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Academic integrity of tertiary students and its outcome to academic performance: Basis for a sustainable learning environment

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ABSTRACT

Academic integrity in higher education is a topic of choice, especially in the era of artificial intelligence (AI). Hence, institutions are making waves to establish a concrete, sustainable policy to regulate and monitor students and promote a credible academic experience. This study investigated the level of academic integrity and academic performance among tertiary students at a higher education institution in Olongapo City, Philippines. Using a descriptive-correlational research design, the study assessed the perceptions of 395 participants who were sampled via convenience sampling. The investigation employed a research tool adapted from a previous study comprising five latent variables: Honesty, Fairness, Respect, Trust, and Responsibility. This investigation was conducted during the first semester of the academic year 2025-2026. Employing both descriptive and inferential statistics using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23, the study revealed a high overall level of academic integrity, with honesty emerging as the highest-rated dimension. Academic performance was similarly robust, with 37.2% of the sample achieving a "Very Good" and 30.1% reaching "Excellent." Inferential analyses using *t*-tests and ANOVA indicated significant differences in integrity levels by sex at birth, college affiliation, and year level. At the same time, age specifically influenced perceptions of Fairness and Trust. Correlation analysis established significant positive relationships between all integrity dimensions and academic achievement. Furthermore, multiple regression analysis identified Trust as a significant unique predictor of academic performance, with honesty showing marginal significance. These findings suggest that a student's commitment to ethical standards is intrinsically linked to their scholastic success. The study concludes that educational institutions must implement tailored interventions that account for demographic diversity to cultivate a culture of Trust and Responsibility, ultimately fostering a sustainable learning environment that supports both ethical standards and academic outcomes.

Keywords: academic integrity, academic performance, tertiary students, sustainable learning environment, Olongapo City, SDG 4 (quality education)

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INTRODUCTION

Academic integrity stands as a foundational pillar that shapes not only the ethical standards of institutions but also the intellectual and personal development of students. It refers to the commitment to honesty, Trust, fairness, Respect, and Responsibility within academic work. With the rapid shift in classroom course delivery to an online modality, academic integrity violations presented greater opportunities and increased instructor concerns (Maryon et al., 2022). Stoesz and Eaton (2020) also noted that punitive approaches to academic misconduct were based on the notion that academic misconduct stems from a lack of morals. It encompasses behaviors such as avoiding plagiarism, cheating, fabrication, and other forms of academic misconduct. In a related vein, Cerda-Navarro et al. (2022) noted that almost all universities have plagiarism-detection tools and academic regulations or specific codes of conduct for students addressing fraud or dishonesty. Upholding these values is essential, as it reflects the authenticity of students' efforts and the credibility of the academic qualifications they earn. For instance, in New Zealand, most universities have developed policies that combine educational and punitive approaches to academic integrity (Möller, 2023). In the Mid-Atlantic Region of the United States, DiPaulo (2022) reported that self-reported engagement in academic dishonesty among preservice teachers was comparable to that of undergraduate students in other majors. Tatum (2022) added that having an honor code appears to work by educating students about academic integrity. De Maio and Dixon (2022) also reminded us that maintaining and promoting academic

integrity as a culture is everyone's business and that there is no simple solution.

The rapid advancement of technology, the increasing pressure to achieve high academic results, and the competitive nature of educational environments have made academic integrity violations a growing concern in higher education institutions (HEIs) globally. In a Chinese study, Liu and Alias (2022) found that more than two-thirds of their respondents had experienced an episode of academic dishonesty in examinations and assignments at least once during the previous academic year. Many students today face immense academic and social pressure, often leading them to resort to dishonest practices such as copying assignments, using unauthorized resources during examinations, or engaging in contract cheating. Novick et al. (2022) also reported that students experienced greater stress and perceived a heavier workload in online courses, and were aware of cheating during online exams. These behaviors not only compromise their personal growth and ethical values but may also distort the true measure of their academic capabilities, now that Artificial Intelligence (AI) is at every student's doorstep. Gulumbe et al. (2025) also added that the implementation and enforcement of guidelines are a must to ensure that the integration of AI in academia does not compromise the integrity of work.

