International Journal of Behavioral and Social Analytics
Volume I, Issue 1, February 2026
https://journal.ijhba.com/index.php/ijbesa
https://slsipress.com

Dark Triad Personality Traits and Academic Dishonesty-Related Tendencies among Senior High School Students: A Correlational Study

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Abstract

Academic dishonesty remains a persistent concern in contemporary schooling, particularly in environments shaped by performance pressure, peer influence, and increasingly technology-mediated learning tasks. This study investigated the relationship between Dark Triad personality traits (Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy) and academic dishonesty-related tendencies among Senior High School students at First City Providential College in the Philippines. Using a quantitative, correlational design, data were collected from 50 students selected through stratified random sampling. Two adapted self-report instruments were administered: a Dark Triad trait measure based on the Short Dark Triad (SD3) and an academic dishonesty-related tendencies measure based on the Academic Dishonesty Tendencies Scale (ADTS), yielding acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = 0.822$ and $\alpha = 0.791$, respectively). Descriptive results indicated a moderate level of Dark Triad trait endorsement (composite mean = 2.68) and a moderate level of academic dishonesty-related tendencies (composite mean = 2.94). Pearson's correlation analysis showed a statistically significant moderate positive association between the constructs ($r = 0.471$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher endorsement of Dark Triad traits co-varies with greater susceptibility to dishonesty-oriented academic coping. The findings support integrity initiatives that combine credible academic governance (clear standards, fair assessment design, and consistent enforcement) with development-oriented supports addressing self-regulation, ethical decision-making, and performance-related stressors.

Keywords: *Dark Triad; Machiavellianism; narcissism; psychopathy; academic dishonesty; cheating tendencies; peer pressure; performance anxiety; Senior High School; Philippines*

1. Introduction

Academic dishonesty remains a persistent concern in secondary and higher education because it undermines fairness, weakens learning outcomes, and erodes institutional credibility (Bohlens, 2025). When students gain academic advantage through dishonest means, grades and credentials become less reliable indicators of competence, thereby affecting both individual development and the integrity of the educational system. This concern is particularly salient in senior high school (Aguilar, 2021), where students are simultaneously consolidating academic habits and transitioning into higher education or early employment contexts that presume credentialed competence. In this developmental stage, decisions about compliance, effort, and ethical boundaries can become patterned, shaping how learners approach deadlines, performance demands, and accountability in subsequent academic and professional settings.

Within the Philippine K–12 context, the Senior High School program places strong emphasis on performance-based assessment, written outputs, and increasingly technology-mediated tasks. While these features support authentic learning and skills demonstration, they can also inadvertently widen opportunity structures for dishonest behavior when monitoring, policy clarity, and formative support are uneven. Senior high school learners may encounter challenging assessment demands while still developing the study strategies, time management practices, and academic writing competencies required to meet those demands. When expectations are experienced as unclear, inconsistent, or unattainable, misconduct can become psychologically easier to justify—not necessarily because students reject integrity in principle, but because they seek coping shortcuts under perceived constraint.

The literature consistently suggests that academic dishonesty is multidetermined rather than reducible to a single cause (Buagayan et al., 2024). Peer norms, academic workload, assessment design, fear of failure, and performance anxiety can shape students' cost–benefit reasoning and moral rationalizations. In settings where competitive grading and "high stakes" performance expectations

are salient, students may perceive that outcomes matter more than learning, potentially increasing temptation to secure results by any means available. Dishonesty can also be driven by more ordinary pressures: excessive task load, limited time, poor comprehension of lesson content, or minimal feedback that would otherwise clarify mistakes and promote revision. From this perspective, misconduct is not only a moral problem but also a functional symptom of misalignment between demands and support, particularly when learners experience limited capacity to meet expectations through legitimate means.

Contemporary learning environments further complicate integrity governance because digital platforms and AI-enabled tools have altered how students access information, generate outputs, and collaborate. Digitalization expands legitimate learning resources but also increases the ease of copying, paraphrasing, and uncredited reuse. AI tools, in particular, blur boundaries between acceptable assistance and prohibited substitution: students may interpret AI-supported drafting, summarization, or response generation as an efficiency tool rather than an integrity violation, especially if teachers and institutions do not provide clear guidance on permissible use. In such conditions, academic integrity becomes partially an institutional design challenge: the quality of task design, assessment authenticity, instruction on citation and authorship, and credible enforcement mechanisms all shape how learners interpret the legitimacy of shortcuts. Effective integrity systems therefore require a combination of clear standards, consistent enforcement, and developmental supports that enhance students' self-regulation, comprehension, and academic skill-building.

Alongside situational pressures, individual differences may influence how students interpret rules, evaluate risks, and respond to temptation. One relevant individual-difference framework is the Dark Triad, a cluster of socially aversive personality tendencies comprising Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. These traits are typically conceptualized as dispositional tendencies rather than fixed identities, and they are associated—at varying degrees—with strategic manipulation, entitlement and self-enhancement, and reduced empathic concern. In educational contexts, these tendencies may influence how students justify misconduct, how strongly they value outcomes over process, and how willing they are to exploit ambiguous rules or weak monitoring. Empirical work has reported associations between Dark Triad traits and greater acceptance of dishonest or exploitative responses, including academic misconduct; however, this relationship is best treated as probabilistic rather than deterministic, because trait expression depends on context, opportunity, perceived sanctions, and available rationalizations.

In senior high school settings, the interaction between dispositional risk factors and contextual stressors is especially salient. Students may face heightened academic demands, competitive grading, and identity pressures while simultaneously navigating uneven mastery of study strategies and varying levels of lesson comprehension. These pressures can create circumstances in which students who are already predisposed toward self-serving or rule-bending tendencies may be more likely to view dishonest strategies as acceptable or strategically advantageous. Conversely, even students with generally prosocial orientations may become susceptible when stressors and perceived unfairness are intense and when legitimate academic coping strategies are underdeveloped. For this reason, understanding whether Dark Triad tendencies co-vary with academic dishonesty-related tendencies can contribute to a more nuanced account of integrity risks—one that recognizes both character-linked vulnerabilities and situational triggers.

A behavioral science and social analytics framing underscores that "dishonesty" is not merely a category of prohibited acts but a pattern of decision-making under pressure, shaped by personal dispositions, peer norms, perceived legitimacy of rules, and available means for concealment or rationalization. In institutional terms, integrity is also a credibility issue: schools that communicate coherent standards, implement transparent assessment processes, and apply consistent enforcement reduce ambiguity and minimize the perception that rules are negotiable. In contrast, when standards are unclear or enforcement is inconsistent, the perceived risk of misconduct decreases and the perceived normality of cheating can rise, particularly in peer-driven environments. This interactional view supports research that examines both the psychological predispositions of learners and the school-context factors that can amplify or attenuate those predispositions.

