

The Effect of Perceived Stress on Academic Outcomes of First Generation College Students

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Previous research has shown different academic experiences for first generation college students (FGCSs) and non-first generation college students (NFGCSs). In particular, studies have found attrition rates of FGCSs to be higher than those of NFGCSs. Additionally, research findings have demonstrated a relationship between attrition rates, negative academic outcomes, and FGCSs. Past research has also indicated that FGCSs face greater perceived stress than NFGCSs. The present study examined the relationship between perceived stress, generational status, and academic outcomes. Four hundred and six first year college students, including 44 FGCSs, completed the perceived stress scale. Data on grade point average (GPA) was taken from institutional research, while student generational status was determined from self-report measures. The author predicted that perceived stress would moderate the relationship between student generational differences and GPA. The results of a hierarchical regression analysis suggest that perceived stress may moderate the relationship between FGCSs and GPA. These findings suggest that universities could specifically target effective stress management skills when dealing with the FGCS population. Fostering improvements in the amount of perceived stress experienced by FGCSs may in turn bolster academic outcomes, which in turn may affect attrition rates.