

IMPOSTORISM DURING THE PRECLINAL-CLINICAL TRANSITION: FINDINGS IN THIRD-YEAR MEDICAL STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

Impostor syndrome is a phenomenon in which individuals distrust their abilities and accomplishments, and fear they may be exposed as an “impostor”. Although first described in women, impostorism has been shown to occur in both genders, and is currently viewed as an evoked affective response to specific situations. Overall, it occurs in nearly half of female and one-fourth of male medical students and residents. Transitions, such as beginning a career or moving between phases of a career, are times when impostor feelings are particularly likely to occur. For medical students, moving from the preclinical to the clinical phases of training can be a particularly challenging period.

Having frequent impostor feelings has a negative effect on medical students’ wellness. It has also been shown to contribute to burnout, and to be an impediment to identity formation as physicians, which in turn can negatively affect patient care. Accordingly, there is considerable interest in promoting student wellbeing in medical education.

To better address the specific wellness needs of medical students, this study assessed impostorism in third-year medical students at KUSOM early in their clinical training.

METHODS

Students in the KUSOM Class of 2020 completed a voluntary, anonymous, 60-item survey administered by REDCap during Oct-Nov of the M3 year consisting of:

- Clance Impostor Phenomenon (IP) Scale
- Perceived Stress (PS) Scale
- Maslach 2-item Burnout survey
- Demographic characteristics
 - 127 of 215 students responded (59%)
 - 112 (52%) completed the IP Scale. 111 completed all 3 instruments

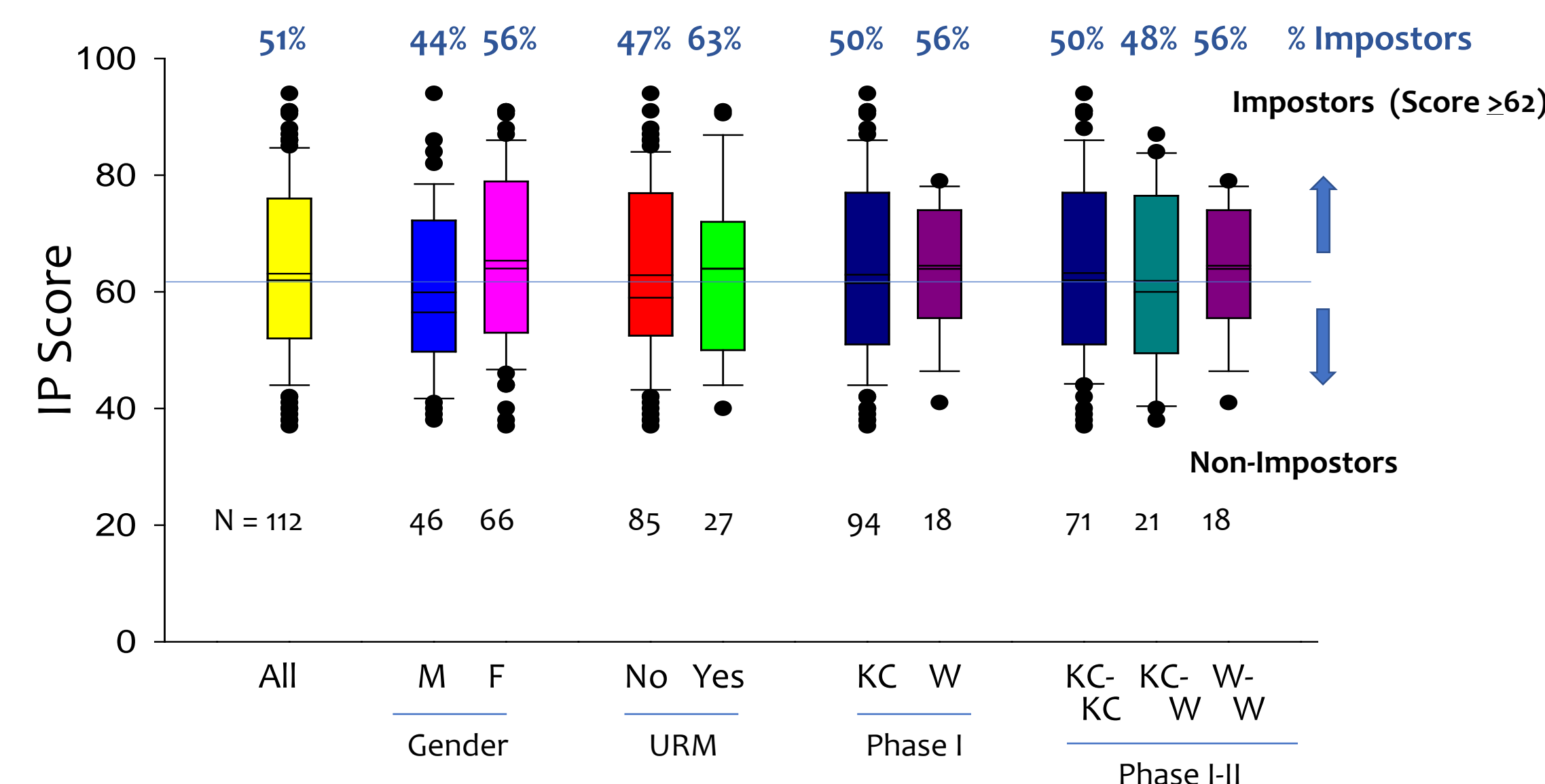
	Total	Male	Female	P M v F
Gender		41%	59%	
Age	25.9±3	26.2±4	25.5±2	NS
Racial Minority	24%	26%	23%	NS
Econ. Disad.	14%	11%	17%	NS
MCAT Score	508±5	508±5	507±6	NS
Phase 1 GPA	3.5±0.4	3.5±0.4	3.4±0.5	NS
Step 1 Score	228±16	234±16	224±15	0.002

