

Relationship of Attitude toward Cheating to Academic Integrity, Moderated by ‘Khauf’ (Fear of God)

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ABSTRACT

Previous research has explored various strategies for promoting academic integrity (AI); however, there is a gap in understanding how religious behavior, particularly the concept of khauf (fear of God), can be investigated as a factor influencing and moderator toward academic integrity. Therefore, this study aimed to analyze whether khauf moderates the influence of attitude toward cheating (ATC) on academic integrity. Using the PLS-SEM analysis method, the questionnaire was distributed through cluster random sampling to 224 students of Islamic colleges in Jakarta, Tangerang, and Bekasi. The results showed that the fear of God (khauf) can moderate the influence of attitude toward cheating (ATC) on academic integrity, with a significance p-value of 0,002. Integrating religious values such as *khauf* may be a valuable approach to strengthening academic integrity in educational institutions. The practical implications of this research were the need to consider strategies that emphasize religious moral values as an essential element in building an integrated academic culture, one of which is the fear of God (khauf).

INTRODUCTION

Integrity is an imperative requirement for the growth of a moral generation of the nation because education is the main element that can be a means of building people with integrity. In the context of education, a review of integrity is known as academic integrity (Hafizha, 2021). The concept of academic integrity that is widely agreed upon by psychology experts is often defined as academic honesty, which is considered a moral value and behavior to act honestly in any situation related to academic goals, and all students are expected to apply this principle to themselves (Olasehinde-Williams, 2006). Yulk and Van Fleet also stated that the discussion of integrity seems to have become an inseparable part of the discussion of honesty, both in the literature on individual and organizational honesty and human resources, and individual honesty is most often associated with academic integrity (Wisesa, 2011).

Cheating behavior remains prevalent among students in Indonesia, even at the university level. A survey conducted by the Little Circle Foundation in 2015 on 344 students at Udayana University revealed that 92.7% of students admitted to cheating during exams (Cahyo et al., 2017). Of those, 59.7% reported feeling indifferent about their actions, while only 30.3% felt guilty after cheating. This survey underscores the widespread occurrence of cheating among university students and highlights that only a small portion experience remorse for their actions. Similarly, a study on



11th-grade science students at SMA Negeri 2 Pati found that, despite a high level of self-regulation in learning (with 43.7% of students scoring high), 54.5% of students still engaged in moderate levels of cheating (Khairunisa et al., 2023). These findings illustrated the persistence of academic dishonesty and suggest that many students lack strong internal deterrents against cheating. In addition, the news reported by medcom.id on Friday, October 27, 2023, the Acting Director General of Higher Education, Research and Technology (Diktiristek) of the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research and Technology, Mr. Nizam, said that students who cheat are also considered an example of corruption (dishonesty) and include students who ask other students to sign their attendance to fulfill the lecture attendance list (Putra, 2023).

The opposite of integrity, academic cheating, including cheating, plagiarism, fraud, and forgery, especially among students, is still a widespread issue that threatens integrity in the academic environment. Cheating leads to the development of incompetent graduates who are ill-prepared for professional challenges, as they have not genuinely acquired the knowledge and skills their qualifications suggest (Abel et al., 2020). This lack of engagement can lead to gaps in learning that affect future academic and professional performance (Sevnarayan & Maphoto, 2024).

Students, as future leaders, must have better academic integrity, and this is related to the quality of higher education (Akbar & Picard, 2020). Therefore, academic integrity, which is a moral commitment in the academic field, must be displayed by a student by maintaining academic honesty versus avoiding academic violations, which consists of four indicators, namely being honest in tests, honest in doing assignments, independent in assignments and not facilitating academic cheating (Suralaga et al., 2021), is a fundamental thing in academic activities that must be adhered to. Dellington explains that cheating behavior means that there has been an attempt to achieve success by unfair (dishonest) means in order to win or gain an advantage (Jayanti, 2015). Various factors have been identified influencing academic integrity, including religious and cultural background, attitude towards cheating, peer influence, institutional policies and environment, and social acceptance of academic dishonesty (Lestari et al., 2022; Maral, 2024; Sevnarayan & Maphoto, 2024; Teo et al., 2024).

