



The Dark Side of Success: Impostor Phenomenon as a Predictor of Self-Sabotaging Behavior and Workaholism

Original Article

Rabia Zahid

Department of Management Science, Qurtuba
University of Science and IT, Dera Ismail Khan,
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
Email: khanzahidamir64@gmail.com

Muhammad Fiaz

Department of Management Science, Qurtuba
University of Science and IT, Dera Ismail Khan,
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
Email: fiaz@queturba.edu.pk

Muhammad Taous

Department of Management Science, Qurtuba
University of Science and IT, Dera Ismail Khan,
Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Pakistan
Email: taous@qurtuba.edu.pk

Citation

Zahid, R., Fiaz, M., & Taous, M. (2024). The dark side of success: Impostor phenomenon as a predictor of self-sabotaging behavior and workaholism. *Open Access Organization and Management Review*, 3(1), 8-18.

WEBSITE: www.mdpip.com**PUBLISHER:** MDPIP

ISSN: Print: 2959-6211

ISSN: Online: 2959-622X

Abstract

Imposter phenomenon (IP) is a specific type of behavioral health phenomenon and can be defined as individuals, most frequently high achieving, who are marked by an inability to internalize their accomplishments and attribute their successes to external factors either luck or misperceiving others' scrutiny of their work. The purpose of this study is to examine the relationships between the impostor phenomenon (IP), self-sabotage, and Workaholism among faculty working in HEIs. A survey design was employed, using data from 290 sample faculty drawn from two universities. A structured questionnaire was used. We investigated associations between perceptions of IP and maladaptive behaviors with both correlation and regression analyses. Results indicate a robust positive association between the impostor phenomenon and both self-sabotage tendencies and workaholic behavior, with IP being the significant predictor for all. We found that faculty members who felt like impostors procrastinated, over-prepared, and put in extra hours they did not need to log because they did not trust their competence. Through Control-Mastery Theory (CMT) and Social Comparison Theory, this research sheds light on the unconscious motives and social comparisons behind these behaviors. Results underscore the need for intervention at both the individual and institutional levels to support faculty well-being. It also offered implications for professionals and mental health practitioners.

Keywords: Dark side of Success, Impostor Phenomenon, Self-Sabotaging Behavior, Workaholism, Mental Health.

Copyright: © 2024 by the authors. Licensee MDPIP, Mardan, Pakistan. This open-access article is distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>). Reproduction, distribution, and use in other forums are permitted provided the copyright owner (s), the original authors are credited, and the original publication is cited.

Introduction

Impostor Phenomenon (IP) is a psychological state in which high-achieving individuals have difficulty accepting their accomplishments, often insisting that they do not deserve praise when it is obvious to others that they do (Clance and Imes, 1978). The syndrome is characterized by a long-standing belief that one has incurred failures due to an external cause like bad luck, and no genuine ability. Over the decades, studies have examined IP–mental health and work relationships (Clance & O’Toole, 1987; Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). The Impostor Phenomenon has been identified with a fear of failure, feelings of intellectual phoniness, and minimization (Thompson *et al.*, 2000). Those men and women who grapple with this anxiety are folks just too scared to believe they could ever be good enough at what they do to deserve the praise that comes their way. Initially identified in high-performing women, research now suggests that IP affects both men and women from various professional and academic disciplines (Bravata *et al.*, 2020). It is estimated that up to 70% of people will experience impostor feelings at some point in their lives (Cummins, 2013), which means it is highly likely that this feeling exists in today’s workplaces and educational institutions. The psychological aftereffects of the impostor phenomenon are indeed serious: increased anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem. These include self-defeating behavior such as procrastination, fear of success, and constant over-preparation — for example, avoidance of risk-taking situations, because individuals suffering from IP believe they are “frauds” who would soon be discovered, and to avoid such an eventuality, they subconsciously eschew exposure to new situations or challenges (Kets de Vries, 2005). Such strategies are painful and serve to maintain impostor feelings via a cycle of self-effacing thoughts (Clance & Imes, 1978). For instance, an individual might put off the beginning of a project due to fear of failure or work excessively hard but still find themselves unfulfilled by the outcome (Sakulku & Alexander, 2011).