	KC	Wich- ita	Sal- ina
Pre clin ical	94 (84%)	18 (16%)	0 (0%)
Clin ical	71 (65%)	39 (35%)	0 (0%)

RESULTS

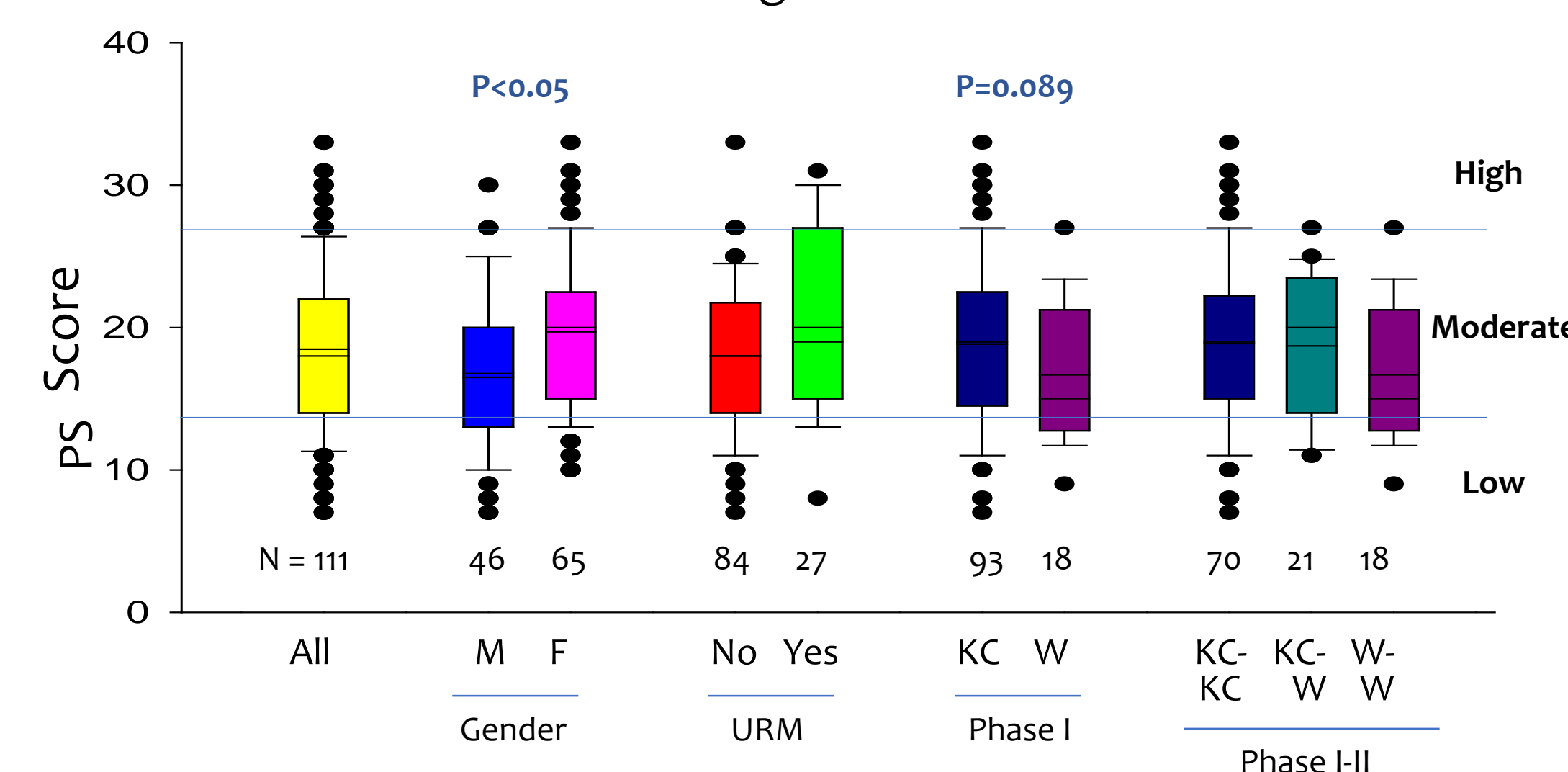
Impostorism

51% of students met the criterion for “Impostors”.
There were no differences between groups.