Understanding the relationship between academic integrity and academic performance is critical for educators and policymakers alike. Academic performance—commonly measured through grades, GPA, and academic recognition—is often viewed as a primary metric of success in educational institutions. However, when performance is achieved through dishonest means, it raises questions about the quality of learning and the validity of academic credentials. Ossai et al. (2023) provided some evidence suggesting that academic integrity is a significant predictor of academic performance among students. Liaqat et al. (2024) also reported a significant relationship between academic integrity and students' academic performance. Conversely, students who practice academic integrity are more likely to develop genuine understanding, critical thinking, and lifelong learning skills, which are essential for both academic and professional success. Kapur (2024) stipulated that academic honesty is crucial for achieving educational objectives among students.

In the country, there were some local studies on academic integrity, especially among college students. Jose et al. (2025) shared that students employ and uphold integrity, which underscores the ambiguities in digital collaboration norms, peer influence, and proactive strategies. In the paper by Lichauco et al. (2023), the authors corroborated that academic misconduct is prevalent among students in higher education, indicating the normalization of such behavior. According to Chavez (2023), organizational and institutional contexts are relevant to students' academic integrity. On the other hand, Aproda et al. (2024) emphasized that students might misuse artificial intelligence (AI) technology, which might breach academic integrity. Lastly, Sagge (2024) enumerated factors that can influence academic integrity, such as the learning environment, cheating, ethical concerns, educational impact, academic anxiety, mental health, external pressures, technological challenges, and motivation.

Based on these different findings regarding students' perspectives on academic integrity, there is yet to be local literature that has statistically analyzed academic integrity as a factor in students' academic performance. Most literature in the global and local scenes treated academic integrity as a singular factor that influences academic performance. In the current paper, the proponent determined if the five latent variables of academic integrity can statistically influence academic performance.

Hence, this research aims to explore the concept of academic integrity among students in higher education institutions and examine its outcomes on their academic performance. Specifically, it seeks to assess how adherence to or violations of academic integrity principles influence students' academic outcomes, and the extent to which institutional policies and student attitudes contribute to this dynamic. By identifying patterns and correlations, the study will provide valuable insights into the ethical landscape of academia and offer recommendations for promoting a culture of integrity that supports meaningful academic achievement.

Ultimately, this research underscores the importance of fostering an academic environment where integrity is not only expected but deeply ingrained in the educational experience. Promoting academic honesty is not merely about preventing misconduct; it is about cultivating responsible, ethical, and competent individuals who will carry these values beyond the classroom and into their future careers and contributions to society.

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

This study employed a quantitative cross-sectional research design to achieve its primary purpose. A cross-sectional research design aims to examine a particular phenomenon or characteristic at a single point in time from a sample of individuals. Savitz and Wellenius (2023) supported this idea. They stipulated that cross-sectional studies are those in which exposure and outcome are assessed at the same point in time. Specifically, this design is appropriate for the study, facilitating the investigation of the relationship between students' academic integrity at a higher education institution and their academic performance, allowing for a concurrent analysis of how academic standards of honesty align with their scholastic achievement.

Participants

To achieve the objectives of the study, the proponent recruited 395 voluntary participants. The participants generally came from a higher education institution located in Olongapo City, Philippines. They were chosen particularly because it is one of the leading institutions in the city, and its students are competitive, as reflected in their commendable and exemplary performances in board examinations and other regional and national competitions. The investigation then used a convenience sampling technique to gather enough participants for the study over a period of one month, from November to December, 2025, during the first semester of the academic year 2025-2026 of the said participating institution. Convenience sampling is a non-probability method in which researchers choose participants based on their immediate accessibility, proximity, and availability. Golzar et al. (2022) also support this idea in their paper. It is highly cost-effective and time-efficient as well.

