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Impostor Syndrome as Correlates of Academic Performance among Early Childhood and Primary Education Undergraduates in Kwara State

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ABSTRACT

This study explored the relationship between impostor syndrome and academic performance among Early Childhood and Primary Education undergraduates in Kwara State. A correlational descriptive research design was adopted. The population comprised all undergraduates in the Early Childhood and Primary Education program, with 136 first-year studentsfrom the University of Ilorin and Kwara State University serving as the sample. Census sampling was employed to ensure representativeness. Data collection utilized a structured, validated questionnaire titled "Impostor Syndrome as Correlate of Academic Performance Among Early Childhood Undergraduates (ISACAPAECU)" and a proforma to record cumulative grade point averages (CGPA). The instrument's content validity was ensured through expert review, while internal consistency reliability yielded a Cronbach Alpha coefficient of 0.83. Data analysis was conducted using descriptive statistics, Pearson Product-Moment Correlation, and independent t-tests.Results revealed that 50.7% of respondents exhibited intense impostor syndrome characteristics, while 46.3% demonstrated moderate academic performance (CGPA: 2.40–3.49). A low positive correlation (r = 0.18, p = 0.03) was observed between impostor syndrome and academic performance, indicating statistical significance. Furthermore, no significant difference in impostor syndrome based on gender was identified (t = 0.69, p > 0.05).The study concluded that intense impostor syndrome significantly impacts academic outcomes among undergraduates. Recommendations include institutional development of tools to assess impostor syndrome, implementation of targeted awareness campaigns, and provision of mentoring programs to address self-doubt and build resilience. These measures are vital for enhancing students' mental well-being and academic success.

Keywords: *Academic Performance, Early Childhood Education, Imposter Syndrome, Undergraduate Students*

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Introduction

Undergraduate students studying early childhood education and primary education studies are preservice teachers trained to maintain the developmental milestones of children and make sure they grow to the fullest which involves a lot of responsibility for the students. They often experience fear, doubt, and emotional instability because of their field of study's particular difficulties and demands. This may lead to unexpected psychological conditions which can be manifested through self-doubt and a dread of being exposed as a phoney which can become a major obstacle to academic performance and personal well-being.

Imposter syndrome (IS) is *a behavioural psychological phenomenon described as self-doubt of intellect, skills, or accomplishments among high-achieving* individuals (Martin et al., 2023). Besides, examining the connection between imposter syndrome and academic attainment in this field advances knowledge of imposter syndrome in learning environments. It offers awareness to mental health, education, and policy experts beyond. Successfully addressing imposter syndrome can result in more encouraging learning environments, eventually improving student performance and producing healthier, more self-assured future teachers. The academic world has given impostor syndrome, which is often called theimpostor phenomenon, a great deal of attention, especially in light of its effect on students' academic performance.

Imposter syndrome is characterised by a person's persistent fear of being revealed as phoney, even in the face of apparent success and accomplishments (Bravata et al., 2020). These people frequently blame other variables, including good fortune or timing, for their successes rather than their abilities and efforts. First off, the concept of impostor syndrome has changed throughout time since it was first identified and defined by Clance andImes, in 1978as an internal sensation of intellectual phoniness, especially for high-achieving women (Villwock et al., 2016). However, this definition includes a wider range of people, including males and different ethnic groups, acknowledging that impostor syndrome does not target a certain group of people.

Similarly, impostor syndrome has been characterized by McElwee and Yurak, (2020) as a psychological pattern in which people feel self-doubt about their achievements and worry about being revealed as fakes. Impostor syndrome has several different origins, most of which are the result of a confluence of social forces, familial expectations, individual personality factors and finding oneself where he or she doesn’t expect. Higher incidences of impostor syndrome have been highly correlated with personality characteristics such as neuroticism and perfectionism (Neureiter&Traut-Mattausch, 2016). Moreover, impostor syndrome development can be strongly influenced by familial expectations, particularly when such expectations and pressures come from high parental expectations (Lane, 2015).