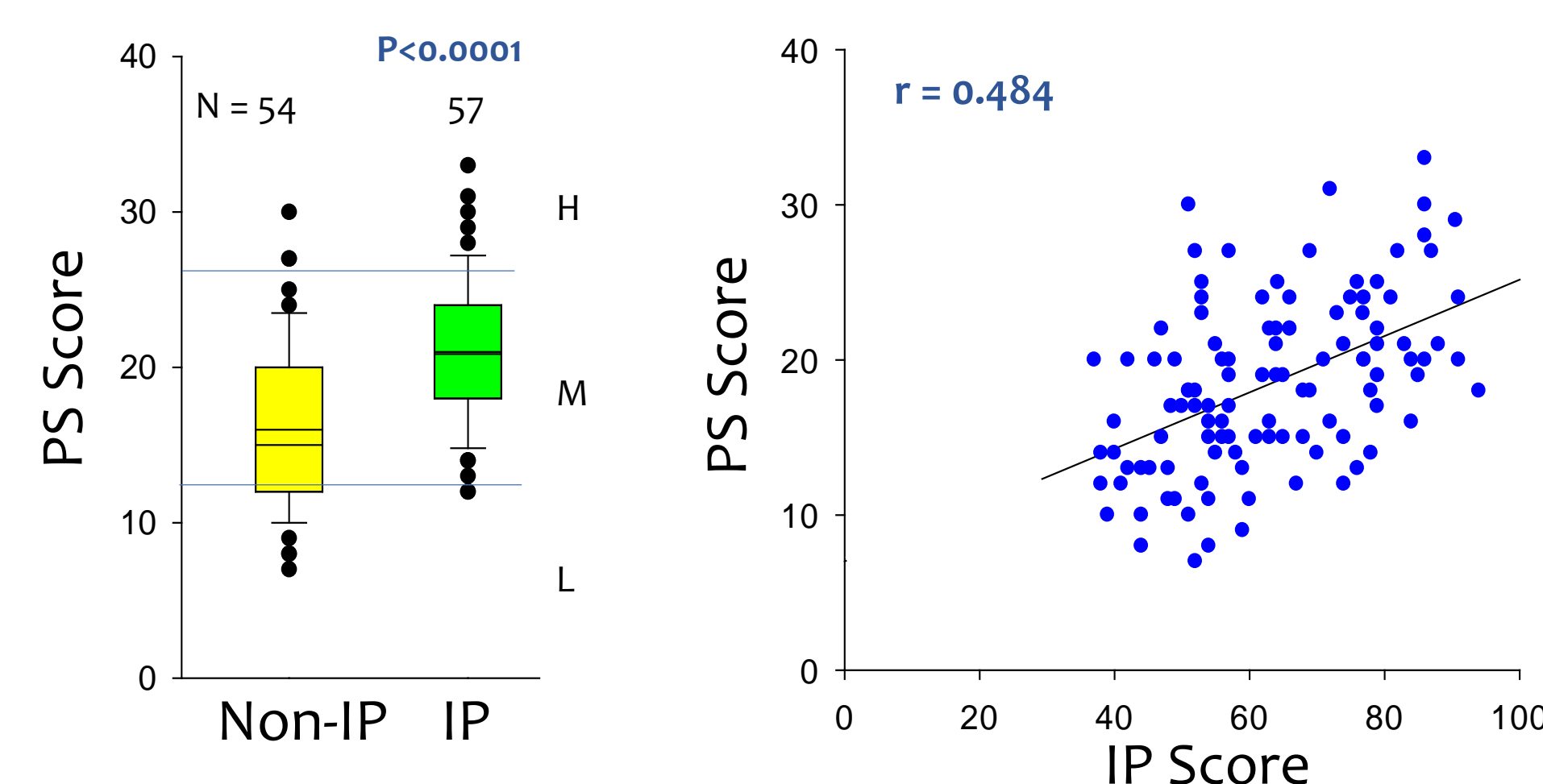
Perceived Stress

Most students reported moderate stress.
Stress was higher in females.



