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Focus Group Evaluation of Imposter Phenomenon and Its Impact on College Education and Perception of Future Opportunities

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FOCUS GROUP EVALUATION OF IMPOSTER PHENOMENON AND ITS IMPACT ON COLLEGE EDUCATION AND PERCEPTION OF FUTURE OPPORTUNITIES

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INTRODUCTION

- What is imposter syndrome/imposter phenomenon?
 - “An internal belief that you are not as competent as others perceive you to be”
 - “A feeling of internal inadequacy and fraudulence in spite of any accomplishments or public perception”
- Some notable examples:
 - “The exaggerated esteem in which my lifework is held makes me very ill at ease. I feel compelled to think of myself as an involuntary swindler.”
 - “I have spent my years since Princeton, while at law school and in my various professional jobs, not feeling completely a part of the worlds I inhabit. I am always looking over my shoulder wondering if I measure up.”

COMMON SYMPTOMS

- Self-criticism
- Achievement Pressure
- Negative Emotions
- Fraudulent Ideals
- Low Self-Worth

CLANCE-IP SCALE

- 20 question survey
- 0-40 means few characteristics of IP
- 40-60 means moderate IP experiences
- 60-80 means frequent experiences of IP
- 80+ means oh goodness...

WHAT AM I RESEARCHING?

- Effects of IP on education (specifically pharmacy education)
- Perception of future opportunities in the career of pharmacy
- Much literature exists on IP from our literature review, however nothing has specifically discussed how IP impacts both of these

HOW AM I RESEARCHING THIS?

- Methods
 - Students who were P5's and ONU Healthwise interns were recruited for the focus group. A total of 11 students were recruited, with 6 of them being in one group and the other 5 being in another group
 - Students took the Clance IP scale and after doing so were introduced to IP with a discussion following it
 - Discussions were done using the Delphi technique

WHAT QUESTIONS WERE ASKED?

- Do you feel that IP has impacted your experience at ONU? If so, in what way?
- Specifically, has IP impacted your performance academically?
- Has IP impacted your relationship with other peers?
- Has IP made you feel that you have limited opportunities for a career in pharmacy?
- If interested in residency/fellowship/graduate program, has IP held you back from pursuing these opportunities?
- What do you do that helps you when you are feeling inadequate/underprepared/unfit, etc.?
- What things or situations help you control your IP feelings?

WHAT DID I FIND IN THE FOCUS GROUP?

- **Do you feel that IP has impacted your experience at ONU? If so, in what way?**
 - Students with high IP scores felt that this feeling caused them to compare themselves to their peers. They look at the accomplishments of their peers positively while looking at their own accomplishments in a lesser way.
- **Specifically, has IP impacted your performance academically?**
 - The students felt that it did not impact their academic performance in an overwhelming positive or negative way, however some mentioned that feelings of IP will cause them to study even more so that they are on the same level as their peers.
- **Has IP impacted your relationship with other peers?**
 - Most of the P5's felt that IP had impacted their relationship with their peers. The most common situation the students discussed concerned issues with telling their friends how they did on certain tests and exams. Some felt ashamed to tell their closest friends any bad grades they received, and would even avoid discussing good scores they got.

WHAT ELSE DID I FIND IN THE FOCUS GROUP?

- **Has IP made you feel that you have limited opportunities for a career in pharmacy? If interested in residency/fellowship/graduate program, has IP held you back from pursuing these opportunities?**
 - Students overwhelmingly did not feel that IP caused them to believe there were no opportunities for a career in pharmacy. While it did make them feel that they couldn't get a residency, they did feel that there are other opportunities in pharmacy for them.
- **What do you do that helps you when you are feeling inadequate/underprepared/unfit, etc., and what things or situations help you control your IP feelings?**
 - It was noted that peers that are also in the pharmacy program are the best support system since they know what they are going through. Another thing that helped students was taking a break from working on pharmacy materials.

CONCLUSIONS/TAKEAWAYS

- Out of the 5 students in the focus group, 4 had a score that would be defined as either moderate or severe feeling of imposter phenomenon
- In the context of education, IP seems to affect interpersonal relationships amongst peers more than affecting academic performance
- Students also mentioned that feelings of IP did not make them feel that there were limited opportunities in pharmacy, but that it did make them feel less confident about residency due to constant comparison with others

MORE CONCLUSIONS/TAKEAWAYS

- An effective way to help deal with these feelings mentioned by the students was to discuss these feelings with close friends also in pharmacy
- Students felt discussing these feelings with therapists and counselors would also be beneficial

MOVING FORWARD

- Some other possible areas to explore
 - Prevalence in other majors
 - Differences between grades (freshman vs seniors)
 - Holding more focus groups with students
 - Making faculty more aware of IP

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