In addition to self-sabotaging behaviors, the impostor phenomenon is intrinsically linked with workaholism – a compulsive need to engage in excessive working behavior pursuing an internal desire to justify oneself as competent and able (Schaufeli, Shimazu & Taris 2009). Workaholics may believe that they must work more than is anticipated by the organization for their job, which increases mental strain due to feelings of impostor (Ng, Sorensen, & Feldman, 2007). This could, in turn, foster job burnout and stress, leading to reduced quality of work as well as overall well-being in their occupation setting (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009). For example, in the context of HEIs, faculty members who experience the impostor phenomenon might avoid seeking a leadership position, applying for grants, or engaging in collaborative projects due to the fear that their work will be revealed as incompetent. This unwillingness inhibits their growth as professionals and their involvement in scholarly conversations (Hutchins, Penney & Sublett, 2018). Additionally, the emotional aspect of the IP may cause further organizational problems such as increased turnover and decreased job satisfaction (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). Faculty experiencing intense feelings of being a fraud may find themselves unable to give proper guidance to the students or take an interest in research work, an insidious influence on creating an academic culture (Mir & Kamal, 2018). Thus, the main research question for this study is:

What role does the impostor phenomenon play in self-sabotaging behaviors and workaholism among faculty members working in higher education institutions HEIs?

Although the phenomenon of IP has been covered by several studies, various gaps in research exist. However, an important area that deserves further examination is the distinction between trait and state perspectives of IP. Indeed, some studies have conceptualized IP as an individual difference stable trait dimension (Kashdan and Roberts, 2004), whereas others have argued that it is more related to specific contexts or situations (Fimiani *et al.*, 2024). By determining whether IP is an enduring susceptibility or merely a transient condition, we may be able to parse out the differential mechanisms through which this trait leads to long-term self-defeating behaviors, including workaholism (Gullifor *et al.*, 2023).

The current study thus focuses on fleshing out this relationship whilst addressing the limitations in the existing literature by examining how IP dimensions relate negatively with self-sabotage behaviors and then predicting workaholism among faculty of HEIs. The items are intended to see whether IP is a trait or state and investigate psychological correlates of its expression. It will further our understanding of how IP functions and provide pragmatic advice on preventing IP from causing individual harm to academic success or well-being. Theoretically, although

other studies have examined the effect of IP from psychological or behavioral perspectives, this study integrates both. This inquiry has important theoretical and practical ramifications: it considers the fundamental question of whether IP is an enduring trait or a situational reaction. The study also provides a deeper insight into the relationship of internal psychological factors and external professional behaviors, focusing on self-sabotage behavior and workaholism as consequences of IP. We hope that the exploration discussed here will enrich the understanding of IP and lay the groundwork for research in the fields of organizational psychology and higher education studies.

This study adds to the growing literature on how IP affects maladaptive behavior (e.g., self-sabotage and workaholism) - especially within the higher education environment. This study contributes to interventions that can be used to enhance the well-being and professional impact of faculty by highlighting the characteristics (such as IP) and diversities (in the academic workforce) central to understanding what types of intervention or structural change are needed. The results of this study also guided health and educational institutions' efforts (HEIs) to develop policies that facilitate environments conducive to mental wellness and academic output. Ultimately, this work adds an important piece to the larger conversation about tackling impostorism and its struggles, especially within academia but also beyond.

Literature Review and Theoretical Bases

Theoretical Basis

This article is rooted in two basic theories Control-Mastery Theory and Social Comparison Theory. Control-Mastery Theory (CMT) argues that people's behaviors are governed by unconscious goals formulated in early life experiences, particularly in relationships with primary figures (Weiss, 1993). These unconscious strategies also impact how individuals approach challenges and may also be the catalyst for maladaptive behaviors that people use as coping mechanisms for feelings of inadequacy like self-sabotage and workaholism (Fimiani *et al.*, 2021). For individuals experiencing IP, these behaviors may serve to reinforce their belief that they are undeserving of their accomplishments. Workaholism and self-sabotage can act as mechanisms to manage impostor syndrome, often resulting from unresolved internal conflicts stemming from childhood (Weiss, 1993; Curtis & Silberschatz, 2007). Social Comparison Theory posits (Festinger, 1954) that people determine their own social and personal worth based on how they stack up against others. This results in individuals with IP engaging in continual upward comparison, where even if they are objectively successful, they believe that others are doing better than them (Leonhardt *et al.*, 2017). These unfavorable comparisons make one feel like an impostor, leading to self-defeating behaviors or workaholism as compensatory methods to deal with the difference between their self-evaluation and what they believe society expects of them (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). Social Comparison Theory helps explain how external validation only feeds this sense of being a fraud, and the behaviors that ensue.