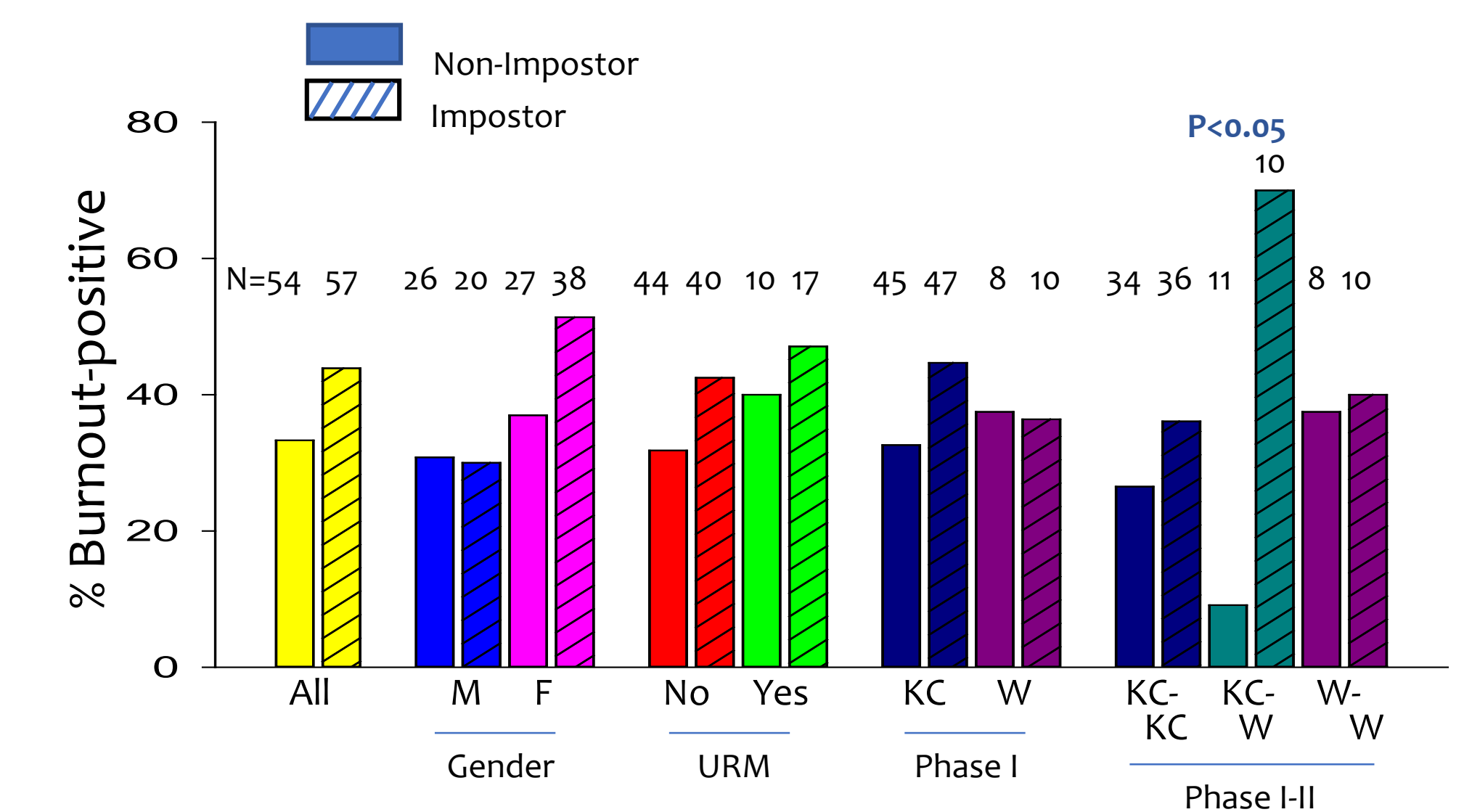
Impostorism and Stress

Stress was higher in impostors and was moderately correlated with Impostor Score.



Impostorism and Burnout

Burnout was not different between groups.
There was no effect of impostorism on burnout except in students who moved from KC to Wichita for Phase I-II.



Most Endorsed Clance IP Scale Items

1. I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I undertook the task (Item 1).
2. If I’m going to receive a promotion or gain recognition of some kind, I hesitate to tell others until it is an accomplished fact (Item 19).
3. I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those times I have done my best (Item 7).
4. I often compare my ability to those around me and think they may be more intelligent than I am (Item 17).
5. I often worry about not succeeding with a project or examination, even though others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well (Item 18).

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

- The percentage of third-year students at KUSOM with impostorism was greater than previously reported for all medical students.
- Impostor score was not affected by gender, minority status, or campus.
- Stress was higher in impostors and in females.
- The most strongly endorsed Impostor items related to fear of failure, rather than doubting past accomplishments or attributing success to luck.