In this study, the attitude factor was one of the variables studied, especially the attitude toward cheating. Previous research explains that attitude is believed to have a significant effect on an individual's intention to violate academic integrity, such as plagiarism and other academic violations (Paul et al., 2018). In addition to attitudes toward cheating, the role of religious behavior has also become a concern lately in educational research (Lestari et al., 2022; Sevnarayan & Maphoto, 2024; Teo et al., 2024), one of which is *khauf* (fear of Allah SWT). The study emphasizes that religious values, including the fear of God, can shape students' attitudes and behaviors toward honesty, suggesting that incorporating religious education into the curriculum may help promote academic integrity (Alias et al., 2023; Lestari et al., 2022; Ridwan & Diantimala, 2021). Not many have explored the role of religion, especially *khauf*, in influencing academic integrity (Akbar & Picard, 2020). However, the role of religious values is a supporting basis for the importance of religiosity factors such as *khauf*, as research results show that there is a significant positive relationship between religiosity and academic integrity (Laila, 2020). For higher education institutions around the world, studying the relationship between attitudes towards cheating, spirituality, religiosity, and cheating behavior will prove to be a useful exercise (Nelson et al., 2017); other studies also show that there is a significant positive correlation between religiosity and academic integrity, meaning that the higher a person's level of religiosity indicates a higher level of academic integrity (Alias et al., 2023; Lestari et al., 2022; Saadah et al., 2020).

In the scale of religiosity, there is a dimension of religious experience, which in an Islamic perspective has a positive relationship between the practice of worship and the presence of a person's religious experience, because the purpose of worship in Islam is to purify a person's soul so that they have a tendency to do good and positive (beneficial) deeds in their lives (Amir, 2021). Religious experience in this context is one form of obedience, namely *khauf* (fear of Allah SWT).

The Arabic root letters of *khauf* are [خ و ف], and they convey the meaning of apprehension or doubt regarding potential danger in specific situations (Asfahānī, 2009). *Khauf* thus encapsulates a sense of caution or wariness, prompting individuals to be mindful of actions and consequences, especially in a spiritual or moral context (Moez et al., 2022). According to the book *Ihya Ulumuddin*, fear is divided into three, namely the first instinctive fear (*thabi'i*), the second praiseworthy fear (*mahmud*), and the third sinful fear (Safitri & Haris, 2022). Fear in this context is worship, namely the type of fear that can encourage its owner to obey and prevent them from doing prohibited acts. This kind of fear is only directed toward Allah and has a worship value that encourages its owner to do commendable deeds rather than doing prohibited acts (Safitri & Haris, 2022).

In this study, the author developed the role of *khauf* as a moderator in influencing attitudes toward cheating toward academic integrity. *Khauf* acts as an internal moral deterrent that can strengthen ethical behavior and reduce the likelihood of cheating, even when individuals face external pressures or temptations. Students with a higher sense of *khauf* are more inclined to perceive cheating as morally unacceptable and adhere to principles of academic integrity (Alias et al., 2023; Ariani & Islami, 2022; Arini et al., 2024). Positive attitudes of students are important to be developed and instilled through religious guidance in order to improve students' academic integrity (Suhartono, 2024). Thus, it was expected that this study could contribute to existing knowledge and provide insight into the development of effective strategies to improve academic integrity in higher education because the benefits of *khauf* will direct individuals to live carefully and be aware of bad (negative) behavior that will be carried out (Mujib, 2019). In line with that, M. Darwis Hude explained that *khauf* is one of the most important emotions in human life, playing an important role in defending oneself from various problems that can threaten life because of fear of Allah SWT. It will encourage taking important actions in considering decisions and avoiding dangers that threaten survival (Hude, 2006).

The novelty of this study was exploring the role of *khauf* as a moderator, which had not been widely studied before. The study aimed to examine the role of *khauf* in moderating the influence of attitude toward cheating on academic integrity. The hypothesis proposed was whether *khauf* significantly moderates the influence of attitude toward cheating on academic integrity.