To be eligible for the investigation, the participant should be a bona fide, full-time, regular student of the said participating institution. The participant must also be willing to participate in an online survey.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics of the participants

Profile	Frequency	Percentage
College		
CAHS	185	46.8
CCS	73	18.5
CEAS	73	18.5
CHTM	64	16.2
Year Level		
First	138	34.9
Second	51	12.9
Third	182	46.1
Fourth	24	6.1
Sex at Birth		
Female	227	57.5
Male	168	42.5
Age		
< 20 years old	267	67.5
21 – 25 years old	113	28.6
26 – 30 years old	7	1.8
> 31 years old	8	2.0
Total	**395**	**100.0**

Students outside the participating institution, studying part-time, and not interested in answering the online survey were excluded.

Instrumentation

In this investigation, the proponent adapted the previous study by Ramdani (2018), which aimed to address the study's main objective: academic integrity among students. The research tool consisted of five (5) latent variables: honesty, fairness, respect, trust, and responsibility. For the honesty aspect, a sample item includes *"Honesty trains us to believe in our abilities."* As for the Fairness aspect, a sample item presents *"I am glad when a friend asks my idea in doing the lecture work."* For the Respect, the item includes *"Regular academic evaluation is very important in the learning process."* For the Trust, the item includes *"I like to discuss how to cite the reference sources that lecturers present in the classroom."* Lastly, for the Responsibility, a sample item includes, *"I feel a good image of campus is a shared responsibility."*

The scale was also based on using a Likert continuum from one (1) to five (5) with the following response counterparts: Very Appropriate (5), Appropriate (4), Neutral (3), Inappropriate (2), and Very Inappropriate (1). In terms of the scale's reliability, it has an overall coefficient of 0.866, which is considered highly reliable at this level.

Statistical Analysis

Using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) version 23, the collected data were subjected to both descriptive and inferential analyses. The proponent first performed a Shapiro-Wilk test for normality; the data were not normally distributed; hence, the bootstrapping method was employed for inferential statistics. The bootstrap method is a powerful statistical technique that estimates the accuracy of sample statistics by repeatedly resampling the original data with replacement. Kostanek et al. (2024) reported that using the bootstrap method can greatly improve statistical analysis, thereby overcoming the constraints of conventional parametric tests. For the descriptive statistics, the proponent used frequency and percentage distributions for the participants' demographic characteristics. On the other hand, mean and standard deviation distributions were used to assess students' academic integrity. As for the inferential statistics, the study used t-tests, Analysis of Variance, Pearson's r, and linear regression with bootstrapping, since the data were not normally distributed.

RESULTS

The main objective of this study is to determine the level of academic integrity among tertiary students and analyze its relationship to their academic performance. The succeeding tables below show the results of the investigation.

Table 1 presents the demographic profile of the participants, categorized by college affiliation, year level, sex at birth, and age. The data reveal that the largest group of respondents belongs to the College of Allied Health Sciences (CAHS), accounting for 46.8% (f = 185) of the total sample, while the remaining colleges (CCS, CEAS, and CHTM) show relatively equal but smaller distributions ranging from 16.2% to 18.5%. Regarding academic standing, the majority of the participants are Third Year students (46.1%, f = 182), followed by First Year students (34.9%, f = 138). There is a notably lower representation of Fourth Year students, who constitute only 6.1% (f = 24) of the total population. This distribution suggests that the study's findings primarily reflect the perspectives of mid- to lower-level undergraduates. By sex at birth, the sample is predominantly female, accounting for 57.5% (f = 227) of participants, compared with 42.5% (f = 168) male. Finally, the age distribution indicates a young participant base. A significant majority of the respondents are under 20 years old (67.5%, f = 267), followed by those in the 21–25 age bracket (28.6%, f = 113). Only a marginal fraction of the population (3.8%) is aged 26 or older. The data suggest a respondent profile typical of a traditional undergraduate setting, characterized by young adults (primarily under 20), a higher concentration of females, and students from health-related disciplines.

