

A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

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ABSTRACT

Background: Impostor phenomenon is an internal feeling where one doubts their abilities and accomplishment and feels like a fraud. It is very common feeling among the management students. It is desirable for the management students to have high self-esteem and low impostor phenomenon in order to become successful managers or leaders. This study was carried out among the management students to determine impostor phenomenon and its association with self-esteem. The study also includes the association of impostor phenomenon with number of hours sleeping, GPA and age. **Methods:** The present study is a correlation study and was conducted among 386 management students. Clance impostor phenomenon and Rosenberg self-esteem scale were used to assess impostor phenomenon and self-esteem. Data was collected through google forms. **Results:** Impostor phenomenon and self-esteem was found to be inversely correlated ($r = -.794$). There is no significant relation found between age and the impostor phenomenon. There was no significant relation between the Gpa and total number of hour sleep and impostor phenomenon. **Conclusion:** A significant negative correlation between the impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among the management students. The students with stronger impostor characteristics had lower self-esteem and vice versa. High Impostor phenomenon characteristics and lower self-esteem is unfavorable for a manager. Measures to increase level of confidence and self-esteem should be implemented.

Keywords: *Impostor phenomenon, self-esteem, management students, Age*

The term impostor phenomenon refers to psychological pattern in which one doubts one accomplishment and has continuous fear of being exposed as a fraud. The impostor phenomenon is a set of feelings of fear, doubt, anxiety in successful young people. This phenomenon is one of the major obstacles in the path of success and deprives them from progressing ahead. Clance defined IP as “an internal experience of intellectual phonies than those who feel like fraud in spite of achieving great heights in academic or professional. Faculty also faces impostor phenomenon (Hutchins, 2015). The impostor phenomenon was majorly observed among the medical interns and the frequency of impostor phenomenon is high among the medical professional. (Qureshi, et al., 2017). The

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Received: October 29, 2020; Revision Received: November 30, 2020; Accepted: December 22, 2020

A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

impostor phenomenon was more common among females as compare to females. Females give more share of success to luck and faith. (Vaughn, Taasobshirazi, & Johnson, 2020). (Alrayeres, Dar, Alrayeres, Alghutayghit, & Alrayeres, 2020) studied that impostor phenomenon further leads to depression, anxiety and burnout among the individuals also the individuals with high impostor phenomenon have a constant fear of success which lowers their self-esteem and confidence.

Self-esteem is defined as the extension of the values which the information within self-imagination has for a person it comes from beliefs about all the attributes and features presented in him. Self-stem is one of the most important attributes for the mental health. It is the rate of validity approval acceptance and worthiness that a person feels about oneself. Achieves in the academic or non-academic form is one of the ways of increasing self-esteem. On the contrary there are people who are not able to internalize this success and deny them. Their feelings of doubt fear and the impostor phenomenon weaken their self-esteem. (Haddadi, Khalatbari, & Qorban, 2011 Young people who are suffering from impostor phenomenon continues to doubt the ability and have feeling of fear anxiety which effects their upcoming achievements. The individuals having impostor feelings become social impairment and there always have a low self-esteem and confidence. (TIP, S. V., TANITIMLARI, K., & SOR, S, 2020)

The impostor phenomenon also has negative effect on the mental health of the individuals. Very intense feelings of impostor syndrome among the individuals effects the mental health of the person. (Kananifar, et al., 2015).

Impostor feelings can be reduced through friend support family support parent support and teacher support. The support provided by the family friends and teachers help only females to reduce the feelings of impostor phenomenon. Whereas in case of males only friend support help to reduce the feeling of impostorism. ((Caselman, Self, & Self, 2006).Further, the feelings of the impostorism can be reduced among the high achieving women through proper mentorship and having support from family and romantic partners.((Sanford, Ross, Blake, & Cambiano, 2015)

REVIEW OF LITERATURE TABLE

Table-1 Review of literature

Title of the paper	Name of Authors	Name and indexing of the journal/book/book chapter	Geography and region	Framework adopted and major findings of the study	No of citations received as on July 2020
1.Impostor syndrome and burnout among American medical students-a pilot study	(Villwock, Sobin, Koester, & Harris, 2016)	International journal of medical education, 7, 364.	America	Increase in the burnout and impostor syndrome in the female students as compare to males	108
2.Outing the impostor: A study exploring impostor phenomenon	(Hutchins, 2015)	Horizons in Adult Education and Human Resource Development,, 27(2), 3-12	Russia	Emotional exhaustion is positively related to impostor syndrome among	84

A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

Title of the paper	Name of Authors	Name and indexing of the journal/book/book chapter	Geography and region	Framework adopted and major findings of the study	No of citations received as on July 2020
among higher education faculty.				the faculty	
3. Confronting otherness: An e-conversation between doctoral students living with the Impostor Syndrome	(Waston, G, & A.S., 2010)	Canadian Journal for New Scholars in Education/Revue canadienne des jeunes chercheurs et chercheurs en éducation, 3(1)	Canada	The study shows the impostor syndrome felt by doctoral students.	29
4. Impostor syndrome among Pakistani medical students	(Qureshi, et al., 2017)	Annals of King Edward Medical University, 23(2)	Lahore, Pakistan	Higher frequency of impostor syndrome among medical students in Pakistan.	12
5. Impostor phenomenon and motivation: women in higher education	(Vaughn, Taasobshirazi, & Johnson, 2020)	Studies in Higher Education, 45(4), 780-795.		Higher achievers women tend to give share of success to luck ,faith etc.	7
6. Perceived Fraudulence in Young Adults: Is There an 'Impostor Syndrome'?	(Kolligian Jr. & Sternberg, 2010)	Journal of Personality assestment, 56(2), 308-326		Perceived fraudulent are a combination of depression, anxiety fear, and self-doubt.	173
7. Achievement Orientation and the Impostor Phenomenon among College Students	(King & Cooley, 1995)	Contemporary Educational Psychology, 20(3), 304-312.		Higher GPA higher impostor syndrome. Big families also have a direct relationship with increasing impostor syndrome.	158
8. The impostor phenomenon.	(Sakulku, 2011)	The Journal of Behavioral Science,, 6(1), 75-97.		Family environment and distress due to impostor syndrome.	158
9. Surveying the relationship between resilience and impostor syndrome.	(Safaryazdi, 2014)	International Journal of Review inLife Sciences, 4, 38-42.	Mazandaran	Negative or Inverse Relationship between resilience and impostor syndrome	1
10. "Does self-esteem mediate	(Yaffe, 2020)	Personality and Individual		Parental care relationship with	2

