

The Relationship Between First-Generation Status and Academic Success

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Introduction

Attending a post-secondary institution is an important part of a person's life. Higher education not only guides people toward future careers but is also a key factor in determining financial independence, future success, life satisfaction, and comfort (House et al. 2020). However, not every student, such as firstgeneration students, has an equal opportunity nor the cultural capital to succeed academically. It is then necessary to research the unique factors that create differences between first-generation students and non-firstgeneration students to understand why there might be an achievement gap or any social inequalities between these two groups.

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Research Question

Do first-generation college students experience greater obstacles that negatively impact their academic success than non-first-generation students?

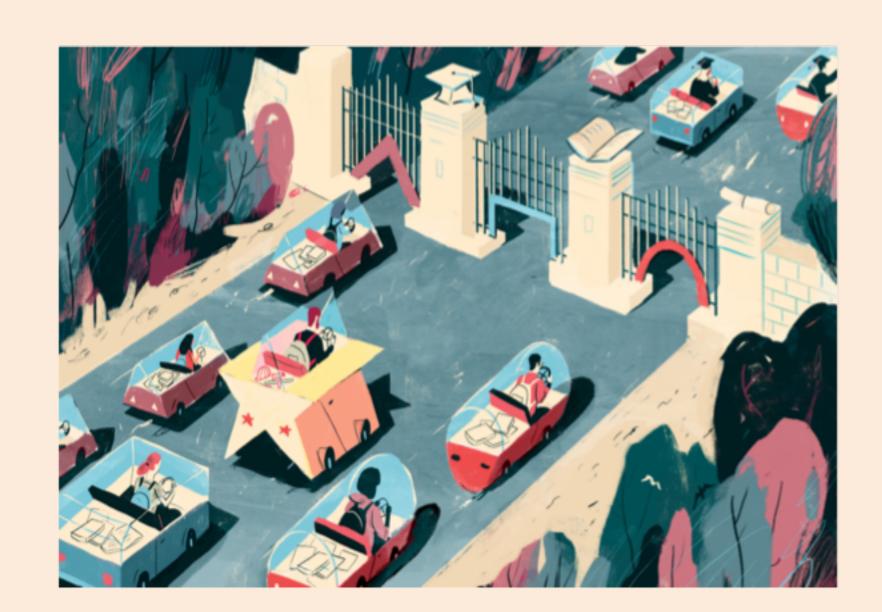


Figure 1. Student Obstacles

Background and Literature Review

It is common for first-generation students to feel as if they don't belong at their institutions. In a study looking at a nationally representative survey of 23,570 first-year college students in the U.S, researchers found that first-generation students reported a lower sense of belonging at four-year institutions than non-first-generation students (Gopalan & Brady, 2020).

First-generation students experience more mental health issues that may impact their academic success. Jenkins et al. (2013) revealed that out of a sample of 1,647 participants, first-generation college students reported significantly stronger PTSD symptoms and significantly less life satisfaction than non-first-generation students.

Additionally, Stebleton and Soria (2012), used the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey to discover that out of 58,017 students across six, large public universities, first-generation students reported higher instances of feeling depressed, stressed or upset, as an obstacle to their academic success.

Method

Participants:

- At least 100 students from CSU Stanislaus who are 18 and older.
- Recruited voluntarily through social media

Materials:

- Demographic survey
- Altered version of the SERU asking closeended questions regarding self-reported learning abilities, financial wellness and additional open-ended questions regarding sense of belonging and grade point average adapted from the SERU

Design:

- A non-experimental correlational design will be utilized via a survey made available to California State University, Stanislaus (CSU Stanislaus) students through Qualtrics.
- Will assess correlation between number of obstacles first-generation students face and their academic success and the number of obstacles non-first-generation students face and their academic success

Procedure:

• Survey will be administered through Qualtrics available to Stanislaus State students in a link through social media with a brief description of the purpose of the study

Expected Results

Based on my non-experimental correlational design, I predict first-generation students will have a negative correlation between the obstacles they face and their academic success. Therefore, I expect to observe that first-generation students will have lower grades and a lower grade point average as well as a greater number of obstacles compared to non-first-generation students.



Figure 4. Obstacles to Graduate

Significance

First-generation students may be at a disadvantage in their academic success due to the number of stressors they encounter compared to non-first-generation students. Therefore, it is necessary to thoroughly research this topic to ensure that all students have an equal chance at prospering academically.

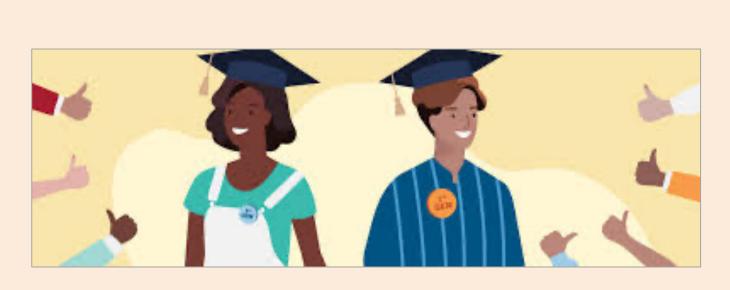


Figure 2. First-Generation Students



Figure 3. First-Generation Students Under Pressure

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