METHODS

The design of this research is quantitative research, and the model proposed in this study is exploratory, so the data analysis technique used is PLS-SEM with the help of SmartPLS software version 4 to test the influence between variables and to test the hypothesis. The population in this study consisted of active students at Islamic universities, totaling 23,433 students (Badan Pusat Statistik, 2024). The research employed cluster random sampling to administer a survey scale to a sample of 224 students from Islamic colleges located in Jakarta, Tangerang, and Bekasi. The geographic selection aimed to capture a diverse representation of student experiences and perspectives within urban Islamic educational institutions in Indonesia. According to Sugiyono (2013), the sampling technique provides an equal opportunity for each element (member) of the

population to be selected as a sample member. The simple random sampling technique is a sampling technique from population members that is carried out randomly without paying attention to the strata in the population (Sugiyono, 2013).

This study used endogenous variable (Y) academic integrity (AI), exogenous variable (X) attitudes toward cheating (ATC), and moderator variable khauf (Kh). The scale used to measure academic integrity in this study is the Academic Integrity Scale (AI) developed by Suralaga. F. et al., (2021). This scale measures academic integrity with 4 indicators, namely honesty in tests, honesty in doing tasks, independence in tasks and not facilitating academic cheating. This scale is designed using a Likert scale.

To strengthen the validity and reliability of the measurement scales, convergent validity was confirmed with Average Variance Extracted (AVE) values above 0.5 and sufficient factor loadings for the variables of attitudes toward cheating (ATC), academic integrity (AI), and khauf (Kh), meeting the minimum AVE standard as recommended by Chin (1998). Reliability was also demonstrated by composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values, both exceeding the minimum threshold of 0.70, indicating strong internal consistency (Hair et al., 2021).

Furthermore, ATC is measured by indicators of student opinion that academic cheating is not right in any situation (Salehi & Gholampour, 2021). This unidimensional scale consists of 10 favorable statement items, designed using a Likert scale. The khauf variable is measured by indicators including fear of divine retribution, fear of divine greatness, fear of divine disapproval, fear of sin, and fear of negative consequences of careless behavior (Mujib, 2016).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Based on the results of the questionnaire data collection, there were 224 respondents with the characteristics grouped by age, gender, and study program. The data is dominated by respondents aged 17-29 years as much as 87% and female gender as much as 85%. In contrast, all respondents have entered the characteristics of respondents, namely students of Islamic universities. The following is a structural model of the study described by the path coefficient:

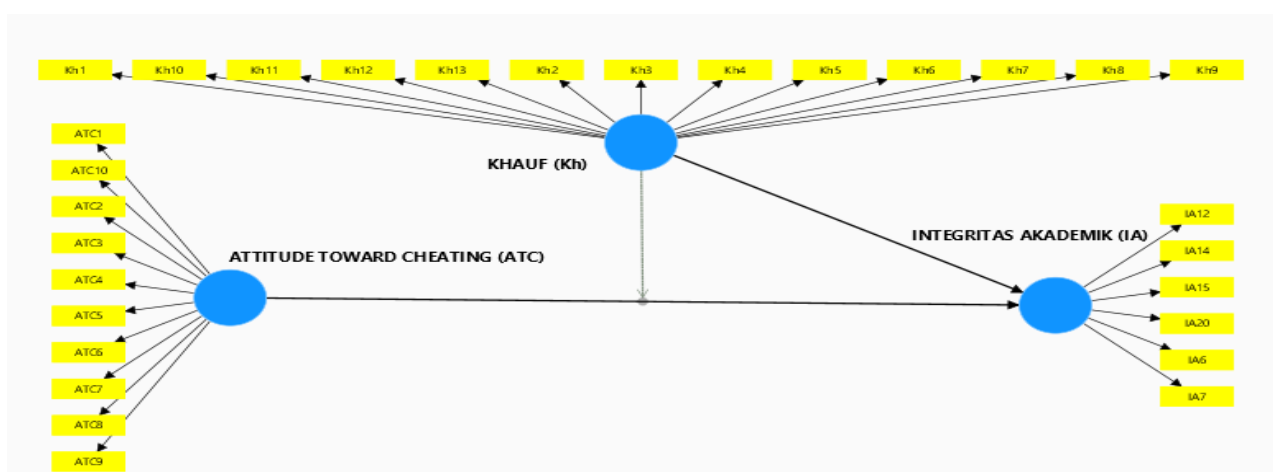


Figure 1. Path Coefficient

Based on the figure, it can be explained that the exogenous variable of this study is Attitude toward cheating (ATC), the endogenous variable is Academic Integrity (AI) and the moderating

variable is Khauf (Kh). Furthermore, an evaluation of the measurement model test (outer model) was carried out on the three variables to see the validity and reliability, as shown in Table 1 below:

