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Imposter Phenomenon, Perfectionism and Fear of Failure among Emerging Adults

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A B S T R A C T

An individual's concern is striving for perfection, self-evaluation in critical situations and regarding other's evaluation. Most of the students think about getting evaluated for their own abilities. They also face situations where they don't feel completely successful. This study tries to find the relationship of the Imposter Phenomenon with Perfectionism and Fear of Failure. Using the convenience sampling technique, 166 emerging adults were chosen and given the questionnaire. The correlational research methodology was used to analyse the acquired data. The Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale, The Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI) and Imposter Profile (IPP31) were the instruments employed in this study. It was found that Competence Doubt, Frugality and Need For Sympathy were significantly correlated with Self-oriented Perfectionism, Other-oriented Perfectionism and Socially-oriented Perfectionism. Alienation and Other-Self Divergence were significantly and positively correlated with socially-oriented perfectionism. Fear of Failure was also found to have a significant relationship with all sub factors of Imposter Phenomenon.

Keywords:Fear of Failure, Imposter Phenomenon, Perfectionism

1. Introduction

A psychological feeling of intellectual and professional fraudulence is described as the "impostor phenomenon" (Clance and Imes, 1978). They first recognised the impostor phenomenon in counselling sessions with extremely successful women who continued to ascribe their accomplishments to other forces despite conflicting evidence. People who experience impostorism think others have exaggerated views of their abilities and worry about being judged. These people perceived themselves as frauds and felt they weren't deserving of honours, promotions, or respect. People with impostor tendencies place a lot of pressure on themselves to maintain the forefront and as a result, they are known to exhibit high levels of perfectionism and workaholism. Students may experience pressure in a traditional setting as a result of social cues from peers, teachers, and institutional norms. According to a study conducted by Fraenza (2016), traditional graduate students had significantly higher imposter phenomenon ratings than graduate students who studied online.

The urge to look perfect, or even the belief that perfection is conceivable, are all examples of perfectionism. It is often seen as a strength rather than a weakness. The phrase "healthy perfectionism" may be used to explain or defend perfectionism. Examining the connections between perfectionism, shame-coping, and failure phobia in a sample of college athletes,after a poor performance, athletes may suffer shame and other negative emotions. According to Elison et al. (2006), people may react inadvertently to situations that cause shame by using one of four coping mechanisms. We predicted that the degree to which the coping mechanisms involve consciousness will determine the magnitudes of the associations between shame-coping mechanisms and perfectionism and fear of failure. The term "demanding of oneself or others a higher degree of performance than is necessary by the context" was used to describe perfectionism (Hollender, 1965). It is a broad personality type that is characterised by an individual's interest in attaining flawlessness and perfection in everything they do along with a critical assessment of oneself and consideration of others perspectives. Perfectionism is also related to another variable underachievement that is highly related to fear of failure. People who strive for perfection could start to think that "self-worth equals ability which equals performance" (Burka & Yuen, 1982). Perfectionists think that success and self-worth are related in this way.

Some people may experience fear of failure in everything they do. Also, intend to doubt their skills. Fear of failure can be compared with the imposter phenomenon. The fear of failing frequently results from a fear of feeling humiliated or ashamed. Avoiding attempts altogether could occasionally serve as a method of self-protection against regretand misery because failing can result in feelings of worthlessness. The potential of failure is frequently downplayed or rejected in a culture that places a high value on performance and success. However, success can only be obtained by a select few due to the very structure of a competitive culture (Esther, 1990). The fear of failure is a problem that affects everyone, not just students, and it has been ingrained in us as a result of growing up in our society (Richard G Beery, 1975).

The present study aims to investigate the relationship between the Imposter Phenomenon, Perfectionism and Fear of Failure. There is a scarcity of research that has looked at Perfectionism and Fear of Failure about feelings of the imposter phenomenon among these undergraduate students. Results of this study may help administrators and professors who interact with undergraduate students understand the variables that may have an impact on student's mental health.