Impostor Phenomenon and Self-Sabotaging Behavior

The connection of the Impostor Phenomenon (IP) to self-sabotage is a well-known phenomenon in literature within the psychology field. People who experience impostor feelings are likely to engage in behaviors that sabotage their success, further exacerbating the sense of self-doubt and potential failure. This is because they believe they do not deserve their achievements and, therefore, act by this negative self-concept (Clance & Imes 1978; Sakulku & Alexander 2011). This stems from IP, chronic self-doubt, and fear of being found out as a fraud (Leonhardt *et al.*, 2017), which can cause behaviors like procrastination or over-preparation. In defense, we react like that; it is how people live with their fear of not being good enough. Sakulku and Alexander (2011) argue that some people may postpone or eliminate tasks because they fear they will not meet unrealistic demands, either from themselves or others. This procrastination becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy- doing work last minute, performing poorly, or missing deadlines only reinforces their feelings of inadequacy. Procrastination is a common form of self-sabotage in people with IP. This fear of failure or feeling that success is undeserved leads to procrastination when facing important tasks, using avoidance as a coping mechanism against feelings of failure and incompetence (Kets de Vries, 2005). As deadlines approach, the fear grows, resulting in rushed work and a reinforced impostor feeling.

Over-preparation is another common behavior linked to IP. Those with impostor feelings may overwork to cover their perceived ineptness (Clance & O'Toole, 1987). If they succeed as a result, they often attribute it to luck or external factors rather than fostering a positive cycle of self-belief.

Such behavior may result in burnout, exhaustion, and erosion of their confidence. Many people with IP also self-sabotage by dodging opportunities and challenges. These individuals are deterred from taking leadership roles that could advance them professionally either because they fear failure or believe themselves to be impostors. This evasion causes a standstill in their progress. Strangely, this self-sabotage also acts as protection. By procrastinating or avoiding tasks, they provide themselves with an excuse for failure (I ran out of time to study), rather than trying their best and still failing (Sakulku & Alexander, 2011). While these coping mechanisms offer immediate relief, they lead to self-destruction in the long run. Studies show these behaviors not only harm performance but also increase stress, anxiety, and depression. People with IP are more prone to burnout as they struggle to meet perceived expectations (Sakulku & Alexander, 2011). The psychological toll fuels the impostor cycle, reinforcing self-sabotaging behavior. Succinctly, IP and self-sabotage are interconnected. Self-sabotage can be a way for individuals with IP to manage their anxiety over inadequacy, failure, or deficiencies. However, these behaviors only reinforce impostor feelings, leading to a downward spiral of self-doubt, poor performance, and deteriorating mental health. Understanding this connection is crucial for breaking the cycle with interventions. Hence, we proposed that:

H₁: The Impostor Phenomenon is positively related to Self-Sabotaging Behavior.

Impostor Phenomenon and Workaholism

At the heart of the problem of workaholism among those experiencing IP is a fundamental psychological dynamic known as The Impostor Phenomenon (IP). Workaholism, a type of behavior in which most IP people obsess and become compelled to work long hours, is the natural outcome of these internal pressures. These individuals experience a constant desire to prove their ability while also preventing others from realizing they are undeserving by maintaining the belief they could achieve anything (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009). Sometimes, the motivation is not the work itself, but the need to "appear competent to combat impostor phenomenon" (Ng, Sorensen & Feldman., 2007). Similarly, those with IP often feel that their successes are due to luck rather than hard work or skill. As a result, they work long hours to feed this constant need to prove they deserve their job. However, this overworking is fueled not by true pleasure in the work, but by anxiety about being reminded of their perceived incompetence (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009). Paradoxically, the higher they rise, the less satisfied they may be with their achievements, as work continues to exist as a perpetual labor to sustain appearances of adequacy (Leonhardt *et al.*, 2017).