Table 1. Validity and Reliability

Variable	Outer Loading	Cronbach's alpha	rho_a	AVE
ATC		0,937	0,950	0,643
ATC1	0,793			
ATC2	0,732			
ATC3	0,849			
ATC4	0,842			
ATC5	0,830			
ATC6	0,693			
ATC7	0,882			
ATC8	0,638			
ATC9	0,842			
ATC10	0,881			
AI		0,809	0,819	0,513
AI6	0,677			
AI7	0,680			
AI12	0,788			
AI14	0,773			
AI15	0,682			
AI20	0,689			
Kh		0,943	0,950	0,596
Kh1	0,669			
Kh2	0,778			
Kh 3	0,809			
Kh4	0,818			
Kh5	0,748			
Kh6	0,885			
Kh7	0,836			
Kh8	0,820			
Kh9	0,827			
Kh10	0,687			
Kh11	0,641			
Kh12	0,701			
Kh13	0,776			

The three variables above met convergent validity with AVE values above 0,5 and the loading factor values for the variables attitude toward cheating (ATC), academic integrity (AI), and khauf (Kh) had been considered sufficient to meet the minimum standard of AVE values in the process of developing a measurement scale (Chin, 1998). The reliability test was indicated by the composite reliability and Cronbach's alpha values that meet the criteria $>0,70$ (Hair et al., 2021), while discriminant validity is presented with the HTMT value, presented in the following Table 2:

Table 2. HTMT

	ATC	AI	Kh
ATC			
AI	0,411		
Kh	0,499	0,286	
Kh*ATC	0,413	0,045	0,510

The HTMT value of each pair of variables was less than 0,90, so the discriminant validity evaluation was met. Additionally, the variance shared by the variables is higher for their respective measuring items, compared to being shared with other variable items. Thus, the discriminant validity evaluation with the HTMT value was met. So, from the explanation it can be concluded that the three variables were declared valid and reliable. The next step involves hypothesis testing.

Next, the structural model test (inner model) in PLS-SEM is related to the hypothesis test of the influence between research variables. In SmartPLS, the structural model test is carried out by bootstrapping. The following Table 3 is the results of the hypothesis test:

Table 3. Hypothesis

	Original sample (O)	P-values	f-square
ATC->AI	0,360	0,000	0,117
Kh->AI	0,207	0,014	0,035
Kh*ATC->AI	0,174	0,002	0,041

Based on the results of the hypothesis test, attitude toward both cheating (ATC) and khauf (Kh) had significant direct effects on academic integrity (AI). The results indicated that ATC had a significant positive effect on AI, with a p-value of 0.000 (p-value <0,05), making this effect highly statistically significant. Furthermore, the variable Kh had a significant positive effect on AI, with a p-value of 0.014 (p-value <0,05). It is also known that the significant results were obtained from the interaction between variables, namely khauf (Kh) as a moderator, attitude toward cheating (ATC), and academic integrity (AI) are 0,002 (p-value <0,05). This means that the hypothesis was accepted where khauf (Kh) is significant in moderating the effect of ATC on students' academic integrity, with a positive original sample value (strengthening or moderation) of 0,174 and a p-value of 0,002 <0,05. The results revealed that students with higher levels of khauf (Kh) exhibited a stronger positive relationship between attitudes toward cheating (ATC) and academic integrity (AI) compared to those with lower levels of khauf. The moderation effect was significant (F-square), with a moderation effect size of 0.041. The 95% confidence interval value is as follows:

Table 4. Interval Confident 95% Path Coefficient

	Original sample (O)	Sample mean (M)	5.0%	95.0%
ATC->AI	0,360	0,371	0,241	0,501
Kh->AI	0,207	0,216	0,065	0,371
Kh*ATC->AI	0,174	0,170	0,066	0,264