Burdens from society, such as racial and cultural dynamics, are also quite important, because of their marginalization and prejudice in largely white universities, students from understated minorities may suffer from Impostor Syndrome more severely (Cokley et al., 2017). These demands from society which are burdens from society may become noticeable and bringa high frequency of impostor syndrome in academic environments for undergraduates. According to recent research by Gravois, (2020), who revealed that 20% to 30% of very talented students eventually have severe symptoms of impostor syndrome during their scholastic years. Vaughn et al. (2019), explained that there is a greater occurrence of impostor syndrome among some categories of students as he buttressed that female students and students from minority upbringings frequently report higher levels of impostor syndrome.

This psychological condition known as impostor syndrome or imposter phenomenon causes people to mistrust their achievements and worry about being exposed as frauds even in the face of specious success. This syndrome, which is more common in students enrolled in courses dissimilar to their original field of study, can have a substantial undesirable influence on both academic performance and mental health (Mak et al., 2019). Continuous repetition of impostor syndrome can result from emotions of inadequacy and self-doubt being impaired by the disagreement between the prescribed course and their preferred field. Still, students who are allocated to courses that diverge from their first choices mostly face such specific difficulties (Maqsood et al., 2018). These students may have weaker self-confidence and a greater sense of being an impersonator because they feel less prepared or passionate about their new field. Indeed, the sudden shift may cause these students more stress because they may find it problematic to adjust to the new social and academic performance. Imposter syndrome in students is serious when they have confidence that their coursemates are more skilled or truthfully engaged in university courses than they are and perform better academically (Bravata et al., 2020).

Academic performance refers to the extent to which a student, teacher, or institution has achieved their educational goals and it is often measured by continuous assessment through grades, standardized tests, completion rates, and evaluations. It encompasses not only cognitive skills but also affective and social competencies that contribute to overall educational success (York et al., 2015). These trends are supported by several points of research that show that academic performance is not only associated with an intellectual quotient (IQ) but there are multiple variables and dimensions to which a certain predictive value can be attributed (Martín et al., 2017)

Shoukat et al., (2013) related that students' academic gain and learning performance are affected by numerous factors including gender, age, teaching faculty, students' schooling, father/guardian socioeconomic status, residential area of students, medium of instruction in schools, tuition trend, daily study hours and accommodation as hostelries or day scholar. The measurement of students’ previous educational outcomes is the most important indicator of students’ future

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achievement (academic achievement) and this means that the higher the previous appearance, the better the student's academic performance in future endeavours.

It is vital to comprehend and tackle the distinct obstacles encountered by the students to cultivate a nurturing and comprehensive learning atmosphere. Through the implementation of focused interventions, educational institutions can assist these individuals in overcoming symptoms of imposter syndrome and realizing their academic potential by putting focused interventions into place. According to estimates, approximately 70% of students in higher education experience Impostor Syndrome at some point in their academic careers. Research by Gravois, (2020) has demonstrated the widespread prevalence of Impostor Syndrome within this population.

Apart from other personal attributes, academic performance has always been linked to the outcomes of evaluation tests, which are those that correlate to a student's IQ. The creation of meaning is linked to each person's individual development, in hand with other processes like identity, relationships, and life goals. Among these qualities, the importance of emotional intelligence is worth highlighting the management, facilitation, understanding, and perception as dimensions associated with personality traits, emotional impulsiveness, respect for others, sociability, negotiating skills, openness to experience, self-confidence, and of course, the meaning of life (Martínet et al., 2017) while mental health issues are associated with lower Grade Point Averages and higher dropout rates which is the case of imposter syndrome.

Students with impostor syndrome are less likely to ask for assistance or participate in academic activities, both of which are essential for success in their area of study (Thomas et al., 2019). The unwanted sequence of self-doubt and underachievement can be strengthened by the unwillingness to partake and seek help, which can result in lower academic achievements. Furthermore, these students can be more depressed, and anxious and likely to worsen their general well-being and academic performance (Cokley et al., 2017). The effect and frequency of impostor syndrome among these students might be greatly influenced by the educational and cultural environment. Regardless of their initial interests, students may experience increased pressure to do well in their given courses in areas where there is substantial importance on academic performance and conformism (Peteet et al., 2015).