Accordingly, this study examines the relationship between Dark Triad personality traits and academic dishonesty-related tendencies among Senior High School students at First City Providential College. The focus on dishonesty-related tendencies emphasizes vulnerability and

permissive orientations toward dishonest academic responses, which are theoretically and practically relevant even when misconduct is not directly observed. This approach is consistent with integrity scholarship that views dishonest behavior as a decision pattern shaped by both dispositional tendencies and contextual pressures, including perceived performance demands, peer norms, and the clarity and credibility of institutional rules.

The findings are expected to inform integrity initiatives that are both preventive and developmentally appropriate, combining clear standards and consistent academic governance with student supports that strengthen ethical reasoning, self-regulation, and legitimate coping strategies under pressure. In line with this purpose, the study is organized around specific questions that define the research problem and guide the analysis, as presented in the Statement of the Problem.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

This study aimed to investigate the relationship between Dark Triad personality traits and academic dishonesty-related tendencies among Senior High School students at First City Providential College. Specifically, it sought to answer the following questions:

a. What is the level of Dark Triad personality traits (psychopathy, narcissism, and Machiavellianism) among the respondents?

b. What is the level of academic dishonesty-related tendencies among the respondents across the questionnaire dimensions?

c. Is there a significant relationship between Dark Triad personality traits and academic dishonesty-related tendencies among the respondents?

2. Review of Related Literature

Academic dishonesty, encompassing behaviors such as cheating, plagiarism, and fabrication, is a multifaceted issue influenced by a complex interplay of individual dispositions, cognitive processes, and institutional environments. This review synthesizes the literature on these determinants, with a particular focus on the role of the Dark Triad of personality traits, and contextualizes the discussion within evolving digital learning landscapes and specific educational systems like the Philippine K–12 program.

2.1. The Dark Triad as a Dispositional Risk Factor

The Dark Triad refers to a constellation of socially aversive personality traits—Machiavellianism (strategic manipulation), narcissism (entitlement and self-enhancement), and psychopathy (callousness and reduced empathy).

Contemporary accounts frame these traits as dispositional tendencies that increase the likelihood of norm-violating behavior when personal gain is salient and perceived sanctions are low (Curtis, 2023; Curtis et al., 2022). Empirical work confirms an association between Dark Triad traits and greater acceptance of dishonest or exploitative behaviors across settings, including education. These traits may shape how students interpret competitive demands and justify misconduct, particularly when rules appear negotiable or enforcement inconsistent. However, their effects are neither uniform nor deterministic, as situational constraints can attenuate or amplify trait expression, positioning them as probabilistic predictors rather than direct causes (Srirejeki et al., 2022).

Research specifically examining the mechanisms linking the Dark Triad to academic dishonesty reveals a complex relationship. Psychopathy and Machiavellianism are consistent predictors of dishonest behaviors (Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2023; Shaikh et al., 2024). The role of moral disengagement—a cognitive process allowing individuals to rationalize unethical acts—as a mediator is context-dependent. Some studies find it mediates the link, particularly for psychopathy's effect on behaviors like unauthorized collaboration, with gender differences influencing these dynamics (Shaikh et al., 2024; Kokkinos & Antoniadou, 2023; Sirca & Billen, 2024). Others, however, do not find strong support for this mediation, suggesting it may vary by specific trait or type of dishonesty (Lingán-Huamán et al., 2023). Alternative mediators like academic entitlement and externalized responsibility have also been identified, indicating multiple psychological pathways (Ivan & Pavalache-Ilie, 2025; Curtis, 2023).

2.2. Academic Dishonesty as a Multidetermined Phenomenon

Beyond personality, academic dishonesty is strongly shaped by situational and institutional factors. Key drivers include performance pressure, task overload, weak monitoring, peer normalization, unclear criteria, and perceived unfairness. These conditions increase the perceived benefits and reduce the psychological costs of dishonesty, especially when students view assignments as unmanageable or disconnected from learning (Srirejeki et al., 2022). Capability gaps stemming from low instructional clarity or misaligned scaffolding can also increase reliance on unauthorized assistance, even among students without a predisposition to cheat.

The academic integrity climate—perceived fairness, consistent enforcement, and teacher

credibility—is a critical institutional predictor. A credible and fair climate can reduce cheating by fostering ethical awareness and increasing perceived detection risk (Ehrmann et al., 2025; Okolo et al., 2025). Conversely, weak enforcement and low monitoring amplify dishonest behavior (Ehrmann et al., 2025). Peer norms are among the most powerful predictors: descriptive norms (perceptions of peer cheating) strongly correlate with individual cheating, while injunctive norms (peer approval/disapproval) can act as deterrents, though their effectiveness varies by culture (Zhao et al., 2022; Ehrmann et al., 2025; Malesky et al., 2021).

Deterrence factors, namely perceived detection risk and sanction severity, significantly affect dishonesty. However, sanctions alone are often ineffective unless paired with a credible likelihood of detection (Ehrmann et al., 2025; Ullah & Khan, 2025). The interplay of pressure and opportunity is also key; opportunity consistently predicts cheating, while pressure's influence is more variable and context-dependent (Choo & Tan, 2023; Jatmika et al., 2025; Heriyati & Ekasari, 2020).

2.3. The Role of Self-Regulation and Motivation

Individual differences in self-regulation and achievement motivation further predict academic integrity. Self-control and self-regulation help students align actions with long-term goals, reducing susceptibility to momentary temptations to cheat (Duckworth et al., 2019). Achievement goal orientation shows a nuanced relationship: mastery goals (focus on learning) are generally negatively associated with dishonesty, while performance goals (focus on demonstrating competence) can be linked to higher cheating, depending on context (Baran & Jonason, 2020; Fritz et al., 2023; Krou et al., 2020). Academic self-efficacy, particularly for self-regulated learning, tends to reduce cheating by promoting engagement and confidence, though it may interact with other factors like procrastination (Putarek & Pavlin-Bernardić, 2019; Subekti et al., 2024; Mutmainah, 2023). Moral self-regulation may also mediate the influence of achievement goals on integrity (Suralaga et al., 2021).