In the 95% confidence interval, the influence of ATC on AI is between 0.241 and 0.501. This means that as students' attitudes towards cheating became increasingly intolerant, their influence on students' academic integrity would increase up to 50.1%. In the 95% confidence interval, the moderating influence of khauf in moderating the influence of ATC on AI was between 0.066 and 0.264. Additionally, the R-squared value obtained was 0.183, as shown in Table 5. The R-square value is as follows:

Table 5. R-Square

Variabel	R-Square
Academic Integrity (AI)	0,183

Based on the results of data analysis, it can be said that the magnitude of the variation of the ATC variable moderated by khauf (Kh) on student academic integrity was 0,183 or 18.3% so that it can be categorized as having low variation. The R-squared value of 0.183 indicated that 18.3% of the variability in endogenous variable can be explained by the exogenous variables included in the model. However, the remaining 81.7% of the variation was not necessarily explained by other variables.

Next, looking at the SRMR (Standardized Root Mean Square Residual) value, here is a table of 6 SRMR values:

Table 6. SRMR

	Estimation Model
SRMR	0,066

Based on the SRMR value (0,066) above, it showed an acceptable fit model. In Hair et al. (2021), an SRMR value below 0,080 indicated a fit model. This means that the goodness and suitability of the model estimated in this study were acceptable.

The effect of moderation interaction in graphical form is shown in Simple Plot Analysis, as shown in Figure 2 below:

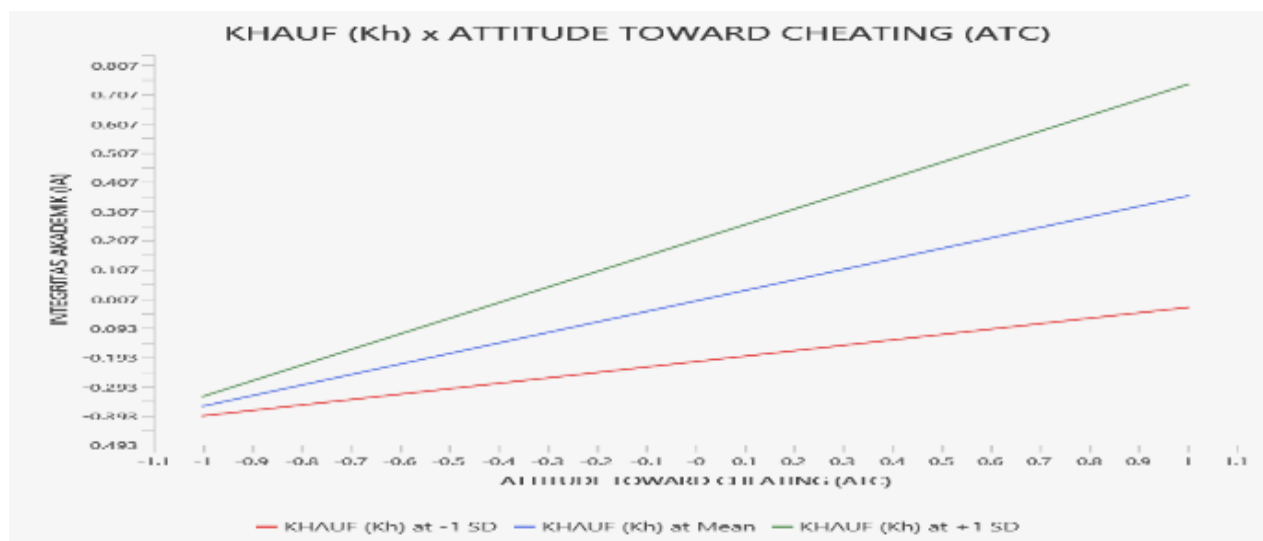


Figure 2. Simple Plot Analysis

From the simple plot results above, the green line was the effect of ATC on AI for the group of students with high khauf, and the red line was the effect of ATC on AI for the group of students with low levels of khauf. While the gradient (slope) of the two lines was relatively different, the effect of motivation on satisfaction between groups of students with high and low levels of khauf was different. Khauf significantly moderated the effect of ATC on AI, which means that students with high levels of khauf had a higher effect of ATC on AI compared to students with low levels of khauf.