The distribution of mean and standard deviation scores for participants' academic integrity, as illustrated in **Table 2**, reveals varying levels across the different latent variables. Participants scored highest in the honesty domain (M = 4.45, SD = 0.757), which was rated "very appropriate," indicating strong adherence to ethical principles related to truthfulness. Fairness (M = 4.12, SD = 0.766), interpreted as "appropriate," and Respect (M = 4.33, SD = 0.783), interpreted as "very

Table 2. Mean and standard deviation distribution for the academic integrity of the participants

Latent Variables	Mean	Standard Deviation	Interpretation
Honesty	4.45	0.757	Very Appropriate
Fairness	4.12	0.766	Appropriate
Respect	4.33	0.783	Very Appropriate
Trust	4.17	0.819	Appropriate
Responsibility	4.25	0.832	Very Appropriate
Overall	**4.26**	**0.698**	**Very Appropriate**

Legend: 4.21 – 5.00 = Very Appropriate; 3.41 – 4.20 = Appropriate; 2.61 – 3.40 = Neutral; 1.81 – 2.60 = Inappropriate; 1.00 – 1.80 = Very Inappropriate

Table 3. Distribution for the academic performance of the participants

GPA	Interpretation	Frequency	Percentage
75 – 79%	Average	10	2.5
80 – 84%	Good	81	20.5
85 – 89 %	Very Good	147	37.2
90 – 94%	Excellent	119	30.1
95% above	Outstanding	38	9.6

Table 4. Significant differences in the academic integrity of the participants based on sex

Latent Variables	*t*- value	Mean Difference	Bias	Std. Error	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% LCI	95% UCI
Honesty	3.858*	0.292	0.002	0.078	.001	0.144	0.449
Fairness	1.479	0.115	0.002	0.081	.155	-0.048	0.272
Respect	2.287*	0.182	0.003	0.084	.028	0.025	0.351
Trust	2.039	0.169	-0.001	0.882	.060	-0.008	0.347
Responsibility	1.710	0.145	-0.000	0.091	.118	-0.031	0.330
Overall	2.559*	0.181	0.001	0.076	.021	0.033	0.335

Note: df= 393; *p < .05; Bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

appropriate," also yielded high mean scores, suggesting a commitment to fair treatment and respectful behavior. Trust (M = 4.17, SD = 0.819) and responsibility (M = 4.25, SD = 0.832), interpreted as "appropriate" and "very appropriate," respectively, were rated slightly lower but still demonstrated significant endorsement. The overall mean integrity score of 4.26 (SD = 0.698) indicates a generally high level of academic integrity (very appropriate) among the participants, demonstrating their strong ethical values and commitment to upholding integrity standards in academic settings.

With high mean scores across various latent variables such as honesty, fairness, respect, trust, and responsibility, the participants demonstrate a strong dedication to upholding integrity standards. The overall mean integrity score of 4.26 suggests a consistent adherence to ethical behavior and values among the participants. This result underscores a positive academic environment characterized by a culture of honesty, fairness, respect, trust, and responsibility, essential for fostering a community committed to academic integrity and ethical conduct.

The distribution of academic performance among participants, as outlined in **Table 3**, shows a diverse range of performance levels across GPA categories. The majority of participants fall within the "Very Good" category, with 147 individuals (37.2%) achieving grades between 85% and 89%. Additionally, a significant portion of participants are classified as "Good," with 81 individuals (20.5%) attaining grades in the 80%-84% range. Furthermore, 119 participants (30.1%) demonstrate an "Excellent" performance level, with grades ranging from 90% to 94%. A smaller yet notable group of 38 participants (9.6%) excel academically, earning grades of 95% or higher and placing them in the "Outstanding" category. This distribution signifies a diverse range of academic achievements among the participants, highlighting a spectrum of performance levels and indicating a generally strong academic performance within the group.

The analysis in **Table 4** examines significant differences in participants' academic integrity by sex across various latent variables. Results indicate significant differences in honesty, respect, and overall integrity. Specifically, regarding honesty, there is a significant mean difference (t = 3.858, p = .001) favoring one gender by 0.292 units. Similarly, Respect also shows a significant difference (t = 2.287, p = .028) with a mean difference of 0.182 units. The overall integrity score also displays a significant difference (t = 2.559, p = .021) with a mean difference of 0.181 units. These findings suggest that gender may shape perceptions and behaviors related to honesty, Respect, and overall integrity among participants, underscoring the importance of considering gender dynamics in academic integrity assessments and interventions.

