI properly because sometimes they overuse it, so every time I have them do it, I remind them about the proper use of AI tools (IDI_1)." "It's not always forbidden to use AI tools; sometimes AI can be useful, especially for searching for new ideas (IDI_2)."* In addition, IDI_3 also shared that, *"As a teacher, we should*

remind our students that AI is just a tool to help them learn better, especially if there are students who don't like the teacher, so at least we can help them out."

The UNESCO's AI in education guidance stress that ethical and human-centred AI integration requires building capacity and readiness in both teachers and learners so AI enhances learning rather than undermines educational values (UNESCO, 2026). In addition, promoting a culture of ethical AI use and academic honesty is essential, underscoring that unchecked AI adoption may undermine learning if not paired with integrity-focused instruction (Balalle & Pannilage, 2025). On the contrary, a systematic review on K-12 AI ethics education concluded that ethical AI literacy remains underprioritized in classrooms and highlighted the urgent need for structured AI ethics instruction to prepare students to understand AI limitations, risks, and ethical use (Ma et al., 2025).

CONCLUSION

The analyses of the results reveal that addressing academic dishonesty among students has significant implications for teaching practice. Teachers face ongoing challenges such as the misuse of AI tools, plagiarism, and cheating via mobile devices, all of which hinder the development of critical thinking, creativity, and academic responsibility. Based on participants' experiences, effective responses include establishing clear policies, providing ethical guidance, and strategically using technology. Promoting honesty, implementing fair assessment practices, and employing AI detection tools can help shape students' values while maintaining a classroom environment grounded in trust and accountability.

These efforts, however, must be thoughtfully balanced to avoid over-reliance on punitive measures or technological monitoring, which may raise fear or suspicion. Encouraging independent learning, guiding the responsible use of digital tools, and consistently reinforcing ethical expectations can lead to more meaningful learning outcomes. The study suggests that teachers and school leaders integrate these strategies into daily classroom practices, emphasizing that promoting academic integrity relies on consistent values, clear expectations, and a student-centered approach rather than expensive systems. Moreover, the findings indicate the need for further research with larger and more diverse participant groups across different grade levels and educational settings, as well as the inclusion of student perspectives, to achieve a more comprehensive understanding of academic dishonesty and effective interventions.

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