Furthermore, based on the results of data processing and the objectives of this study, which were to predict the role of khauf as a moderator in influencing the variable attitude toward cheating (ATC) on academic integrity (AI), the findings regarding the results of this analysis were as follows:

Based on the results of the hypothesis test, it was found that the significance value obtained was 0,002, which means that khauf and ATC had a significant effect on academic integrity. Therefore,

the hypothesis proposed in this study was accepted. These results indicated that students with a high level of *khauf* (Kh) tend to have a higher ATC influence on academic integrity (AI) than students with a low level of *khauf*. This means that *khauf*, as a moderating variable, influenced the relationship between attitudes toward cheating and academic integrity, such that the higher a person's *khauf*, the more intolerant their attitude toward cheating will be, thereby strengthening the student's academic integrity. The dominant indicator in forming the *khauf* construct was Kh6 of 0,885, which means that 88.5% of students tried not to cheat because they know that Allah SWT does not like such actions. Thus, the role of *khauf* has an impact on students' attitudes towards cheating, so students' tendency to be intolerant of cheating will ultimately be able to increase students' academic integrity. However, this research suggested that only a modest portion of the variation in academic integrity was explained by the exogenous variables in this study, *khauf* (fear of God) and attitude toward cheating (ATC). This is possible because academic integrity is a complex construct influenced by a variety of factors beyond religious beliefs, such as personal ethics, peer influence, institutional culture, family background, and societal norms.

These findings aligned with previous research demonstrating a link between religiosity and attitudes toward cheating (Amponsah et al., 2021; Kamarudin et al., 2024). The study's findings further supported the role of religion (religiosity) in shaping attitudes toward cheating (Laila, 2020; Saadah et al., 2020; Nelson et al., 2017) and reducing cheating to strengthen academic integrity (Japar et al., 2024; Sarbini et al., 2023; Suralaga, 2014). This relationship appears robust across various cultural and educational contexts, suggesting a broad influence of religious beliefs on ethical behavior (Abuhammad et al., 2023; Kenia et al., 2023). Thus, the moderating role of *khauf* on the relationship between attitudes toward cheating and academic integrity was significant and contributed to both theories and field findings.

Individuals with strong religious beliefs are likely to adhere closely to their faith's principles and teachings, shaping their values, attitudes, and behaviors (Hamdani et al., 2022). In the Islamic context, religious teachings emphasize honesty, integrity, and accountability, rooted in the belief that actions should align with divine commands and prohibitions. According to study by Khan (2019), students who participated in religious activities, such as religious assemblies, discussion forums, and mosque prayer, exhibited a more honest attitude during academic sessions and tests. Therefore, students who actively engage in religious activities, such as worship, may be less likely to engage in academic misconduct.

According to Idziak, (2010), the divine command theory defines right and wrong actions based on God's orders and prohibitions. People who believe in God's commands and prohibitions tend to have higher ethical ideals than non-believers. This reflects the principles of divine command theory, where a person's moral choices are directly influenced by their reverence for and fear of violating divine laws. The student's heightened sense of *khauf*, reinforced by their religious beliefs, leads them to reject cheating, upholding academic integrity as a reflection of their commitment to God's commands. Additionally, Vitell, (2009) defined religiosity as "a belief in God accompanied by a commitment to follow principles believed to be set by God". According to the study, religiosity consists of three components: religious connection, religious practices, and religious beliefs, and it greatly promotes morality. Therefore, students' religious practices, such as prayer and self-reflection, may further reinforce their moral values and commitment to honesty in academic settings.