The analysis presented in **Table 5** examines significant differences in participants' academic integrity by college affiliation across various latent variables. The results reveal notable differences in academic integrity among participants from different colleges. For honesty, fairness, respect, trust, responsibility, and overall integrity, significant differences are observed between groups. Specifically, the F-tests indicate statistically significant differences for each latent variable: honesty [F (3, 391) = 14.195, p = .000], fairness [F (3, 391) = 3.556, p = .014], respect [F (3, 391) = 5.941, p = .001], trust [F (3, 391) = 8.662, p = .000], responsibility [F (3, 391) = 5.591, p = .001], and overall integrity [F (3, 391) = 9.088, p = .000]. These findings suggest that participants' levels of academic integrity vary significantly by college affiliation, underscoring the importance of accounting for institutional differences in promoting and maintaining integrity standards in educational settings.

Table 5. Significant differences in the academic integrity of the participants based on college

Latent Variables		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Honesty	Between Groups	22.207	3	7.402	14.195*	.000
	Within Groups	203.896	391	0.521		
	Total	226.103	394			
Fairness	Between Groups	6.163	3	2.054	3.556*	.014
	Within Groups	225.866	391	0.578		
	Total	232.029	394			
Respect	Between Groups	10.556	3	3.519	5.941*	.001
	Within Groups	231.555	391	0.592		
	Total	242.111	394			
Trust	Between Groups	16.498	3	5.499	8.662*	.000
	Within Groups	248.250	391	0.635		
	Total	264.748	394			
Responsibility	Between Groups	11.257	3	3.752	5.591*	.001
	Within Groups	262.426	391	0.671		
	Total	273.684	394			
Overall	Between Groups	12.533	3	4.178	9.088*	.000
	Within Groups	179.746	391	0.460		
	Total	192.279	394			

Note: *p < .05; Bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Table 6. Significant differences in the academic integrity of the participants based on year level

Latent Variables		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Honesty	Between Groups	24.704	3	8.235	15.987*	.000
	Within Groups	201.399	391	0.515		
	Total	226.103	394			
Fairness	Between Groups	4.973	3	1.658	2.854*	.037
	Within Groups	227.057	391	0.581		
	Total	232.029	394			
Respect	Between Groups	10.645	3	3.548	5.994*	.001
	Within Groups	231.466	391	0.592		
	Total	242.111	394			
Trust	Between Groups	13.863	3	4.621	7.202*	.000
	Within Groups	250.885	391	0.642		
	Total	264.748	394			
Responsibility	Between Groups	6.812	3	2.271	3.327*	.020
	Within Groups	266.871	391	0.683		
	Total	273.684	394			
Overall	Between Groups	11.125	3	3.708	8.004*	.000
	Within Groups	181.154	391	0.463		
	Total	192.279	394			

Note: *p < .05; Bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

The analysis in **Table 6** examines significant differences in participants' academic integrity by year level across various latent variables. The results indicate distinct variations in academic integrity among participants at different year levels. For honesty, trust, responsibility, and overall integrity, statistically significant differences are observed between groups. The F-tests reveal significant differences for each latent variable: honesty [F (3, 391) = 15.987, p = .000], trust [F (3, 391) = 7.202, p = .037], responsibility [F (3, 391) = 3.327, p = .020], and overall integrity [F (3, 391) = 8.004, p = .000]. Additionally, fairness and respect show significant differences by year level, indicating variations in these aspects of academic integrity across different academic years. These findings highlight the importance of considering year level in academic integrity, emphasizing the need for tailored interventions and support mechanisms to effectively promote integrity standards within educational contexts.