For those suffering from impostor feelings, workaholism may be an attempt to cope. They think that the unachievable objectives they set for themselves or believe others expect of them can only be achieved through constant, full-blooded effort (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). The fear of not reaching their potential drives them to work beyond what their job or economic needs require (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009). However, this compulsive behavior often leads to burnout and dissatisfaction. People with IP feel trapped, fearing that any let-up at work will lead to failure or humiliation (Mir & Kamal, 2018). The main dimensions of workaholism - working excessively and compulsively relevant to those with IP (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009). They overwork to shield themselves from insecurities about their worth, believing that working harder will prevent them from being exposed as inadequate (Ng *et al.*, 2007). Unfortunately, this often triggers a vicious cycle - long hours and constant stress lead to exhaustion, reduced productivity, and worse performance, reinforcing their impostor feelings (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009).

Workaholism gives perfectionists a compulsive way to control public perception and avoid being seen as weak or losing. Similarly, individuals with IP often ruminate on work or stay preoccupied with thoughts of work, constantly thinking about their performance and maintaining an illusion of competence (Andreassen *et al.*, 2018). The more they become engrossed in work, the greater their fear of failure becomes, leaving them unable to stop working, thus always under anxiety and stress. Even when successful, individuals with IP often attribute their success to luck or external forces rather than claiming a sense of competence, feeling pressured to keep up the appearance of being competent (Clance & O'Toole, 1987). Workaholism fueled by impostor feelings can trickle down to affect health and personal

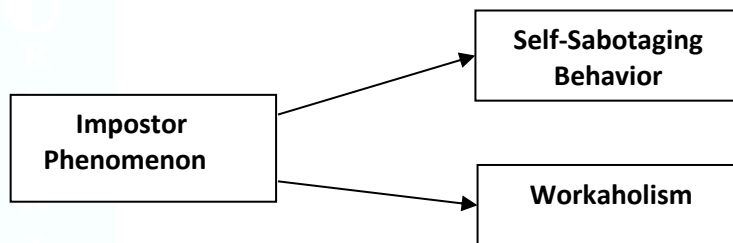
life. Studies show that workaholics tend to suffer from higher levels of burnout, physical strain, and emotional stress (Schaufeli *et al.*, 2009). Their inability to disconnect from work often results in neglecting personal relationships, as they spend more time and energy at work, inadvertently affecting friends and family. This isolation perpetuates the cycle of workaholism, as IP-driven individuals increasingly rely on work for validation and self-worth (Ng *et al.*, 2007).

Even worse, those with IP often cannot enjoy the fruits of success or celebrate their accomplishments, as they feel more pressure to keep producing results or fear that someone will eventually discover they are impostors. This creates a vicious cycle of overworking while never feeling satisfied, as even the most impressive achievements do not rid them of the impostor feeling (Leonhardt *et al.*, 2017). The quest for perfection further worsens the impostor mindset, trapping them in a loop that is nearly impossible to break (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). In brief, IP and workaholism feed off each other. Those with inner perfectionist overwork to counter their insecurities convinced that overperforming will hide their imperfections. However, this leads to burnout and a diminished sense of accomplishment, which strengthens their impostor feelings and compels them to work even harder. Understanding this connection is crucial for interventions aimed at breaking the workaholic cycle and helping individuals with IP recognize and internalize their achievements, hence we suggested that:

H₂: The Impostor Phenomenon is positively related to Workaholism.

Figure 1

Research Framework



Method

A quantitative design was used to investigate the relationship between IP, self-sabotaging behavior, and workaholism in HEIs among faculty to answer the research questions of this study. The survey was a cross-sectional survey from the faculty of Gomal University and Qurtuba University of Science and Information Technology Dera Ismail Khan. The study population was composed of 457 teaching faculty from public and private universities. With the use of Simple random sampling, a sample size of 285 participants was estimated (Yamane, 1967).

Structured questionnaires with validated instruments were used to collect the data. Measurements IP was assessed by the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS; Clance, 1985), self-sabotaging behavior with the Self-Handicapping Scale (SHS; Strube, 1986), and workaholism with the Workaholism Scale developed by Andreassen *et al.* (2012).

This study is based on the positivist philosophy and deductive approach that was used by deriving hypotheses from established theories and then collecting quantitative data through surveys. Questionnaires were rated on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree).

Reliability and validity tests were conducted using Cronbach's alpha for the collected instruments were done via IBM SPSS Version 26.

