Abstract

The impostor phenomenon is an internal experience which occurs in high-achieving individuals who believe that their success has been achieved due to chance rather than their own abilities and intelligence (Clance, 1985a). Previous research has investigated this phenomenon based on a variety of factors such as minority status, age, gender, and psychological health (McClain et al., 2016; Sonnak & Towell, 2001; Thompson, Davis, & Davidson, 1998). Few studies, however, have investigated the impostor phenomenon in undergraduate first-generation students. Therefore, the purpose of the current study was to compare the impostor feelings of first-generation students to those of non-first-generation students. The first hypothesis was that first-generation undergraduate students would have significantly higher impostor phenomenon scores compared to non-first-generation students. In addition, it was hypothesized that both socioeconomic status and racial/ethnic minority status would mediate this relationship. The final hypothesis was that there would be an inverse relationship between semesters in college and impostor feelings in both groups. In order to explore these hypotheses, participants completed an online survey including the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale and demographic questions (Clance, 1985b). The results showed that non-first-generation students had greater impostor feelings compared to first-generation students. Also, neither socioeconomic status nor racial/ethnic minority status mediated that relationship. Finally, there was no relationship between semesters in college and impostor scores. Exploratory analyses also yielded significant results. Implications for college students and future research directions are discussed.

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