Table 7 presents significant differences in participants' academic integrity by age across various latent variables. The analysis indicates varying levels of academic integrity among participants of different age groups. For fairness and trust, statistically significant differences are observed between age groups. Specifically, the F-tests reveal significant differences in fairness [F(3, 391) = 2.625, p = .050] and trust [F(3, 391) = 2.726, p = .044], suggesting that these aspects of academic integrity may be influenced by age. While honesty, Respect, Responsibility, and overall integrity do not show significant differences based on age, the findings highlight the potential impact of age on specific dimensions of academic integrity. These results underscore the importance of considering age-related factors in understanding and promoting academic integrity across diverse age cohorts, emphasizing the need for tailored strategies to address integrity challenges effectively.

Table 8 displays the relationship between academic integrity and participants' academic performance across various latent variables. The analysis reveals significant positive correlations between academic integrity and academic performance for honesty (r = .288, p = .000), fairness (r = .210, p = .000), respect (r = .162, p = .001), trust (r = .237, p

Table 7. Significant differences in the academic integrity of the participants based on age

Latent Variables		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Honesty	Between Groups	4.163	3	1.388	2.444	.064
	Within Groups	221.940	391	0.568		
	Total	226.103	394			
Fairness	Between Groups	4.581	3	1.527	2.625*	.050
	Within Groups	227.449	391	0.582		
	Total	232.029	394			
Respect	Between Groups	2.538	3	0.846	1.381	.248
	Within Groups	239.572	391	0.613		
	Total	242.111	394			
Trust	Between Groups	5.423	3	1.082	2.726*	.044
	Within Groups	259.325	391	0.663		
	Total	264.748	394			
Responsibility	Between Groups	3.245	3	1.082	1.564	.198
	Within Groups	270.438	391	0.692		
	Total	273.684	394			
Overall	Between Groups	3.530	3	1.177	2.437	.064
	Within Groups	188.749	391	0.483		
	Total	192.279	394			

Note: *p < .05; Bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Table 8. Relationship between academic integrity and academic performance of the participants

Latent Variables	Pearson Correlation	Sig. (2-tailed)	Bias	Std. Error	95% LCI	95% UCI
Honesty	.288*	.000	-0.002	0.052	0.121	0.326
Fairness	.210*	000	-0.001	0.049	0.115	0.305
Respect	.162*	.001	-0.002	0.052	0.054	0.266
Trust	.237*	.000	-0.002	0.051	0.129	0.335
Responsibility	.177*	.000	-0.001	0.051	0.074	0.280
Overall	.230*	.000	-0.002	0.051	0.125	0.325

Note: N = 395; Bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

Table 9. Predictors of academic performance based on academic integrity of the participants

Latent Variables	B	Bias	Std. Error	Sig. (2-tailed)	95% LCI	95% UCI
(Constant)	1.846	-0.023	0.356	.001	1.075	2.506
Honesty	0.230	0.005	0.124	.062	-0.007	0.484
Fairness	0.109	-0.004	0.108	.311	-0.111	0.306
Respect	-0.191	-0.003	0.125	.122	-0.429	0.057
Trust	0.220*	0.009	0.107	.041	0.026	0.439
Responsibility	-0.040	-0.002	0.100	.687	-0.238	0.165

Note: *p < .05; Bootstrap results are based on 1000 bootstrap samples

= .000), responsibility (r = .177, p = .000), and overall integrity (r = .230, p = .000). These findings suggest that higher levels of academic integrity, encompassing honesty, fairness, Respect, Trust, Responsibility, and overall integrity, are associated with improved academic performance among the participants. The results underscore the importance of fostering and maintaining academic integrity as a key factor in enhancing learners' academic achievement.

Table 9 presents predictors of academic performance, based on participants' academic integrity across various latent variables. The analysis reveals that Trust emerges as a significant predictor of academic performance, with a positive coefficient (B = 0.220, p = .041), indicating that higher levels of Trust in academic integrity are associated with better academic performance among participants. However, honesty shows a marginally significant relationship with academic performance (B = 0.230, p = .062), suggesting a potential influence on academic achievement. Conversely, fairness, respect, and responsibility do not demonstrate significant predictive power for academic performance, regardless of participants' academic integrity. These findings highlight the importance of trust as a key factor influencing academic performance in the context of academic integrity, underscoring its role in fostering successful academic outcomes among learners.