2.4. Digital Transformation and Emerging Challenges

The digitalization of education introduces new complexities for academic integrity. Digital learning platforms and blended modalities are increasingly institutionalized, but implementation quality varies, affecting assessment practices and monitoring mechanisms (Atento, 2025a). The emergence of AI-enabled tools creates new incentives and capabilities, complicating integrity governance. While AI offers benefits for personalization, issues of inequitable access, algorithmic bias, and data privacy persist (Rao et al., 2025). This technological shift frames academic dishonesty increasingly as an institutional design problem, requiring rules and task design to evolve alongside technology.

2.5. Human-Centered and Governance Perspectives

Integrity is also a credibility issue requiring coherent rules, transparent processes, and consistent enforcement over mere moral appeals (Atento, 2025b). A governance-oriented analysis emphasizes that institutional credibility and disciplined implementation are foundational. Furthermore, psychosocial strain, digital transformation, and generational learning dynamics reshape expectations and coping strategies within learning environments (Atento et al., 2025c). Human-centered perspectives, such as the Narrative Health Analytics framework, argue for systems that attend to meaning, culture, and ethical mediation (Atento et al., 2025d). Analogously, integrity initiatives are strengthened when policies are paired with context-sensitive guidance and support systems that address underlying strain and comprehension gaps.

2.6. Methodological Considerations: Social Desirability Bias

Research on academic dishonesty heavily relies on self-reports, which are susceptible to social desirability bias (SDB), leading to underreporting and threatening validity (Tang et al., 2025; Tan et al., 2021). Methods to mitigate this include ensuring anonymity, using clear instructions, online administration, and advanced techniques like randomized response combined with item response theory (Setiawati et al., 2024; Wlömert et al., 2018). Traditional social desirability scales may poorly capture faking, necessitating more sophisticated validity checks and, where possible, indirect or implicit measures (Holtrop et al., 2020; Tang et al., 2025).

2.7. The Philippine Senior High School Context

Local contextual factors significantly influence integrity risks. The K–12 program's policy emphasis on character formation and responsible citizenship underscores the relevance of studying learner dispositions (Republic Act No. 10533, 2013). However, variability in resources and teacher competencies impacts the implementation of

authentic assessments, which are crucial for minimizing cheating (Bayo et al., 2025; Manigbas & De Luna, 2024). Teacher assessment literacy and beliefs shaped by K–12 policies directly affect integrity maintenance (Capacete, 2020). The diffusion of blended learning requires adapted assessment practices to mitigate new risks, highlighting the need for continuous teacher professional development (Tabliago, 2025; Bayo et al., 2025).

In summary, the literature supports a plausible but non-deterministic association between Dark Triad traits and academic dishonesty, often mediated by factors like moral disengagement or academic entitlement. The most defensible explanations are interactional: dispositional tendencies may elevate susceptibility, while institutional conditions—such as integrity climate, peer norms, assessment design, and enforcement credibility—shape whether and how dishonesty manifests. Within specific contexts like Philippine Senior High Schools, these dynamics are further filtered through local policy commitments, resource constraints, and the ongoing digital transformation of education. Effective integrity governance therefore requires a multifaceted approach that addresses personality risks, strengthens institutional credibility and support, adapts to technological change, and employs methodologically sound measurement.

3. Methodology

3.1 Research Design

This study employed a quantitative, correlational research design to examine the association between Dark Triad personality traits and academic dishonesty-related tendencies among Senior High School students. Correlational designs are appropriate when the objective is to estimate the direction and magnitude of relationships among measured constructs without experimental manipulation, random assignment, or intervention exposure. The design supports inferential assessment of whether students' trait endorsement patterns co-vary with self-reported tendency patterns, while maintaining a non-causal interpretation consistent with observational data.

3.2 Participants and Sampling

The study was conducted at First City Providential College (Philippines) and focused on the Senior High School student population. A total of 50 students participated in the survey (N = 50). Respondents were selected through stratified random sampling to improve representativeness relative to simple convenience recruitment. Under this approach, the Senior High School population was divided into meaningful strata (e.g., grade level and/or academic strand), after which respondents were randomly selected within each stratum using proportional allocation based on enrolment shares. This procedure reduces the likelihood that one subgroup is disproportionately represented in the final sample and strengthens the interpretability of descriptive and correlational estimates within the school context.

The target sample size was set primarily by feasibility within a single-institution study context. Nonetheless, N = 50 is broadly defensible for exploratory correlational analysis. An a priori power check using G*Power 3.1 (Faul et al., 2007) indicates that a sample of 50 provides adequate statistical power ($\geq .80$) to detect a moderate association (e.g., $r \approx .40$) at $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed). The modest sample size, however, implies wider confidence intervals and limits the stability and generalizability of point estimates; replication with larger and multi-site samples is therefore recommended (Schönbrodt & Perugini, 2013).

3.3 Research Instruments

Two adapted self-report questionnaires were used to operationalize the variables: Dark Triad personality traits (independent variable) and academic dishonesty-related tendencies (dependent variable). Both instruments were administered in a standardized format and scored using mean-based composites consistent with Likert-type scaling practice.

3.3.1 Dark Triad Personality Traits Questionnaire

Dark Triad traits were measured across three dimensions: Machiavellianism, narcissism, and psychopathy. Dimension scores were computed as the mean of the indicators/items corresponding to each trait dimension. An overall Dark Triad composite score was computed as the mean across the three dimension-level scores.

The questionnaire was adapted from the Short Dark Triad (SD3) developed by Jones and Paulhus (2014). The original 27-item instrument was modified to improve developmental and cultural appropriateness for Filipino Senior High School respondents. Adaptation focused on simplifying lexical complexity and contextualizing phrasing while retaining the core conceptual domains of (a) Machiavellianism (strategic manipulation and instrumental interpersonal orientation), (b) narcissism (entitlement and self-enhancement), and (c) psychopathy (reduced empathy and moral concern). Illustrative item stems include "I tend to manipulate others to get my way" (Machiavellianism), "I tend to want others to admire me" (narcissism), and "I tend to be unconcerned with the morality of my actions" (psychopathy).

International Journal of Behavioral and Social Analytics
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3.3.2 Academic Dishonesty Questionnaire

Academic dishonesty-related tendencies were assessed across five dimensions: peer pressure, academic demand management, fear of failure, performance anxiety, and lesson comprehension challenges. Dimension scores were computed as the mean of indicators/items under each dimension, and an overall composite score was computed as the mean across the five dimension-level scores.