Impostor Syndrome is a common issue among women which makesImes and Clance firstly limited their research on females as it is often linked to traditional gender roles and societal expectations. Women have faced structural barriers and biases in academic and professional settings, exacerbating feelings of inadequacy as they strive for success in male-dominated fields, they may feel undeserving of their achievements. Impostor Syndrome is a unique challenge faced by men also due to societal norms that emphasize confidence, assertiveness, and self-sufficiency. Men may feel compelled to hide their self-doubt, avoid help, or express vulnerability to avoid being perceived as weak. This can lead to feelings of isolation and increased self-doubt asBravata et al. (2020) discovered that 20% of men and 35% of women experience high levels of Impostor Syndrome, with women often experiencing stronger feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt.

This connotes that both male and female students may have emotions of inadequacy and fraudulence as a result of this pressure, which can make it even harder for them to adjust to the expectations of their new academic environment. Educational establishments can take several helpful steps to lessen the impact of impostor syndrome on students enrolled in various courses. Strong academic counselling and advising programs can assist students in adjusting to their new disciplines and gaining self-assurance (Neureiter&Traut-Mattausch, 2016). According to Parkman (2016), mentoring programs that facilitate the connection between students and experts in their new professions can offer significant assistance and mitigate feelings of loneliness and inadequacy. Students who are placed in courses that are not their first preferences run the danger of developing Impostor Syndrome, which can hurt both their emotional and academic well-being.

It was noted by Parkman (2016) that individuals with impostor syndrome, out of their determination may set high standards for themselves and persistently pursue their goals strongmindedly to avoid perceived failure. Students who experience imposter syndrome often fear being exposed to fraud, which can drive them to work harder and strive for excellence. This paradoxical effect is well-documented in the literature. Theoretically, Clance and Imes, who first identified impostor syndrome observed that affected individuals might achieve high levels of success as a result of their relentless efforts to meet or exceed the expectations of others and peers. Nevertheless, it's interesting to note that, despite its negative consequences, impostor syndrome may occasionally motivate students to succeed academically. Some students may be inspired to study harder and produce better work because they are afraid of being revealed as frauds (Neureiter&Traut-Mattausch, 2016). However, this determination is often short-lived and can result in burnout, which discusses how important it is to manage impostor syndrome in academic settings.

For this, teachers and institutions may provide focused interventions to help students who are impacted by impostor syndrome by having a thorough awareness of the definitions, causes, and prevalence of impostor syndrome. To add to the growing conversation on effective management strategies, and to contribute extensively to the literature on how to effectively manage and mitigate the effects of impostor syndrome in educational environments, this study aimed to investigate the relationship between academic performance and impostor syndrome among early childhood students in Kwara State.

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Statement of the Problem

Early childhood educators are required to nurture kids, train young children, and have an understanding of children's development and means of imparting necessary knowledge and skills to young children. Therefore, academic life experience and emotional health are important in achieving the expected goals. However, early childhood and primary education undergraduate students tend to fear failure, procrastinate, avoid challenges, feel unworthy of success, downplay achievements, perfectionism, self-doubt, fear being exposed as a fraud, overworking, and attributing success to luck which leads to low academic performance. These undergraduates are expected to master teaching methodologies, theoretical knowledge, and practical abilities to stay and use with children with thorough observations but often face unique pressures which exacerbate feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, incompetence, and fear of being exposed to unhealthy emotional trauma and academic failure leading to impostor syndrome.

Imposter syndrome is a psychological emotion of feeling of being exposed as phoney. Undergraduates grappling with Impostor Syndrome procrastinate, avoid seeking help, or overwork excessively to compensate for their perceived deficiencies, thereby experiencing burnout, reduced motivation, and lowered academic outcomes. Few research studies have been conducted about how imposter syndrome, its prevalence, and the factors that manifest its effect on the academic performance of students in higher institutions. Therefore, this study examines the relationship between imposter syndrome and the academic performance of early childhood undergraduate students in Kwara state.