In the book entitled 'Emotions (Religious-Psychological Explanation) that Explains Humans in the Qur'an', M. Darwis Hude explains that *khauf* is one of the most important emotions in human life, playing a crucial role in defending oneself from various problems that can threaten one's life,

because this fear will encourage taking positive actions needed to avoid dangers that threaten survival (Hude, 2006). A heightened sense of moral duty, potentially driven by *khauf*, can discourage students from cheating by reinforcing the importance of ethical behavior (Kamarudin et al., 2024). Moreover, according to Mustofa (2022), students who have *maqam khauf* (fear) of Allah, their state or knowledge may be removed due to Allah's perfect wisdom and forceful will. Humans are powerless to resist Allah's desires. On the other hand, humans will be held accountable for their actions. According to Mujib (2019), individuals who embody *khauf*, a character trait marked by a profound fear of Allah's displeasure, are guided to consistently introspect and align their actions with ethical standards. This introspection ensures they avoid behaviors that might incite Allah's wrath, including dishonest practices in academic settings. By fostering vigilance and self-awareness, *khauf* supports academic integrity, helping individuals to stay committed to honesty and sincerity in their scholarly work.

In line with that, *khauf* also directs us to be sincere towards good deeds, because the highest hope is the reward in the hereafter. Awareness of the importance of the orientation of the hereafter in every deed and understanding the consequences of actions carried out in the world (Utami et al., 2023; Umi & Huda, 2017), as Al-Qurthubi explained: "Indeed we feed you because of Allah the Almighty, and we fear His punishment, we do not ask for any reward from you, and also do not expect gratitude from you, we only expect a reward from Him" (Al-Qurthubi, 1964).

This emotional reaction stems from *khauf*, which is not a fear of physical harm but rather a deep, reverent fear of disappointing Allah or incurring divine displeasure. For a devout believer, *khauf* generates an intense awareness of the presence of Allah and a natural response of guilt or anxiety when tempted to do something that is prohibited. This feeling is powerful enough to make the individual pause and reconsider their actions. The image of a student who feels *khauf* towards Allah, when tempted to cheat on an assignment or exam, experiences anxiety (affective) and considers (cognitive) the negative consequences of such an act. They are well aware of the divine prohibitions against cheating, as exemplified by Surah al-Muthaffifin, verse 1, where Allah SWT warns against cheating and injustice.:

وَيْلٌ لِّلْمُطَفِّفِينَ

Contextually, Assi (2023) interprets the verse's meaning to extend beyond the specific context of buying and selling, encompassing any act of cheating. This interpretation reinforces the notion that the fear of Allah (SWT) can stop individuals from cheating, causing them to abandon their intentions before committing the act.

CONCLUSION

The results indicated that both attitudes toward cheating (ATC) and *khauf* (Kh) have significant direct effects on academic integrity (AI). This suggests that students' perspectives on cheating and the level of their reverence and fear of divine displeasure played crucial roles in shaping their commitment to honesty and ethical conduct in academic settings. A negative attitude toward cheating discourages dishonest behaviors, while the character of *khauf* fosters a deeper, introspective motivation to maintain integrity due to spiritual and moral considerations. This indicated that students who experienced *khauf* were more likely to resist dishonest behavior in academic settings. It is important for students to have values of academic integrity because this habit will be internalized and have implications for themselves, their work, and society. This relationship suggests that cultivating religious values, especially *khauf*, could be a strategy for educational institutions aiming to enhance

academic integrity. By fostering an environment where students are encouraged to reflect on their spiritual and moral beliefs, educators can indirectly promote ethical behavior and reduce instances of academic dishonesty. The religiosity factor or internalization of Islamic values (especially *khauf*) according to this finding can be a consideration in strengthening students' academic integrity scientifically, morally, and ethically, providing implications for the development of character education policies and programs in college.

Institutions can incorporate moral and ethical values more explicitly into the curriculum. It could involve lessons on ethical decision-making, discussions on religious principles related to honesty and integrity, or even analyzing case studies of moral dilemmas. Educational settings can also create mentorship programs where respected figures such as teachers or community leaders, who embody ethical values, including those rooted in faith, guide students. Mentors can share how their beliefs and values influence their behavior, serving as role models. Hearing directly from trusted figures about the importance of integrity and the personal benefits of adhering to one's values can have a lasting impact on students, encouraging them to internalize these values themselves. There were many limitations in this study, so it is necessary to explore further other factors to improve students' academic integrity, including individual factors (student psychology), such as self-control, and external factors, such as family environment, integrity culture in the college environment, use of technology such as artificial intelligence and other factors.

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