The questionnaire was adapted from the Academic Dishonesty Tendencies Scale (ADTS) by Eminoglu (2008). Modifications were made to reflect common academic tasks and pressures in the Philippine Senior High School context (e.g., performance tasks and blended learning conditions). Sample items include "I feel pressured by friends to help them cheat on assignments" (peer pressure) and "I am tempted to use unauthorized help when workload is too high" (academic demand management).

3.3.3 Scoring and Interpretation

Both instruments used a 5-point Likert-type response scale, with mean-based dimension scores and an overall composite score computed for each construct. Descriptive interpretation followed the rubric applied in the Results tables: 4.50–5.00 (Very High), 3.50–4.49 (High), 2.50–3.49 (Moderate), 1.50–2.49 (Low), and 1.00–1.49 (Very Low).

3.3.4 Validity and Reliability

The instruments were adapted for the Senior High School context and underwent content review and pilot testing prior to full administration. In the present sample, internal consistency reliability was acceptable based on Cronbach's alpha: $\alpha = 0.822$ for the Dark Triad scale and $\alpha = 0.791$ for the Academic Dishonesty scale. These values indicate satisfactory internal consistency for group-level research interpretation.

3.4 Data Collection Procedure

Data were collected through a group-administered survey conducted in the school setting. Prior to administration, respondents were provided with a standardized briefing describing the study's purpose, voluntary nature, confidentiality safeguards, and instructions for responding. Questionnaires were administered under supervised conditions to promote consistent administration and reduce missing responses. Completed forms were retrieved immediately after completion to maintain standardized survey conditions and minimize nonresponse.

3.5 Data Analysis

Descriptive statistics (means and standard deviations) were computed for each indicator, each dimension, and each composite score for both constructs. To test the primary hypothesis, Pearson's product–moment correlation coefficient (r) was computed between the composite Dark Triad score and the composite academic dishonesty-related tendency score, with statistical significance evaluated at $\alpha = .05$ (two-tailed) and degrees of freedom $df = N - 2$. Prior to interpretation, score distributions and bivariate scatterplots were screened for obvious outliers and nonlinearity. Because the composites were derived from Likert-type items, results were interpreted with attention to the ordinal origins of the measures; however, mean-based composites are commonly treated as approximately continuous in applied behavioral research when reliability is acceptable and composites reflect multiple indicators.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Ethical safeguards were observed throughout the study. Participation was voluntary, and respondents were informed about the study purpose, procedures, and confidentiality protections. No personally identifying information was included in reporting or dissemination. Where respondents were minors or where institutional policy required it, parent/guardian consent and student assent were secured. Data were handled in a manner consistent with confidentiality expectations for school-based research.

4. Results and Discussion

4.1 Dark Triad Personality

4.1.1 Psychopathy

The psychopathy indicators in Table 1, available in the Online Appendix (https://osf.io/awb7n/files/eayku) collectively suggest a generally moderate level of endorsement, with some items falling into the low range, indicating that the trait-related tendencies measured here are present but not strongly pronounced across the cohort. The highest mean appears in the item reflecting preference for risk and excitement ("I enjoy doing things that are risky or exciting," $M = 2.96$, $SD = 0.75$), implying that sensation-seeking is the most salient psychopathy-linked feature among

the set. Moderate endorsement is likewise evident in items that reflect instrumental opportunism, such as taking opportunities even if unfair (M = 2.56, SD = 0.81), and retaliatory inclination toward authority when feeling wronged (M = 2.68, SD = 0.59). Notably, the relatively lower SD for retaliation toward authority indicates greater response clustering—students tended to converge around a moderate position on this item—whereas the higher SD for opportunism indicates more variability in how acceptable students find unfair advantage-taking.

A more differentiated pattern emerges in the items that are more explicitly punitive or self-incriminating. The belief that those who wrong a respondent should be punished quickly registers at a low level (M = 2.38, SD = 0.85), suggesting that the cohort, on average, does not strongly endorse rapid retribution as a principle. Similarly, the item suggesting poor self-control ("People often describe me as having trouble controlling my actions") also falls at a low level (M = 2.42, SD = 0.86), indicating that respondents generally do not perceive themselves—nor believe others perceive them—as behaviorally uncontrolled. Importantly, both items show relatively high SDs, implying that while the average endorsement is low, there is a non-trivial subgroup whose responses are higher, producing a wider spread and indicating heterogeneity rather than uniform rejection of these tendencies.

Finally, two items sit at the boundary of moderate endorsement and merit interpretive attention for their implications about interpersonal stance. The willingness to "say anything" to get what one wants is rated at a moderate level (M = 2.72, SD = 0.86), reflecting a mid-range openness to outcome-driven communication; however, the large SD indicates substantial variation—some respondents reject this strongly while others endorse it more. The item "People who go against me usually regret it" is positioned at the threshold of moderate (M = 2.50, SD = 0.71), indicating a borderline tendency toward dominance or retaliatory expectations, again with moderate dispersion. Taken together, the psychopathy profile in this sample is best characterized as moderate in opportunistic and sensation-seeking elements, lower in explicitly punitive or self-control–problem indicators, and heterogeneous across morally loaded or self-presentational items (as reflected by higher SDs). This pattern suggests that psychopathy-related tendencies, as operationalized here, are not uniformly high, but appear as selective and context-sensitive dispositions within the cohort—an interpretation that becomes particularly relevant when later considered alongside narcissism and Machiavellianism in the full Dark Triad profile.

4.1.2 Narcissism

The narcissism indicators consistently fall within the moderate level range, suggesting that self-enhancement and status-related orientations are present but not extreme among the respondents. The comparatively higher means are observed in items reflecting entitlement to respect ("I feel that I deserve respect from others," M = 3.22, SD = 0.84), social stimulation in high-ability environments ("I feel most energized and engaged when I'm surrounded by people whose talents and skills inspire and challenge me," M = 3.20, SD = 0.83), and self-presentation ("I enjoy showing off my abilities when I have the chance," M = 3.16, SD = 0.74). Taken together, these results indicate that the most salient narcissism-linked tendencies in this cohort are not necessarily grandiose dominance, but rather a moderate expectation of recognition, an attraction to social environments that affirm competence, and a willingness to display ability when opportunities arise.

At the same time, the indicators reflecting leadership self-image and attention-centrality are present at slightly lower—but still moderate—levels. The item "Others often see me as a natural leader" registers a moderate mean (M = 2.76, SD = 0.89), while "Group activities often seem less interesting when I am not actively involved" shows a similar moderate endorsement (M = 2.74, SD = 0.80). These values suggest that respondents do not strongly position themselves as dominant leaders or insist that group contexts must revolve around them; rather, there is a moderate sensitivity to personal involvement and recognition within group activities. The standard deviations for these items indicate meaningful variation across students, implying that leadership self-perceptions and group-centeredness are not uniformly endorsed and may characterize only a subset of respondents.