Research Questions

The following research questions were raised for this study to be achieved:

1. To what extent do early childhood undergraduates feel impostor syndrome in Kwara State?
2. What is the academic performance of Early Childhood and Primary Education undergraduates?
3. What are the factors that manifest impostor syndrome among early childhood undergraduates in Kwara State?

Research Hypothesis

For this study to be achieved, the following null hypotheses were formulated:

H_{01}: There is no significant relationship between Impostor Syndrome and academic performance among early childhood undergraduates in Kwara State.

H_{02}: There is no significant difference inimposter syndrome among early childhood and primary education undergraduates in Kwara State based on gender.

Methodology

This study employed a descriptive design of correlational type to examine the relationship between impostor syndrome (IS) and academic performance among early childhood and primary education undergraduates in Kwara state. The design was chosen for its ability to provide a snapshot of the current state of imposter syndrome and its potential impact on academic performance within Kwara state. The population for this study is early childhood and primary education studies undergraduates in Kwara State. The study focused on first-year students enrolled in early childhood and primary education programs in Kwara State as potential respondents to investigate the presence of imposter syndrome. University of Ilorin and Kwara State University were used as the two institutions that represent the primary sources of early childhood and primary education programs in Kwara State. A census sample was used for 136 100-level respondents across the universities that were offering early childhood education and primary education programmes; 91 students from University of Ilorin and 45 students from Kwara State University offering Early Childhood and Primary Education Studies in 2022/2023 academic session.

Two instruments were used for data collection. A structured online adapted online media (Google Forms) questionnaire titled, “Questionnaire On Impostor Syndrome as Correlate of Academic Performance Among Early Childhood Undergraduates (ISACAPAECU)”and Proforma to collect Cumulative Grade Points Average (CGPA) of students’ academic performance which portray their performance in all round course in the field. The adapted questionnaire items were restructured to fit the purpose of this research and the culture of the sample environment. A five-pointLikert scale of Very True (5 points) Often True (4 points), Sometimes True (3 points), Rarely True (2 points), and Not True (1 point) was adopted as a response format. The questionnaire Section A comprises information on the **demographic Information** of the respondents(School type and gender). Also, Section B of the questionnaire contains ten items on the level of impostor syndrome and Section Cgathered ten items on factors that influence the manifestation of impostor syndrome. The instrument was validated using face content validity by the experts in Early Childhood Education. The reliability of the instruments was established with the use of internal consistency reliability which yielded a value of 0.83 with Cronbach Alpha. The study adheres to ethical standards by ensuring that informed consent is obtained from all participants. Data gathered were analysed using mean and standard deviation for research questions. Also, Pearl Pearson Moment Correlation (PPMC)and t-testwere used to test hypotheses one and two respectively.

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Results

Demographic Description of Respondents

This section describes the demographic characteristics of the respondents using frequency counts and percentages as illustrated below:

Table 1: Frequency and Percentage Distribution of Gender and School Type of Respondents

			Gender		Total
			Male	Female	
School Ownership	University of Ilorin	Count	39	52	91
		% of Total	28.7%	38.2%	66.9%
	Kwara State University	Count	17	28	45
		% of Total	12.5%	20.6%	33.1%
Total		Count	56	80	136
		% of Total	41.2%	58.8%	100.0%

Table 1 showed that out of 136 respondents who participated in this study, 56 (41.2%) were male, while 80 (58.8%) were females. 39 (28.7%) were males from University of Ilorin and 52 (38%) were females from University of Ilorin too. 17 (12.5%) were males from Kwara State University while 28 (20.6%) were females from Kwara State University. More so, there are 91 (66.9%) total University of Ilorin 100-level students as respondents while 45 (33.1%) total Kwara State University 100-level students as respondents. From this, it can be deduced that most respondents were female and most respondents of this study were from University of Ilorin early childhood undergraduate students in Kwara State.

Research Question 1: To what extent do early childhood undergraduates feel impostor syndrome in Kwara State?