DISCUSSION

Based on the study's objective, the investigation yielded interesting findings that can contribute significantly to practice and the body of knowledge.

The study reveals a student body characterized by both high moral standards and strong academic achievement. According to the descriptive statistics, participants demonstrated a high level of academic integrity, with "Honesty" the most endorsed trait and "Fairness" the least endorsed. This decent profile parallels their academic success. Nevertheless, the current result somewhat contradicts the past study by Eshet and Margaliot (2022), which revealed that 71% of their student participants reported cheating at some point during their academic studies. Rodrigues et al. (2025) also claimed that AI tools are a threat to

students' academic integrity in higher education. At the same time, Fowler (2023) stressed that cultivating ethical values within the academic community is essential to justify the potential "dumbing down" effect and to preserve the core tenets of academic integrity. However, McIntire et al. (2024) suggested that, rather than combating cheating, educators should teach about its moral repugnance, as it is pragmatically untenable given its detrimental effects on learning. In the Philippines, Chavez (2023) explained that the institution has the role of leading and introducing strategies to implement policies relevant to academic integrity, thereby encouraging honesty among students.

For the next variable, academic performance, the study indicates that the vast majority of participants are high achievers, with over 67% falling into the "Very Good" (85–89%) or "Excellent" (90–94%) GPA categories, and nearly 10% achieving "Outstanding" marks. In the previous paper by Dumanjug et al. (2024), the authors reported that their respondents had a "low" level of academic performance, which contradicted the recent study's findings. Zhang et al. (2024) also noted in their paper that first-year students have better academic performance than students in higher year levels. Additionally, March-Amengual et al. (2022) reported that first-year students achieved academic performance above the passing mark.

When examining the factors that influence these integrity levels, the analysis suggests that institutional context plays a more significant role than biological factors. The current study shows that a student's college affiliation and year level are associated with significant differences across all latent variables (honesty, fairness, respect, trust, and responsibility). Based on Stone's (2023) previous study, students reported strong emotional reactions to the process of academic integrity and to its breach by Artificial Intelligence (AI). Campbell and Waddington (2024) also noted that students must be regularly and consistently reminded of the principles of academic integrity and guided to use student-friendly language on campus. This idea implies that a department's specific academic culture and a student's maturity are major drivers of ethical behavior. A local study by Plata et al. (2023) also highlighted three ideas regarding academic integrity in universities: enforcement of academic integrity, education of faculty and students on academic misconduct, and encouragement of the use of generative AI tools in the academe and workplace. Additionally, a previous paper by Lund et al. (2025) reported high awareness among students of university integrity policies and substantial concern about the use of AI in academic writing. In contrast, the investigation also indicates that sex influenced only specific traits, such as Honesty and Respect. At the same time, age had the least impact, creating significant differences only in Fairness and Trust. In relation to this finding, Sullivan et al. (2023) argued that public opinion was mixed, and university responses focused on academic integrity concerns and opportunities, with an emphasis on innovation and assessment design. Cotton et al. (2024) also noted that ensuring academic integrity in the era of generative AI has posed difficulties in detecting and preventing academic dishonesty and suggested strategies that universities can adopt to ensure the ethical and responsible use of such tools.

Most critically, the research establishes a clear, positive link between ethical behavior and academic success. The study demonstrates a statistically significant positive correlation between every dimension of academic integrity and academic performance, with honesty showing the strongest individual relationship. The current findings support the past study by Almutairi (2022), which found a significant relationship between honesty, fairness, responsibility, respect, and trust and students' ethical behavior. Additionally, Ossai et al. (2023) reinforced the study's findings, which showed that academic integrity significantly predicts academic performance. Local studies by Evangelista et al. (2025) and Villaver et al. (2025) also reported a similar result, finding that academic integrity was significantly associated with students' academic performance. From an Asian perspective, Mahmood and Kuan (2025) also reported a similar result in their previous paper. However, the regression analysis provides a nuanced conclusion: while honesty is highly correlated with good grades, trust is the significant predictor of academic performance. This concept suggests that while honest students tend to do well, it is the specific capacity for trust—likely a belief in the validity of the educational system and the fairness of others—that actively drives higher academic achievement.