Results and Findings

Table1
Data Normality

Descriptive Statistics									
	n	Mean	Std. Deviation	Skewness	Kurtosis	Cronbach's Alpha			
	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Statistic	Std. Error	Std. Error	Std. Error	$\alpha > 0.7$
IP	290	3.4714	.03675	.62578	-.089	.143	.002	.285	0.859
SSB	290	3.1402	.03504	.59671	-.234	.143	-.583	.285	0.812
WH	290	3.3394	.04667	.79473	-.193	.143	-.063	.285	0.759

WH> Workaholism; SSB> Self Sabotaging Behavior; IP> Impostor Syndrome

The above Table1 highlights the descriptive statistics of variables. Data distribution and reliability were checked for IP, SSB, WH descriptively. The mean (SD) of Impostor Syndrome was 3.47 (0.63) and skewness = -0.09, Std error = 0.14, Kline Kurtosis test value = 0.00, SE Kline Kurtosis test value = 0. IP internal consistency had a Cronbach's alpha of 0.86 The average score for Self-Sabotaging Behavior was 3.14 (SD = 0.60). There was a small negative skew (skewness = -0.23, SE = 0.14) and kurtosis (kurtosis = -0.58, SE = 0.29), which are consistent with a normal distribution (Field, 2018).

The reliability of SSB was also significant, with the Alpha Cronbach (α) being 0.81 Concerning workaholism, the mean was 3.34 (SD = 0.79), skewness -0.19 and SE = 0.14, kurtosis 0.06 and SE = 0.29 all most equivalently showing the normal distribution pattern (Field, 2013). Overall, WH had a Cronbach's alpha reliability of 0.76. The skewness and kurtosis values for all three variables are also in the standards of normality and the measures demonstrate a good reliability (α -values > 0.70).

Table 2
Correlation Analysis

		IP	SSB	WH
IP	Pearson Correlation	1		
	Sig. (2-tailed)			
	n	290		
SSB	Pearson Correlation	.708**	1	
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000		
	n	290	290	
WH	Pearson Correlation	.661**	.402**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.000	
	n	290	290	290

WH> Workaholism; SSB> Self Sabotaging Behavior; IP> Impostor Syndrome

** . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

Impostor Syndrome (IP), Self-Sabotaging Behavior (SSB), and Workaholism (WH) were analyzed using Pearson correlation analysis. Results displayed in Table 2 showed a significant positive correlation between IP and SSB ($r = .708, p < .05$) Factor Analysis All items load on one factor (eigenvalue 22.01) which captures variance in self-sabotage behavior. In addition, we found a moderate positive correlation linking IP and WH ($r = .661, p < .05$) Workaholism was positively related to impostor feelings ($r = .01$) which indicated that people susceptible to impostor syndrome may be more likely to use work as a means of validating their abilities.

Additionally, the moderate positive relationship between SSB and WH ($r = .402, p < .01$), suggesting self-sabotaging behavior as a significant positive predictor of workaholism.

Table 3

Regression Analysis Impostor Phenomenon and Self-Sabotaging Behavior

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE	F	p
1	.708 ^a	.502	.500	.422	289.830	0.000
Summary		B	SE	β	T	p
1	(Constant)	.796	.140		5.688	0.000
	IP	.675	.040	.708	17.024	0.000

a. Predictors: (Constant), IP, Dependent Variable: SSB

Testing Self-Sabotaging Behavior, Impostor Syndrome, and self-sabotage were analyzed through a simple linear regression model. The results, presented in Table 3, show that based on a linear regression analysis, $F(1,288) = 289.830, p < .001$. The model explains 50.2% of the variance in SSB ($R^2 = .891$), indicating that the two variables are strongly related. The unstandardized coefficient (B) for IP was .675 ($SE = .040$), meaning an increase of 1 unit in IP results in a .675 unit increase in SSB. The relationship between IP and SSB was positive, with a moderate association. The model constant (intercept) was .796 ($SE = .140$), representing the limit of SSB when IP is zero. The t-value for IP is 17.024 ($p < .001$), showing a statistically significant association between IP and SSB. Overall, these results indicate that Impostor Syndrome strongly predicts Self-Sabotaging Behavior. Hence, H_1 is accepted and substantiated.