Two items further clarify the profile by reflecting both self-perceived specialness and affinity for influential networks. Respondents reported moderate endorsement of "I believe I am a special person because of my unique qualities" (M = 2.92, SD = 0.99) and "I like to meet and connect with people who have influence or power" (M = 2.92, SD = 0.75). Notably, the "special person" item has the highest variability (SD = 0.99) among the narcissism indicators, suggesting divergent self-perceptions—some students endorse this more strongly, while others are clearly more reserved. Overall, the narcissism dimension reflects a pattern of moderate entitlement and self-presentation, accompanied by moderate—but not dominant—leadership and attention-centrality, with variability indicating that these tendencies are distributed unevenly across the cohort.

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4.1.3 Machiavellianism and Composite Mean

The Machiavellianism indicators show a consistently moderate level of endorsement across all items, indicating that strategic, reputation-protective, and advantage-oriented tendencies are present but not elevated to high levels in the cohort. The strongest endorsement appears in the item emphasizing reputation management through discretion ("I believe it is better to keep certain things to myself to protect my reputation," M = 3.30, SD = 0.71), suggesting that respondents are relatively more inclined toward cautious self-presentation and controlled disclosure. A similarly moderate pattern is seen in items reflecting instrumental social networking, such as the importance of building connections with powerful people (M = 2.90, SD = 0.76) and meeting others' needs because they may be useful in the future (M = 3.02, SD = 0.71). These results collectively point to a pragmatic orientation toward relationships—where social ties may be valued partly for their future utility—though the means remain within the moderate range rather than indicating strong manipulative intent.

Several items further highlight advantage-seeking cognition and planning. The belief that some people are easy to take advantage of registers at a moderate level (M = 2.82, SD = 0.72), while remembering information that can provide an advantage is also moderately endorsed (M = 2.86, SD = 0.67). Likewise, respondents moderately agree that they usually make plans that benefit them more than others (M = 2.66, SD = 0.77). The standard deviations for these items are generally moderate, indicating that while the overall tendency is mid-range, there remains noticeable variation across students—suggesting that opportunistic or advantage-focused thinking may be more characteristic of some respondents than others. One item sits at the lower boundary of moderate endorsement: "I think most people only work hard when they are forced to" (M = 2.50, SD = 0.79). This indicates only borderline agreement with a more cynical view of others' motivation, again with variability implying that not all students share this assumption.

Taken together, the Machiavellianism results depict a profile of moderate strategic orientation, expressed most clearly through reputation protection, instrumental networking, and advantage-aware cognition, rather than overtly high manipulation. Across the three Dark Triad domains, the overall Dark Triad composite mean is 2.68, which falls within the moderate level range. The item- and dimension-level standard deviations indicate meaningful individual differences, supporting subsequent analysis of how dispositional risk co-varies with academic dishonesty-related tendencies.

4.2 Academic Dishonesty-Related Tendencies

The peer pressure dimension captures the extent to which students' academic decisions and integrity-related choices are shaped by social influence from classmates. In the context of academic dishonesty, peer pressure is important because cheating and related behaviors rarely occur in isolation: classmates can directly request assistance, encourage collaboration that crosses ethical boundaries, normalize dishonest practices ("everyone does it"), or create reputational consequences for refusing to participate. Measuring peer pressure therefore helps explain how social norms and fear of exclusion may increase vulnerability to dishonest tendencies, even among students who might otherwise prefer to comply with rules. In senior high school settings—where peer acceptance and group belonging are developmentally salient—social evaluation can operate as a strong motivator, affecting both day-to-day effort and choices under academic strain.

4.2.1 Peer Pressure

The peer pressure indicators generally reflect a moderate level of social influence on students' academic behavior, particularly in relation to image maintenance, avoidance of negative judgment, and alignment with classmates' expectations. Two items register identical moderate means (M = 2.94, SD = 0.79; M = 2.94, SD = 0.74), indicating that respondents, on average, acknowledge that they sometimes adjust academic behavior to avoid social exclusion or negative evaluation and are moderately motivated to present a favorable image. The relatively similar standard deviations suggest a reasonably consistent mid-range endorsement across the cohort, implying that reputational concerns are not isolated to a small subset but are a broadly shared influence in the peer environment.

A complementary indicator—prioritizing outcomes aligned with others' expectations even at the expense of genuine learning—also falls within the moderate range (M = 2.90, SD = 0.71). This pattern reinforces the interpretation that peer dynamics may shape not only how students behave socially, but also how they frame academic success: performance and appearance can become salient under perceived social scrutiny. The SD for this item

is moderate, suggesting variability, yet not so wide as to indicate polarized positions; rather, it implies that a meaningful portion of respondents experiences some level of outcome-oriented compromise when reputational considerations are salient.

In contrast, the item linking score-based evaluation pressure to temptation toward "unapproved methods" registers at a low level (M = 2.48, SD = 0.91), making it the least-endorsed statement in the peer pressure set. However, the comparatively high SD is analytically important: it suggests that while the average respondent does not strongly endorse this temptation, there is substantial divergence in responses—indicating a subgroup for whom evaluative judgment based on test scores may meaningfully intensify susceptibility to unethical coping. Taken together, the peer pressure dimension appears to operate primarily through reputation management and social evaluation, with explicit temptation toward rule-breaking remaining lower on average but unevenly distributed across students. This profile suggests that integrity vulnerability in peer contexts may be less about direct peer "pushing" toward cheating and more about the social costs of appearing weak, failing publicly, or losing status, which can indirectly increase the appeal of questionable strategies for some learners.

4.2.2 Inability to Manage the Demand of Student Life

The indicators under "Inability to manage the demand of student life" consistently fall within the moderate level range, suggesting that time pressure, competing responsibilities, and workload strain are common and meaningful constraints for the respondents. The strongest endorsement appears in the item reflecting difficulty managing time and responsibilities ("I sometimes struggle with my academic responsibilities because I have difficulty managing my time," M = 3.24, SD = 0.77). This indicates that time management strain is not a marginal issue but a salient and moderately shared experience, with the SD implying a noticeable spread—some students cope better than others, but many report similar mid-level difficulty.