1.1. Hypotheses

- There will be no significant relationship between Perfectionism and Imposter Phenomenon
- There will be no significant relationship between Fear of Failure and Imposter Phenomenon

2. Methods

2.1. Participants

A sample of 166 emerging adults was chosen from various colleges in the state of Kerala using the convenience sampling technique. The participant's ages ranged from 18 to 25. Google forms were used to conduct the online survey. Before giving out the questionnaire, participant's agreement was obtained. On how to react to each statement, they were given instructions. Using SPSS- 28.0.1.1, the gathered data was examined. To ascertain the link between the two variables, Pearson bivariate correlation statistical analysis was utilised.

2.2. Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale

A 45-item test called the MPS (Hewitt &Flett, 1989) measures three different types of perfectionism: Socially-Oriented ("My family wants me to be perfect"), Other-Oriented ("I have high expectations for the people who are important to me"), and Self-Oriented ("One of my goals is to be perfect in everything I do"). On a scale from 1 to 7, participants indicate how much they agree with the items. Higher scores on the subscales imply greater Perfectionism, and several of the items have been re-keyed. The coefficient alphas were 0.86 forSelf-Oriented Perfectionism, 0.82 for Other-Oriented Perfectionism, and 0.87 for Socially-OrientedPerfectionism.

2.3. The Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI)

Performance failure appraisal inventory, a tool for measuring failure fear on several dimensions developed by Conroy et al. (2002) is a multidimensional assessment of cognitive-motivational-relational assessments connected to fear of failure called the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI). The PFAI identified five negative effects of failure: (a) feeling ashamed and embarrassed; (b) having a low opinion of oneself; (c) having an uncertain future; (d) key others losing interest and (e) upsetting important others. A shorter form of this inventory was used in this study. A reliability of 0.82 and validity was established.

2.4. Impostor-Profile (IPP31)

The Impostor-Profile (IPP31) is a multidimensional, theoretically grounded German questionnaire developed by Ibrahim et al.(2020) and can be used in both practice and study. Six factors comprise the questionnaire's 31 total items. The factors that were extracted show the IP's essential components as well as its clearest traits. It displays the pertinent item psychometric characteristics and their factor connection. Competence Doubt, Working Style, Alienation, Other-SelfDivergence, Frugality, and Need for Sympathy are the contributing variables. The standardized Cronbach's alpha revealed the internal consistency of the six scales ranging from 0.69 to 0.92. The scale contains five points: 1 for "not at all true," and 5 for "extremely true."

3. Results and Discussion

Table 1. Bivariate Correlation among Imposter Phenomenon, Perfectionism and Fear of Failure

	Self-Oriented Perfectionism	Other-Oriented Perfectionism	Socially-Oriented Perfectionism	Fear of Failure
Competence Doubt	0.153*	0.163*	0.194*	0.700**
Working Style	-0.015	0.061	0.097	0.390**
Alienation	0.144	0.093	0.220**	0.454**
Other-Self Divergence	0.122	0.145	0.424**	0.191*
Frugality	-0.167*	-0.251**	-0.369**	-0.247**
Need for Sympathy	0.169*	0.192*	0.205**	0.191*

Competence Doubt and Need For Sympathy was significantly and positively correlated with Self-Oriented Perfectionism, Other-Oriented Perfectionism and Socially-Oriented Perfectionism. Frugality was significantly and negatively correlated with Self-Oriented Perfectionism, Other-Oriented Perfectionism and Socially-Oriented Perfectionism. Alienation and Other-Self Divergence were significantly and positively correlated with Socially Oriented Perfectionism. Therefore, the null hypothesis which states that "There will be no significant relationship between Perfectionism and Imposter Phenomenon" is partially rejected.Fear Of Failure was significantly and positively correlated with Competence Doubt, Working Style, Alienation, Other Self Divergence and Need For Sympathy and it was negatively correlated with Frugality. Therefore, a null hypothesis which states that "There will be no significant relationship between Fear of Failure and Imposter Phenomenon" isrejected.