Graph 1

Normal P-P Plot of regression Standardized Residual DV: WH

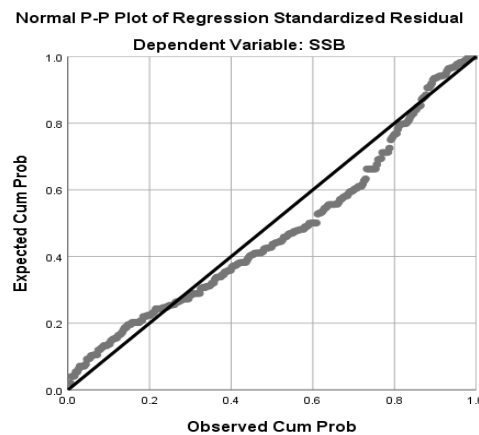


Table 4

Regression Analysis Impostor Phenomenon and Self Sabotaging Behavior

Model	R	R ²	Adjusted R ²	SE	F	p
1	.661 ^a	.438	.436	.597	224.064	0.000
Summary		B	SE	β	T	p
1	(Constant)	.423	.198		2.138	0.000
	IP	.840	.056	.661	14.969	0.000

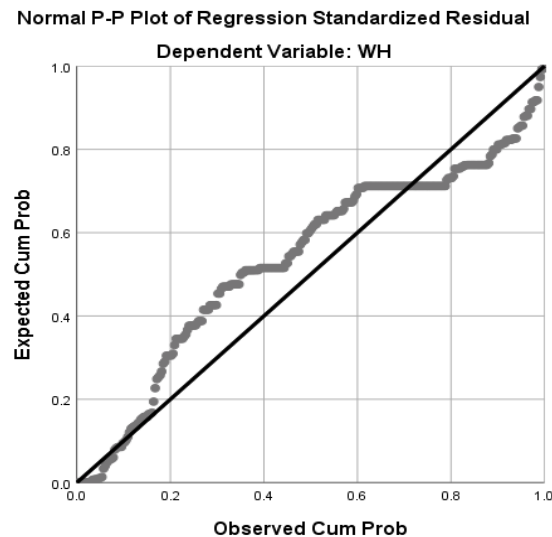
a. Predictors: (Constant), IP, Dependent Variable: WH

a. Predictors: (Constant), IP, Dependent Variable: WH

To explore the study of Impostor Syndrome (IP) with Workaholism (WH), a simple linear regression model was performed. The regression model was significant, $F(1,288), 224.064, p < .001$, indicating that IP is a highly significant predictor of WH. The model accounted for 43.8% of the variance in WH ($R^2 = .503$), indicating a significant moderate correlation between IP and WH. The coefficient B for IP was 0.840 ($SE = .056$), which implies that one unit increase in IP increases WH by 0.840 units. The standardized coefficient ($\beta = .661$) presents a much stronger positive correlation between IP and WH. The constant (intercept) was .423 ($SE = .198$), representing the marginal effect on WH when IP is zero. The t-value for IP was 14.969 and $p < .001$, indicating a strong relationship. These results provide robust evidence that Impostor Syndrome is a strong predictor of Workaholism. Hence H_2 is accepted and substantiated.

Graph 2

Normal P-P Plot of regression Standardized Residual DV: WH



Discussion and Conclusions

Correlation and regression results were analyzed to gain a deeper understanding of how impostor syndrome, self-sabotaging behaviors, and workaholism are perceived by faculty in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). The data indicates that faculty experiencing impostor syndrome are more inclined to engage in self-handicapping behaviors and workaholism, as shown by the correlations. This suggests that impostor syndrome is a significant predictor of both academic outcomes and well-being (Mir & Kamal, 2018; Boxe, 2020; Yao, 2021). The connection between impostor syndrome, self-handicapping, and workaholism is also confirmed by regression analyses. Academic impostors face internal pressures that lead to suboptimal tactics like procrastination or perfectionism, often rooted in a fear of failure or criticism. Perfectionism frequently leads to workaholism, as individuals try to compensate for their perceived inadequacies through overworking. This points toward the potential adverse impact of impostor syndrome on the practices and well-being of HEI faculty. It can result in burnout, decreased job satisfaction, and an unhealthy work-life balance (Crowe & Slocum, 2022; Fimiani *et al.*, 2024; Sonali & Swati, 2024). Institutions can address these patterns by recognizing impostor syndrome and providing resources to help faculty manage their self-sabotaging behaviors and succeed in a more sustainable way. Understanding and addressing these psychological factors can foster a more supportive environment for academic professionals, benefiting both faculty and their institutions.

