

Exploring Imposter Syndrome among First-Generation Black, Indigenous, and People of Color Graduate Students in Hispanic-Serving Institutions within Predominantly White Academic Environments

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Abstract: First-generation Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) graduate students frequently encounter heightened levels of imposter syndrome, particularly while attending predominantly White academic institutions. Imposter syndrome may also impact a student's anxiety, lack of psychological well-being, stress levels, academic performance, and perfectionism ([Bernard et al., 2020](#)). Additionally, BIPOC graduate students face unique challenges such as limited resources, insufficient faculty representation, and cultural imposter syndrome, which can undermine their academic success and sense of belonging. There is limited research on first-generation BIPOC graduate students, particularly in examining their experiences with imposter syndrome and the impact on their mental health, academic performance, and personal stressors while attending predominantly White academic institutions. The purpose of this study is to explore the effects and impact imposter syndrome has on first-generation BIPOC graduate students who attend a Hispanic-Serving Institution within a predominantly White academic environment across the California State University system. A cross-sectional mixed-methods approach was utilized to collect data through purposive and snowball sampling methods, recruiting 100 participants to complete an online survey, which included an informed consent form, a demographic questionnaire, and a Likert scale survey. In addition, structured interviews were conducted with 10 participants who met the inclusion criteria. Participants were asked eight open-ended questions to understand their experiences with how imposter syndrome has impacted their academic performance, mental health, personal and emotional well-being, and overall sense of belonging within their graduate programs. While the results of this study are pending, it is essential to expand research on these students' experiences to inform the development of additional educational, behavioral, and community support systems. Findings from this research may contribute to creating resources that can help foster a sense of belonging, representation, and support for first-generation BIPOC graduate students in Hispanic-Serving Institutions within a predominantly White academic environment.

Keywords: *BIPOC, Hispanic-Serving Institutions, predominantly White academic environments*