The present study aims to assess the relationship between ofImposter Phenomenon with Fear of Failure and Perfectionism. Perfectionism, involves the people of self-oriented perfectionism, other-oriented perfectionism and socially oriented perfectionism. In the case of the imposter phenomenon, it involves Competence Doubt, Working Style, Alienation, Other-Self Divergence, Frugality and Need for Sympathy. By definition, self-directed behaviours like level of aspiration and self-blame should be associated with self-oriented perfectionism (Hewitt et al., 1989). Additionally, Self-OrientedPerfectionism has been linked to several maladjustment indicators, including anxiety (Flett et al., 1989), anorexia nervosa (Brookings et al., 1994), and subclinical depression (Hewitt &Flett, 1990). A disparity between one's actual self and ideal self, a self-oriented perfectionism feature, has been linked to a melancholy effect and low self-regard (Gough et al., 1978). These people mainly involve self-directed perfectionistic behaviours. They involve actions like holding oneself to high standards and rigorously assessing and criticising one's behaviour.

The other-oriented perfectionist is thought to have unattainable expectations for close relationships, attach emphasis to others being perfect, and rigorously assess others' performance. This conduct resembles self-centred perfectionism in many ways, yet perfectionistic behaviour is focused outward. Additionally, this dimension needs to be connected to marital or family issues, as well as interpersonal annoyances like cynicism and loneliness (Burns, 1983). On the positive side, other-oriented perfectionism may be linked to beneficial traits like leadership potential or the capacity to inspire others. Additionally, research on irrational beliefs has revealed that "other-oriented should" statements with an emphasis on others can play a significant role in determining interpersonal functioning (Kassinove, 1986). Therefore, other-oriented perfectionism is a relevant dimension of human behaviour and is an important aspect of maladjustment.

The felt desire to meet standards and expectations set by important others is the third proposed perfectionism dimension. People who practise socially imposed perfectionism believe or think that their loved ones hold them to unattainable standards, rigorously judge them, and put pressure on them to be flawless. There haven't been any thorough studies of socially encouraged perfectionism as of yet. However, research on expressed emotion has established a link between schizophrenia recurrence and people's belief that their loved ones have excessively high expectations for them. (Vaughn &Leff, 1983). According to a recent study by Hooley & Teasdale (1989) on psychosocial determinants of recurrence of depression, the patient's perception of the spouse's critical behaviour was the best predictor of relapse. Research indicated that the perception of having to live up to someone else's expectations when receiving controlling feedback lowers intrinsic motivation and negatively affects mood (Deci & Ryan, 1985).

Competence Doubts evaluate self-doubt related to competence, particularly before a performance challenge. It assesses unhealthy perfectionism and failure phobia. This self-concept is a result of the external attribution style of successful work outcomes. Working Style is characterised as a scale that assesses a person's propensity for procrastination. Procrastination inclinations are indicated by a high working style score, whereas procrastination tendencies are indicated by a low score. Both working methods are seen as separate attempts to compensate for the dread of failing at a performance job.

The feeling of not being enough leads to a high manifestation of this element, and as a result, self-control tendencies extend into private life. The degree to which one feels that the demands of the environment are too demanding is gauged by the other-self divergence. The difference between the anticipation of low self-efficacy and the effective effort as judged by others is what causes this perceptional distortion. Low self-expectations and a lack of leadership are traits that are described by the fifth scale, frugality. The fear of being exposed as a forger leads to a fear of responsibility and challenges. This hesitation prevents both professional and personal growth. The need for others' approval and goodwill is measured by the demand for sympathy. According to this scale, someone who scores highly believes that their well-being depends on the goodwill of others.

There were a few limitations to this study that must be taken into consideration while interpreting the results. The fact that self-reports is that it may not always be reliable. Only 166 people participated in the study, thus more research with a larger sample size had to be done. Emerging adults made up the sole group of the study's sample. To establish consistency, additional studies must be done on a broad population. The dearth of earlier research in this area is another constraint. Additionally, the correlation might not point to a causal connection.

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