The study revealed that the Impostor Phenomenon (IP) could lead to a high risk of self-sabotage behavior and workaholism in faculty members among Higher Education Institutions (HEIs). Faculty who scores higher on the Institutional Protection (IP) scale also report more procrastination, more over-preparation, and less engagement with challenging new projects. They also work too hard, feeling insufficient. These are habits of the mind that can affect both your career and daily life. They also support predictions made by Control-Mastery Theory (CMT) - that behaviors are determined based on unconscious goals formed in early life, which means pathways were unlikely to be common.

Unaltered, faculty with impostor syndrome will inevitably continue to behave in ways that reproduce the belief they are not good enough. Social Comparison Theory also posits that this leads to workaholism and self-sabotage as a coping mechanism- since they are so used to comparing themselves incessantly, the permanent fallback becomes unhealthy behaviors. This study has direct implications for HEIs to facilitate mentorship and mental health resources for faculty to address these maladaptive behaviors. This will lead to better working environments for faculty, improving their well-being and increasing career satisfaction by getting to the heart of self-sabotaging behaviors and workaholism. Finally, the study speaks to theoretical discussions by positioning its findings within CMT and Social Comparison Theory, providing a foundation for future exploration and intervention efforts.

Research Implications

These results are alarming for academic institutions and the welfare of higher education institution (HEI) faculty. The interrelationship of impostor syndrome, self-sabotage, and workaholism underscores the need for institutional change. Impostor syndrome may keep faculty from reaching their full potential, leading to self-sabotaging behaviors that undermine both job performance and mental well-being. Procrastination or over-preparation reduce productivity while amplifying feelings of inadequacy. Furthermore, workaholism may stem from impostor syndrome, with faculty overworking because of feeling inadequate. This excessive work often leads to burnout and low job satisfaction. In academic settings that emphasize publishing, securing funding, and maintaining teaching excellence, workaholism worsens the effects of impostor syndrome, leading to reduced long-term productivity and engagement. In practice, it implies that HEIs should create nurturing environments. Institutions can provide programming to help faculty identify and cope with these impostor feelings, so that they are not driven to destructive self-help mechanisms. Activities such as training schemes, psychological wellness facilities, and buddy programs could be beneficial for work habits and mental well-being. The study also raises policy above the results. Institutions can also develop policies to support work-life balance, manage burnout, and ensure career development by acknowledging how prevalent impostor syndrome is and what the mechanisms that sustain it are. This, in turn, has the potential to create a more positive organizational culture for faculty and higher rates of faculty retention and job satisfaction across academic disciplines.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

Thus, a topic for future research is to address the limited limitations of our study. Self-reported data may bring in biases; second, a cross-sectional design cannot provide causal implications of impostor syndrome to counterproductive work behaviors and workaholism. Moreover, the sample is confined to faculty from only two universities, which limits the generalizability of the results. Longitudinal designs would better allow elucidation of directionality between variables, and future work in other populations and cultures may identify any underlying universality or specificity. In addition, investigating moderators such as personality traits or organizational support might provide a more fine-grained understanding of how impostor syndrome impacts work behaviors in academic contexts.

Acknowledgements

The researchers are gratefully to the authority of the university for providing us an encouraging research environment. We further acknowledge and appreciate the respondents who willing filled up the questionnaire and made it possible to collect the relevant data.

Deceleration of Interest

We declare that authors have no clash of interest.

References

- Andreassen, C. S., Hetland, J., & Pallesen, S. (2012). Workaholism and potential outcomes in well-being and health in a cross-occupational sample. *Psychological Reports*, 110(2), 631-640.
- Boxe, G. (2020). In the Shadows of Perfectionism: Impostor Syndrome. *Discover Mag*. Nov 16, 2020, Available [online] <https://www.discovermagazine.com/mind/in-the-shadows-of-perfectionism-impostor-syndrome>