A related pattern is evident in the tendency to seek "ways to get things done that aren't entirely aligned with proper academic practices" when overloaded (M = 2.80, SD = 0.76). Although still moderate, this mean is lower than the time-management difficulty item, suggesting that while students commonly experience overload, the translation of overload into potentially inappropriate coping strategies is less strongly endorsed. However, the mid-level SD indicates that vulnerability is uneven: a subset of students may be more likely to view overload as justification for shortcuts, whereas others resist that tendency even under strain.

Two items further reinforce the role of prioritization and delay as mechanisms of pressure. "Procrastination can lead me to make poor academic decisions" registers at a moderate level (M = 3.10, SD = 0.81), indicating that many students recognize procrastination as a risk factor affecting decision quality. Similarly, prioritizing other concerns over schoolwork, affecting performance quality, is moderately endorsed (M = 2.74, SD = 0.75). Both items suggest that integrity risk may be indirectly shaped by the management of competing demands: when tasks accumulate due to delays or shifting priorities, students may experience a narrowed set of perceived options near deadlines. Finally, the balancing item ("Balancing everything at once is hard for me…") remains moderate (M = 3.00, SD = 0.86) and shows one of the larger dispersions, indicating that workload-balance difficulty is widely felt but varies substantially in intensity across respondents.

Taken together, this dimension reflects a coherent moderate strain profile characterized by time-management difficulty, overload, procrastination, and competing priorities, with consistent SDs suggesting meaningful individual differences in coping capacity. Substantively, the results imply that academic dishonesty vulnerability—when it arises—may be partly rooted in students' perceived inability to manage workload and deadlines effectively, where stress and time scarcity can increase the appeal of expedient, rule-adjacent strategies for some learners.

4.2.3 Fear of Failing

The "fear of failing" indicators generally register at a moderate level, indicating that performance anxiety and failure-avoidance motivations are salient and broadly experienced among the respondents. The items reflect a pattern in which students commonly report pressure associated with evaluation, comparisons with peers, and concern about disappointing significant others, all of which can heighten vulnerability to questionable academic coping. For instance, moderate endorsement is observed for engaging in questionable practices due to fear of failure (M = 2.90, SD = 0.89) and feeling pressured when comparing one's performance with peers (M = 3.14, SD = 0.76). The latter is among the higher means in this set, suggesting that social comparison is a particularly strong driver of perceived performance pressure, with a relatively tighter SD indicating that this experience is fairly widespread across students rather than concentrated in a small subgroup.

At the same time, the most explicitly direct statement about reliance on improper practices to

secure grades shows a low level mean (M = 2.48, SD = 1.01), distinguishing it from the other items. This indicates that respondents, on average, do not strongly endorse deliberate dependence on improper practices as a primary strategy for grade security. However, the largest SD in the dimension is analytically important: it signals pronounced heterogeneity, implying a split pattern where many students reject this behavior while a meaningful subgroup reports moderate-to-high susceptibility. In practical terms, fear of failing may not translate into direct dishonesty for most students, but it appears to function as a risk amplifier for certain individuals, especially under intense evaluative pressure.

The remaining items reinforce how fear of failing may shape academic behavior through avoidance and justification. Students moderately endorse the idea that fear and embarrassment over mistakes can make them consider compromising honesty (M = 2.88, SD = 0.85), and they also report moderate tendencies toward avoiding work "by myself" to avoid mistakes (M = 2.58, SD = 0.93), which may be interpreted as an avoidance-oriented coping response that can increase dependency on others or on unauthorized assistance. Similarly, the motivation to meet expectations and avoid disappointing parents or teachers remains at a moderate level (M = 2.64, SD = 0.96), indicating that external expectations are a meaningful source of pressure, with considerable dispersion suggesting that some students experience this pressure far more intensely than others.

Overall, the "fear of failing" dimension reflects a moderate-pressure environment in which students experience evaluative stress, peer comparison concerns, and external expectation pressures. Importantly, the results show a nuanced pattern: general performance anxiety is common, but the direct endorsement of improper practices is lower on average and highly variable. This suggests that fear of failing may operate less as a uniform predictor of dishonesty and more as a conditional vulnerability factor—one that can increase risk for a subset of students when combined with additional stressors (e.g., high stakes assessment, low confidence, or limited coping resources).

4.2.4 Performance Anxiety

The performance anxiety indicators reflect a moderate level across the set, indicating that examination-related stress and evaluation apprehension are meaningful influences on students' academic experience. The profile suggests that anxiety is expressed in two related ways: first, as perceived dependence on external reassurance or support when facing evaluative tasks; and second, as a heightened sensitivity to judgment and embarrassment, which can shape coping choices under pressure. For instance, respondents moderately endorse difficulty succeeding in examinations without relying on external support (M = 2.80, SD = 0.76), implying that many students perceive performance situations as challenging enough to require reassurance, assistance, or validation. This is complemented by a moderate tendency to seek external support when doubting one's own abilities (M = 3.06, SD = 0.65), which is among the higher means in this dimension and shows the lowest SD, indicating a comparatively consistent pattern: self-doubt and support-seeking during evaluative moments appear broadly shared across respondents.

Within this anxiety context, the indicators that explicitly connect emotional agitation to dishonest tendencies remain moderate but closer to the lower bound. Students moderately agree that panic or agitation during examinations may lead them toward academic dishonesty (M = 2.60, SD = 0.86), and they similarly report resorting to dishonest practices to avoid being judged or embarrassed (M = 2.50, SD = 0.86). The positioning of these means suggests that while anxiety-driven temptation exists, it is not strongly endorsed as a dominant response pattern for the average respondent. However, the relatively higher SDs indicate that experiences differ meaningfully: some students may be considerably more anxiety-reactive than others, which can elevate susceptibility to unethical coping when emotions peak.

Two additional indicators further clarify the role of confidence and compensatory behaviors. The statement about not taking initiative in accomplishing academic tasks and depending on other means registers at a moderate level (M = 2.58, SD = 0.78), suggesting that anxiety may reduce proactive engagement and increase reliance on alternatives—conditions that can indirectly heighten vulnerability to dishonest assistance when demands intensify. Taken together, this dimension depicts a cohort in which evaluation stress and self-doubt are moderately prevalent, with relatively consistent support-seeking tendencies and more variable anxiety-linked dishonesty vulnerability. Substantively, the results imply that performance anxiety may function as a situational risk amplifier: it is common enough to matter at the group level, but

its translation into dishonest practice appears more likely for a subset of students who experience stronger agitation, heightened fear of judgment, or reduced confidence under exam conditions.

