

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 first-generation 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-first-generation students to understand why there might be an achievement gap or any social inequalities between these two groups.

[Image of first-generation students in differently shaped cars trying to fit into the incorrectly shaped doors]

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

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 close-ended 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 first-generation students and their academic success and non-first-generation students 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

[Image of first-generation students]

[Image of first-generation students under pressure]

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.

[Image of graduation cap and students using a ladder or tassel to climb on top of it]

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.

References –

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