- Bravata, D. M., Watts, S. A., Keefer, A. L., Madhusudhan, D. K., Taylor, K. T., Clark, D. M., Nelson, R. S., Cokley, K. O., & Hagg, H. K. (2020). Prevalence, predictors, and treatment of impostor syndrome: A systematic review. *Journal of General Internal Medicine, 35*(4), 1252-1275.
- Clance, P. R., & Imes, S. A. (1978). The impostor phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention. *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice, 15*(3), 241-247.
- Clance, P. R., & O'Toole, M. A. (1987). The impostor phenomenon: An internal barrier to empowerment and achievement. *Women & Therapy, 6*(3), 51-64.
- Cokley, K., McClain, S., Enciso, A., & Martinez, M. (2018). An examination of the impact of impostor feelings on the academic self-concept of ethnic minority students. *Journal of Multicultural Counseling and Development, 41*(4), 101-116.
- Cummins, L. (2013). Impostor phenomenon as a predictor of work performance and psychological well-being. *Journal of Organizational Psychology, 13*(2), 57-68.
- Curtis, J. T., & Silberschatz, G. (2007). Clinical implications of research on Control Mastery Theory. *Journal of Psychotherapy Integration, 17*(2), 123-132.
- Festinger, L. (1954). A theory of social comparison processes. *Human Relations, 7*(2), 117-140.
- Field, A. (2013). *Discovering statistics using IBM SPSS statistics*.
- Fimiani, L., Conte, S., & Silberschatz, G. (2024). Understanding the temporal dimensions of impostor phenomenon: Trait versus state. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 109*(1), 102-113.
- Fimiani, R., Mannocchi, C., Gorman, B. S., & Gazzillo, F. (2024). Guilt over success, impostor phenomenon, and self-sabotaging behaviors. *Current Psychology, 1*-10.
- Gullifor, D. P., Harris, M. E., & McNeil, M. S. (2023). Gender differences in impostor phenomenon: A review of current findings. *Gender & Society, 37*(2), 174-189.
- Hutchins, H. M., Penney, L. M., & Sublett, L. W. (2018). What imposters risk at work: Exploring impostor phenomenon, stress coping, and job outcomes. *Human Resource Development Quarterly, 29*(1), 31-48.
- Kets de Vries, M. F. R. (2005). The dangers of feeling like a fake. *Harvard Business Review, 83*(9), 108-116.
- Leonhardt, M., Bechtoldt, M. N., & Rohrmann, S. (2017). All impostors aren't alike: Differentiating the impostor phenomenon. *Frontiers in Psychology, 8*, 1505.
- Mir, I., & Kamal, A. (2018). Role of workaholism and self-concept in predicting impostor feelings among employees. *Pakistan Journal of Psychological Research, 33*.
- Neureiter, M., & Traut-Mattausch, E. (2016). An inner barrier to career development: Prevalence and gender differences in the impostor phenomenon among graduates in Austria. *Frontiers in Psychology, 7*, 48.
- Ng, T. W. H., Sorensen, K. L., & Feldman, D. C. (2007). Dimensions, antecedents, and consequences of workaholism: A conceptual integration and extension. *Journal of Organizational Behavior, 28*(1), 111-136.
- Parkman, A. (2016). The impostor phenomenon in higher education: Incidence and impact. *Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice, 16*(1), 51-60.
- Sakulku, J., & Alexander, J. (2011). The impostor phenomenon. *The International Journal of Behavioral Science, 6*(1), 73-92.
- Schaufeli, W. B., Shimazu, A., & Taris, T. W. (2009). Being driven to work excessively hard. *Journal of Occupational Health Psychology, 14*(3), 203-214.
- Sonali, M., & Swati, P. (2024). The Role of Imposter Phenomenon on Self-Handicapping and Psychological Distress among Young Adults. *Human Arenas, 1*-15.
- Weiss, J. (1993). *How psychotherapy works: Process and technique*. The Guilford Press.
- Yao, D. (2021). Depth and persistence: what researchers need to know about impostor syndrome. *Communications of the ACM, 64*(6), 39-42.

Submit your manuscript to MDPIP Open Access journal and benefit from:

- Convenient online submission
- Rigorous peer review
- Open access: articles freely available online
- High visibility within the field
- Retaining the copyright to your article

Submit your next manuscript at ➤ mdpip.com

Note: **Open Access Organization and Management Review** is under the process of recognition by the Higher Education Commission Pakistan in the Y category.

Disclaimer/ Publisher's Note: The statements, opinions, and data contained in all publications in this journal are solely those of the individual author(s) and not of the MDPIP and/ or the editor(s). MDPIP and editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to the people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions, or products referred to in the content.