4.2.5 Inability to Understand the Lesson and Overall Composite Mean

The "inability to understand the lesson" indicators present a mixed pattern that leans toward the low level for the most direct dishonesty-attributed statements, while showing moderate endorsement for difficulty-driven vulnerability conditions. Specifically, items that directly link academic dishonesty to comprehension failure, loss of interest, or inattentiveness fall in the low range—including engaging in dishonesty when the lesson is not clearly understood (M = 2.34, SD = 0.87), when interest in the subject is lost (M = 2.38, SD = 0.95), and when failing to pay attention during class discussions (M = 2.36, SD = 0.92). These means indicate that respondents, on average, do not strongly endorse dishonesty as a routine response to not understanding lessons. However, the SDs for these items are relatively high, implying meaningful variability: while many students reject dishonesty in these circumstances, a subset appears more susceptible when comprehension and engagement decline.

In contrast, the items representing academic difficulty and instructional fit show moderate endorsement and provide important nuance. The tendency to resort to dishonest practices when struggling to keep up with classroom discussions is rated at a moderate level (M = 2.52, SD = 0.89), and the perception that academic dishonesty may occur if the teacher relies on explanations that are difficult to understand is also moderate (M = 2.66, SD = 0.85). These results suggest that while students may not generally admit to cheating simply because they do not understand a lesson, they do acknowledge a moderate vulnerability when difficulty becomes persistent and when instructional delivery is perceived as insufficiently accessible. In this sense, the dimension implies that comprehension-related vulnerability is more strongly associated with systemic learning difficulty and instructional mismatch than with momentary confusion alone. The dispersion levels again indicate unevenness: these conditions do not influence all respondents equally, but they are salient enough to appear at the moderate level in the aggregate.

Taken together, the "inability to understand the lesson" dimension reflects a pattern where direct dishonesty endorsement remains low, but difficulty-based risk conditions are moderately present, supporting an interpretation that comprehension challenges may function as an indirect integrity risk through frustration, inability to keep pace, and perceived instructional barriers. Finally, the overall composite mean for academic dishonesty-related tendencies is 2.94 (SD = 0.79), which falls within the moderate level range. This indicates that, across all five dimensions, the cohort exhibits a moderate overall tendency toward integrity vulnerability under various pressures, with the SD suggesting meaningful variability at the student level. Substantively, the composite result reinforces that academic dishonesty-related tendencies in this sample are not extreme, but are sufficiently present—and sufficiently uneven across students—to warrant analysis of associated dispositional factors, particularly the Dark Triad profile reported in Table 1.

4.3 Relationship between Dark Triad Personality Traits and Academic Dishonesty-Related Tendencies

Pearson's correlation analysis indicated a moderate positive relationship between the composite Dark Triad score and the composite academic dishonesty-related tendency score among Senior High School students at First City Providential College (N = 50). The obtained correlation was $r = 0.471$ ($df = 48$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher endorsement of Dark Triad traits was associated with higher levels of dishonesty-related tendencies. This result supports rejection of the null hypothesis and indicates that the two constructs co-vary meaningfully within the study sample.

Substantively, the direction of the association supports the interpretation that socially aversive trait tendencies—characterized by strategic self-interest, entitlement, and reduced empathic restraintt—are linked with greater vulnerability to academic dishonesty-oriented coping. This pattern is consistent with contemporary accounts that treat the Dark Triad as a risk profile rather than a deterministic cause of misconduct: higher trait endorsement may elevate susceptibility, while the academic environment (e.g., performance pressure, peer norms, and perceived enforcement credibility) shapes whether and how dishonesty is expressed. The present finding therefore provides empirical support for examining integrity as both a behavioral and institutional concern, where dispositional vulnerabilities interact with situational demands.

In practical terms, the results imply that academic integrity initiatives may benefit from a dual emphasis: reinforcing credible academic governance (clear rules, consistent enforcement, and fair assessment systems) while also strengthening learner supports that address vulnerability pathways (ethical reflection, self-regulation, stress management, and academic skill scaffolding).

Although the correlational design does not establish causality, the observed association is sufficiently strong and statistically robust to warrant attention in student development planning and integrity-focused interventions.

4.4 Discussion of Findings

The descriptive results indicate a generally moderate behavioral risk profile in the respondent group, both in terms of Dark Triad personality trait endorsement and academic dishonesty-related tendencies. The overall Dark Triad composite level suggests that socially aversive tendencies—conceptualized as dispositional orientations toward strategic self-interest, self-enhancement, and reduced empathic restraintt—are present but not extreme. This pattern is consistent with contemporary accounts that treat Dark Triad traits as probabilistic susceptibility factors rather than deterministic labels, whose behavioral expression depends on contextual pressures and perceived constraints (Curtis, 2023; Curtis et al., 2022). At the dimension level, the results imply a profile marked more by pragmatic and reputation-sensitive tendencies than by overtly punitive or uncontrolled self-descriptions. Items reflecting reputation protection, instrumental networking, and advantage-aware thinking are moderately endorsed, whereas the most explicitly punitive or self-incriminating statements (e.g., rapid punishment, difficulty controlling actions) are relatively lower. This configuration may reflect a tendency toward instrumental self-management rather than openly aggressive or impulsive posturing, which is also consistent with the possibility of self-presentational restraint in school-based self-report contexts.

Academic dishonesty-related tendencies likewise register at a moderate overall level, suggesting that integrity vulnerability is meaningful in the cohort, even if direct endorsement of cheating as an explicit strategy is not uniformly high. Across dimensions, the most consistent pattern is that respondents commonly report pressures linked to image maintenance, social judgment, workload strain, and evaluative stress, which can narrow perceived coping options during high-demand periods. The peer pressure indicators, for instance, reflect moderate sensitivity to social evaluation and outcomes aligned with expectations, while the most direct "unapproved methods" statement under peer judgment is lower on average but highly variable—indicating that a subgroup may be particularly susceptible when performance becomes socially and reputationally salient. Similarly, the "inability to manage the demand of student life" indicators show moderate endorsement of time-management difficulty, overload, and procrastination-linked decision risks, supporting the interpretation that integrity vulnerability may be amplified by deadline compression and competing responsibilities. These results align with multidetermined accounts of dishonesty emphasizing performance pressure, task overload, weak coping resources, and opportunity structures as proximate conditions that increase temptation and rationalization (Srirejeki et al., 2022).