LIMITATION OF THE STUDY AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Based on the investigation, several limitations were identified in the study's scope, sample characteristics, and methodology.

First, a primary limitation stems from the skewed demographic profile of the sample. The study had more participants from a particular college. Because the sample is heavily concentrated within a single college and specific demographic bands, these findings lack broad generalizability. It is suggested to employ a probability sampling technique to address this issue in the future.

Second, the study is constrained by its cross-sectional design and reliance on correlation. While the study established a significant positive correlation between academic integrity and academic achievement, correlation does not equal causation. Furthermore, because the study captures a snapshot of students predominantly in their third year, it cannot track how a student's relationship with academic integrity evolves dynamically from their first year through graduation.

Finally, there is an inherent methodological risk of social desirability bias. Academic integrity is a highly sensitive topic. Because the study measures abstract dimensions like "trust" and links them to integrity, students likely self-reported their behaviors and attitudes. In such surveys, participants often underreport dishonest behaviors and overreport ethical ones to appear favorable, which may skew the data and result in the "robust level of academic integrity" observed in the findings.

CONCLUSION

Based on the comprehensive findings of this study, it can be concluded that participants, predominantly young, female, third-year students from the College of Allied Health Sciences, exhibit a robust level of academic integrity and generally strong academic performance, with the majority achieving "Very Good" to "Excellent" GPAs. The results indicate that academic integrity is not uniform across the student body; rather, it is significantly influenced by demographic variables including sex at birth, college affiliation, year level, and, to a lesser extent, age. Crucially, the study establishes a significant positive correlation between all dimensions of academic integrity and academic achievement, identifying Trust as the primary significant predictor of

superior academic performance. Ultimately, these findings underscore that fostering a culture of ethical conduct, particularly by strengthening institutional Trust and addressing demographic variations in perceptions of integrity, is essential for enhancing the academic success and ethical development of the student population. The study's findings can serve as a basis for a sustainable learning environment for tertiary students.

IMPLICATION OF THE STUDY

Based on the finding that academic integrity varies significantly across demographics like sex, college affiliation, and year level, institutions cannot rely on a one-size-fits-all approach. Instead, college or university administrators and educators should design targeted, culturally distinct academic integrity campaigns. For instance, since the study noted variations by year level and age, upper-level students or specific colleges might benefit from advanced workshops on complex ethical scenarios, such as professional research ethics. At the same time, first-year orientations should focus on foundational concepts, such as plagiarism and citation. By tailoring these interventions to specific student profiles, institutions can proactively address vulnerabilities before they manifest as misconduct.

Furthermore, the significant positive correlation between academic integrity and academic achievement fundamentally challenges the misconception that cheating is a necessary shortcut to high grades. Educational institutions should leverage this insight to reshape how they talk about ethics, moving away from a punitive "detect and punish" model toward a proactive framework that links character development directly to intellectual excellence. Faculty should explicitly communicate to students that mastering honest scholarship practices is a foundational building block of earning a top-tier GPA, effectively framing integrity as an academic asset rather than an administrative burden.

Most critically, because Trust was identified as the primary predictor of superior academic performance, universities must actively cultivate high-trust learning environments. In practice, this implies that faculty should move away from overly adversarial assessment methods such as aggressive, hyper-surveilled proctoring, which can inadvertently signal distrust and induce anxiety. Instead, educators should focus on building strong student-teacher rapport and implementing authentic assessments, such as project-based learning or reflective portfolios, where students feel valued and trusted. When students perceive that their academic community trusts them, they are not only more likely to uphold ethical standards. However, they are also psychologically empowered to achieve higher academic success.

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