To decide on the level of imposter syndrome feeling by early childhood undergraduates in Kwara state, the total response of each respondent in continuous data was converted to discrete data and summed up, having a minimum of 10, a maximum of 50 and a range of 40. This was categorized into four categorical forms, which are few imposter characteristics, moderate imposter characteristics, frequent imposter characteristics and intense imposter characteristics. The four categories of few imposter characteristics, moderate imposter characteristics, frequent imposter characteristics and intense imposter characteristics were determined by dividing the range into four (40 ÷ 4 = 10). Hence, the interval score between each category is 10. Therefore, the scores were arranged in the following categories to determine a few imposter characteristics (10 – 20), moderate imposter characteristics (21 – 30), frequent imposter characteristics (31 – 40) and intense imposter characteristics (41 – 50). The result is presented in the table below;

Table 2: The Extent of Imposter Syndrome Characteristics

Level of Imposter Syndrome	Range	Frequency	Percent	Remark
Few Imposter Characteristics	10 – 20	5	3.7%	
Moderate Imposter Characteristics	21 – 30	12	8.8%	
Frequent Imposter Characteristics	31 – 40	50	36.8%	
Intense Imposter Characteristics	41 - 50	69	50.7%	Intense I.C
Total		136	100%	

Table 2 indicated that 5 (3.7%) out of 107 participants exhibited few imposter characteristics, 12 (8.8%) had moderate imposter characteristics, 50 (36.8%) exhibited frequent imposter characteristics and 69 (50.7%) exhibited intense imposter characteristics. It can therefore be deduced that most respondents exhibit intense imposter characteristics 69 (50.7%).

Research Question 2: What is the academic performance of Early Childhood and Primary Education undergraduates?

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This section describes the academic performance of the respondents using their Cumulative Grade Point Average (CGPA) of their concluded 100-level result. The cumulative CGPA was computed into different variables ranging from 0 – 1.49 (Extremely low), 1.50 – 2.39 (Low), 2.40 – 3.49 (Moderate), 3.50 – 4.49 (High) and 4.50 – 5.0 (Extremely high). The student's academic performance is illustrated below:

Table 3: Frequency and Percentage of Respondents CGPA

Level	Range	Frequency	Percent	Remark
Extremely low	0 – 1.49	8	5.9	
Low	1.50 – 2.39	48	35.3	
Moderate	2.40 – 3.49	63	46.3	Moderate
High	3.50 – 4.49	17	12.5	
Extremely high	4.50 – 5.0	0	0	
	Total	136	100.0	

Table 3 revealed that the total CGPA of the respondents' academic performance, there are 8 (5.9%) are within the range of 0 – 1.49 (extremely low), 48 (35.3%) were within the range of 1.50 – 2.39 (low), 63 (46.3%) were within the range of 2.49 – 3.49 (moderate), 17 (12.5%) were within the range of 3.50 – 4.49 (high) and none (0%) appear to have 4.50 – 5.0 (extremely high). It can therefore be deduced that the majority of the respondents of this study were within the range of 2.40 – 3.39 (moderate) while none reached the 4.50 – 5.0 (extremely high) among Early Childhood and Primary Education Studies Students in Kwara state used as respondents.

Research Question 3: What are the factors that manifest impostor syndrome among early childhood undergraduates in Kwara State?

To find out the factors that influence the manifestation of imposter syndrome in early childhood undergraduate students in Kwara state, mean responses of the respondents to each item on the questionnaire were computed, having five Likert scale format of Very True (5 points) Often True (4 points), Sometimes True (3 points), Rarely True (2 points), and Not True (1 point). To get the cut-off mark, the average of the total point was calculated to be 3.0 (That is; 5+4+3+2+1 = 15: 15/5 = 3.0). The result is presented in the table below:

Table 4: Factors that Manifest Imposter Syndrome

S/N	Items	Mean	Std. Deviation	Rank	Remark
1.	I feel a lot of pressure to perform well academically.	3.61	1.32	8th	Sometimes True
2.	I do not receive adequate social support from my family.	3.94	1.23	4th	Sometimes True
3.	My friends and peers do not provide me with the support I need to succeed academically.	3.71	1.29	7th	Sometimes True
4.	I feel that my professors and instructors are not approachable and supportive.	3.81	1.18	6th	Sometimes True
5.	I believe that my background and personal experiences have not prepared me well for my studies.	4.06	1.15	3rd	Often True
6.	I do not have confidence in my ability to succeed academically.	4.15	1.12	1st	Often True

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7.	The academic environment at my university is competitive.	4.11	1.09	2nd	Often True
8.	I do not have access to resources that help me manage my academic workload effectively.	3.50	1.28	9th	Sometimes True
9.	I often feel overwhelmed by the academic expectations placed on me.	3.91	1.10	5th	Sometimes True
10.	My cultural background influences my perception of academic success and failure.	3.06	1.54	10th	Sometimes True

Weighted mean: 3.79

Table 4 above reveals factors that manifest imposter syndrome among undergraduate students in Kwara State. The participant evidence was seen in the table where the mean value of all the items was greater than 3.0. From their response, it was revealed that factors that influence the manifestation of imposter syndrome are; confidence in the ability to succeed academically, competitive academic environment, background and personal experience, adequate social support from the family, overwhelmed academic expectations of the students, approachable Professor and lecturers in school, support from friends and peers, pressure to perform well academically, resources to manage academic workload, and cultural background influences. These were all ranked 1st, 2nd, 3rd, 4th, 5th to 10th respectively by their mean values from the highest to the least. The overall mean value of 3.79 which is greater than the cut-off means of 3.0 indicated that all the items listed above are factors that influence imposter syndrome in early childhood undergraduate students. Those items that are above the weighted mean (3.79) indicated that they are the most prominent factors identified by the respondents. Hence, it was revealed that confidence in my ability to succeed academically is the major manifestation of the imposter syndrome in early childhood undergraduate students in Kwara State.

Hypothesis 1: There is no significant relationship between Impostor Syndrome and academic performance among Early Childhood undergraduates in Kwara State.

Table 5:Table of Pearl Pearson Moment Correlation (PPMC) analysis showing the relationship between Imposter Syndrome and academic performance

	N	Mean	**Std. Deviation**	**Pearson Correlation**	**Sig.**	**Decision**
Imposter Syndrome	136	39.23	7.83	0.18	0.03	Significant
CGPA	136	2.60	0.75			

Table 5 above shows a significant relationship between Impostor Syndrome and academic performance in Kwara State. The table above revealed that there is a relationship between Impostor Syndrome and academic performance. This was evident by the correlation value of 0.18, which indicated a low positive relationship (0.18) between imposter syndrome and academic performance. Also, the Sig value of 0.03 obtained which is less than the Alpha value of 0.05 (0.03 < 0.05) implies that there is a significant relationship between Impostor Syndrome and academic performance. It can therefore be affirmed that there is a significant relationship between Impostor Syndrome and academic performance among Early Childhood and Primary Education Studies Undergraduates inKwara State.

Hypothesis 2: There is no significant difference in imposter syndrome among early childhood and primary education undergraduates in Kwara State based on gender.

Table 6:Table of t-test analysis showing the differences between male and female Imposter Syndrome.

	Gender	**N**	**Mean**	**Std. Deviation**	**df**	**t value**	**Sig.**	**Decision**
Imposter Syndrome	Male	56	39.79	7.69	134	0.69	0.49	Not Significant
	Female	80	38.84	7.95				

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Table 6 above shows no significant difference between male and female impostor syndrome among early childhood and primary education studies undergraduates in Kwara State. The tablerevealed that there is no significant differencebetween male and female impostor syndrome among early childhood and primary education studies undergraduates in Kwara State. This was evident by the t-value of 0.69 which is not significant at 0.05 alpha level (0.49 > 0.05). Hence, the stated null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between male and female impostor syndrome among early childhood and primary education studies undergraduates in Kwara state is retained. It can therefore be affirmed that male and female undergraduates of Early Childhood and Primary Education Studies inKwara state do not differ from each other concerning their imposter syndrome.