Notably, the "fear of failing" and "performance anxiety" patterns suggest that evaluative stress functions less as a uniform driver of deliberate dishonesty and more as a conditional risk amplifier. Social comparison pressure and concern about disappointing significant others are moderately endorsed, yet the most direct admission of relying on improper practices is lower on average and accompanied by high dispersion. This divergence implies heterogeneity in how students translate fear and anxiety into coping behavior: for many, anxiety may produce avoidance, dependence on external reassurance, or reduced initiative, while for a subset it may increase vulnerability to rule-adjacent strategies when stress peaks. In the "inability to understand the lesson" dimension, the direct linkage between comprehension failure and dishonesty is generally low, but vulnerability increases when the difficulty is framed as persistent (e.g., difficulty keeping up with discussions) or as an instructional accessibility issue. This distinction is important because it suggests that integrity risk is not merely an individual moral issue but may also reflect instructional alignment and support conditions—a view consistent with arguments that integrity governance must include pedagogical scaffolding and clear, credible assessment practices, especially under digitalized learning environments (Atento, 2025a; Atento et al., 2025c).

The correlational finding provides a coherent integrative interpretation of these descriptive patterns. A moderate positive association indicates that higher endorsement of Dark Triad traits tends to co-vary with higher academic dishonesty-related tendencies in this sample. In substantive terms, this relationship supports the theoretical expectation that dispositional tendencies linked to instrumental rule interpretation, entitlement-related rationalization, and reduced empathic restraintt are associated with greater vulnerability to dishonest academic coping—particularly in contexts where performance pressure, social judgment, and workload strain are salient (Curtis, 2023; Curtis et al., 2022). However,

the interpretation remains non-causal: the result indicates reliable co-variation, not that Dark Triad traits "cause" dishonesty. A defensible reading is interactional—dispositional risk may elevate susceptibility, while contextual pressures and the credibility of academic governance shape whether and how such susceptibility manifests in practice. This interactional interpretation is also consistent with integrity as a credibility issue: coherent rules, fair processes, and consistent enforcement reduce ambiguity and constrain opportunistic interpretations of academic expectations (Atento, 2025b).

Finally, the findings are contextually relevant to Philippine Senior High School under the K–12 policy environment, where academic formation includes not only competence development but also character formation and responsible citizenship as educational priorities (Republic Act No. 10533, 2013). Within this policy framing, the results suggest that integrity initiatives may benefit from a dual emphasis: strengthening institutional credibility (clear standards, authentic assessment design, consistent enforcement) while also strengthening student supports (study skills, self-regulation, stress management, and instructional scaffolding) that reduce vulnerability under pressure. In this sense, the study's results support an approach to academic integrity that is simultaneously behavioral, developmental, and governance-aware—recognizing that integrity risk can emerge from the convergence of individual susceptibility and situational constraints rather than from either factor alone.

5. Conclusion and Recommendations

5.1 Conclusion

This study examined the relationship between Dark Triad personality traits and academic dishonesty-related tendencies among Senior High School students at First City Providential College. The results show that respondents demonstrated moderate levels of Dark Triad trait endorsement and moderate academic dishonesty-related tendencies. Pearson's correlation analysis further revealed a significant positive association between the two constructs ($r = 0.471$, $p < .001$), indicating that higher endorsement of Dark Triad traits is associated with higher susceptibility to dishonesty-oriented academic coping within the study sample.

Substantively, the findings support the view that academic integrity risk is shaped by both individual susceptibility and contextual pressures. Trait tendencies associated with strategic self-interest, entitlement-related self-enhancement, and reduced empathic restraintt appear to co-vary with greater vulnerability to dishonest responses, particularly within environments where performance demands, social evaluation, and workload strain are salient. Although the design does not permit causal inference, the evidence provides a defensible basis for strengthening academic integrity initiatives through approaches that combine governance, student development, and supportive learning conditions.

5.2 Limitations and Implications

This study has limitations typical of single-site, cross-sectional survey designs. First, the sample was limited to one institution and a modest $N = 50$, which constrains generalizability and the stability of point estimates. Second, both constructs were measured through self-report questionnaires, which are susceptible to social desirability bias and underreporting of sensitive behaviors. Third, the correlational design does not permit causal inference, and unmeasured factors (e.g., perceived fairness of assessment, classroom climate, academic self-efficacy, or digital access) may partially account for the observed co-variation.

Notwithstanding these limitations, the findings offer a practical implication for integrity programming in Senior High School settings: personality-linked susceptibility and situational pressures should be treated as joint inputs. Integrity initiatives may be strengthened as a governance function—through clear standards, credible enforcement, and assessment designs that reduce ambiguity and minimize opportunity structures for misconduct—and as a student development function—through programs that build ethical decision-making, self-regulation, and adaptive coping under stress. The descriptive profiles suggest that vulnerability is often embedded in everyday conditions (e.g., time-management difficulty, performance anxiety, social comparison pressures, and comprehension strain), indicating that effective integrity work should address both the moral and functional reasons students may rationalize shortcuts.

Future research should replicate the analysis using larger and multi-school samples and test interactional models that specify when dispositional risk is most likely to translate into dishonest academic coping. Where feasible, subsequent studies may incorporate supplementary indicators beyond self-report (e.g., behavioral proxies, teacher reports, integrity incident records, or classroom climate measures) to strengthen inference and clarify contextual moderators.

5.3 Recommendations

Based on the findings, the following recommendations are offered:

1. Strengthen academic integrity climate through clarity and consistency. Schools may enhance integrity compliance by ensuring that academic rules, collaboration boundaries, and authorship expectations are clearly communicated, consistently applied, and reinforced through transparent assessment procedures.

2. Embed self-regulation and coping supports into student development programs. Since workload strain, procrastination-related pressure, and evaluative stress are salient risk conditions, student support initiatives may include training in time management, goal-setting, planning, and stress regulation to reduce vulnerability during high-demand periods.

3. Implement structured interventions for performance anxiety and fear of failure. Academic units may provide formative feedback systems, test preparation supports, study-skills scaffolding, and guidance mechanisms that reduce grade-centered panic and improve legitimate confidence-building routes to performance.

4. Harness peer influence as a protective factor. Given the relevance of peer dynamics, schools may develop peer-led integrity initiatives and classroom norm-setting strategies that promote prosocial accountability, reduce normalization of dishonest practices, and encourage ethical help-seeking behaviors.

5. Pursue replication and model extension. Future research may replicate the analysis using larger, multi-school samples and examine whether contextual factors (e.g., perceived enforcement credibility, peer norms, workload intensity, instructional clarity) shape the strength of the relationship between dispositional risk traits and dishonesty-related tendencies. Where feasible, subsequent studies may also incorporate supplementary indicators beyond self-report to strengthen inference.

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