Discussion of Findings

The finding of this study revealed that early childhood and primary education undergraduates in Kwara state Universities exhibited frequent intense syndrome characteristics (50.7%). This shows that most of the respondents often worry that others will see them as not capable, they believe that their success is by luck, they think they are not capable, they attribute their academic success to external factors, they see others as more competent, knowledgeable, intelligent and feel uncomfortable when they praise them for their education achievements. This finding was supported by Preta et al., (2022) who also established in their study that imposter syndrome is prevalent among the study sample.

More so, this study also found that the academic performance of early childhood and primary education undergraduates in Kwara state universities is moderate. This revealed that most of the respondents hada cumulative CGPA of 2.40 – 3.49 (46.3%). This finding was supported by Shoukat et al., (2013) who related that students' academic gain and learning performance is affected by numerous factors including gender, age, teaching faculty, students' schooling, father/guardian socioeconomic status, residential area of students, medium of instruction in schools, tuition trend, daily study hours and accommodation as hostelries or day scholar and it is vital to comprehend and tackle the distinct obstacles encountered by the students to cultivate a nurturing and comprehensive learning atmosphere. They also stated that through the implementation of focused interventions, educational institutions can assist these individuals in realizing their academic potential by putting focused interventions into place.

In addition, this study found the various factors inthe manifestation of imposter syndrome. It was revealed that confidence in the ability to succeed academically, was the most identified factor while others are competitive academic environment, background and personal experience to be well prepared, adequate social support from the family, overwhelmed academic expectation of the students, approachable Professor and lecturers in school, support from friends and peers, pressure to perform well academically, resources to manage academic workload, and cultural background influences respectively. This finding is in line with Smith (2021) who identified that external pressures, such as high expectations from family and peers, exacerbate impostor syndrome, but this effect is mitigated by strong self-confidence, suggesting the need for targeted interventions that build self-efficacy and resilience.

Moreover, this study revealed the significant relationship between impostor syndrome and academic performance in Kwara State. It was evident that imposter syndrome had a low positive relationship between imposter syndrome and academic performance. It means that there is an association between imposter syndrome and academic performance. Preta et al., (2022) and Chittle (2023) supported this assertion by stating that imposter syndrome affects academic performance and leadership virtues among undergraduate clinical year medical students. They also found that there was a significant association between imposter syndrome and subjective academic performance compared to the students who were suffering from imposter syndrome.

Furthermore, this study also found that there is a significant difference in male and female early childhood undergraduates in Kwara state having imposter syndrome. This was evident by the t-value of 0.69 which is not significant at 0.05 alpha level (0.49 > 0.05). Hence, the stated null hypothesis which states that there is no significant difference between male and female impostor syndrome among early childhood and primary education studies undergraduates in Kwara state is retained. This corroborates with the study of Johnson and Smith (2022), who revealed that their statistical analysis indicates no significant differences in impostor syndrome scores between male and female students, suggesting that both genders are equally susceptible to experiencing feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy despite their achievements.

Conclusions

It can be concluded that undergraduate early childhood education students in Kwara state exhibit intense imposter syndrome characteristics. However, among Kwara State's early childhood undergraduate students, confidence in their ability to succeed academically was shown to be the most significant influencing element that led to the impostor syndrome appearance. Preventing impostor syndrome in undergraduate students studying early childhood and primary education studies is preferable. This may be achieved by having educational institutions conduct inspiring lectures and activities, as well as by offering immediate expert assistance to students who require it.

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Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Universities should develop a scale to assess the level of imposter syndrome in undergraduate students.

2. Faculties in universities should make provision for regular academic support as well as disciplinary and campus-wide workshops and orientation sessions to raise awareness and normalise imposter syndrome.

3. Awareness campaigns should be organized by the departments for undergraduate students on coping with imposter syndrome feelings, the understanding of which will foster students' wellness and enhance academic performance.

4. Creating and supporting formal student mentorship programs and establishment of an institutional culture supportive of regular professional development by the students' unions of institutions.

5. Departments and faculties should work towards prompting individuals to feel that they are unlikely to succeed.

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