A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

Title of the paper	Name of Authors	Name and indexing of the journal/book/book chapter	Geography and region	Framework adopted and major findings of the study	No of citations received as on July 2020
the association between parenting styles and impostor feelings among female education students?."		Differences, 156, 109789.		the impostor syndrome.	
11. Burnout and impostor syndrome among Saudi young adults: The strings in the puppet show of psychological morbidity.	(Alrayyes, Dar, Alrayes, Alghutayghit, & Alrayyes, 2020)		Saudi Arab	The impostor is frequent and is related to 3 condition- burnout, exhaustion and anxiety	
12. The impostor phenomenon in higher education: Incidence and impact	(Parkman , 2016)	.Journal of Higher Education Theory and Practice,, 16(1)		A study about impostor syndrome and its focus on higher studies	158
13. Prevalence of impostor phenomenon and its association with self-esteem among medical interns in Goa, India.	(Mascarenhas, D'Souza, & Bicholkar, 2019)	International Journal of Community Medicine and Public Health, 6(1), 355-359	Goa	Medical interns with higher Impostor syndrome have less self-esteem.	2
14. What Impostors Phenomenon and Fear of Success talk about Indian School Education?: An Empirical Study	(Singh, 2019)	Skhid,5(163), 48-59		Impostor syndrome has a direct relationship with the fear of success	
15. A culturally informed model of the development of the impostor phenomenon among African	(Bernad & Neblett, 2018)	Adolescent Research Review,, 3(3), 279-300.		Underlying mechanisms that give rise to the impostor syndrome in the African American youth.	3

A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

Title of the paper	Name of Authors	Name and indexing of the journal/book/book chapter	Geography and region	Framework adopted and major findings of the study	No of citations received as on July 2020
American youth.					
16. The study of relationship between emotional intelligence and self-esteem with impostor syndrome. <i>Journal of Fundamentals of Mental Health</i>	(Haddadi, Khalatbari, & Qorban, 2011)	Journal of Fundamentals of Mental Health, 13(49), 30-41	Armenia	Students with impostor syndrome are not able to internalize their success and gain self-esteem.	
17. Impostor Syndrome Leads to Impairment in Social Intelligence and Self-Esteem Levels.	(TIP, S. V., TANITIMLARI, K., & SOR, S, 2020)	psikolog.com		Impostor syndrome leads to self and social impairment.	
18. Applying the big five personality factors to the impostor phenomenon. <i>Journal of personality Assessment</i>	(Bernard, Dollinger, & Ramaniah, 2002)	Journal of personality Assessment, 78(2), 321-333		Impostor syndrome have a direct relationship with high neuroticisms and low conscientiousness.	
19. Family medicine residents and the impostor phenomenon	(Oriel, Plane, & Mundt, 2004)	- FAMILY MEDICINE- KANSAS CITY-, 36(4), 248-252.	Wisconsin	Family medicine residents believe they are less competent and self worth than others perceive them to be.	101
20 The relation between well-being, impostor feelings, and gender role orientation among Canadian university students	(Septmeber, McCarrey, Baranowsky, Parent, & Schindler, 2001)	The Journal of Social Psychology, 141(2), 218-232.	Canada	Well-being was positively correlated	104
21. Finding courage and confirmation: resisting	(Sanford, Ross, Blake, & Cambiano, 2015)	Advancing Women in Leadership Journal, 35, 31-41		Impostor syndrome can be reduced with the help attributes like	24

A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

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impostor feelings through relationships with mentors, romantic partners, and other women in leadership.				good mentorship.	
22. Impostorism as a mediator between survivor guilt and depression in a sample of African American college students.	((Austin, et al., 2009)	College Student Journal, 43(4), 1094-1109.		Higher survivor guilt leads to depression and intense impostor syndrome feelings.	51
23 Rising to the level of your incompetence”: what physicians’ self-assessment of their performance reveals about the impostor syndrome in medicine	(LaDonna, K. A., Ginsburg, S., & Watling, C, 2018)	Academic Medicine, 93(5), 763-768		Self-doubt affects the performance as well as leads to lack credibility in feedback.	59
24. The impostor syndrome and academic life.	(Kauati)	(n.d)		Impostor syndrome leads to anxiety , depression and leads to underperformance.	1
25. The impostor phenomenon in high achieving women: Dynamics and therapeutic intervention.	(Clance, P. R., & Imes, S. A., 1978)	Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice, 15(3), 241		Therapeutic approaches found to be effective in helping women change the impostor self-concept.	1511
26. Impostors have goals too: The impostor phenomenon and its relationship to	(Kumar & Jagacinski, 2006)	Personality and Individual Differences, 40(1), 147-157.		Both fear and ability to avoid goals are positively related.	167

A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

Title of the paper	Name of Authors	Name and indexing of the journal/book/book chapter	Geography and region	Framework adopted and major findings of the study	No of citations received as on July 2020
achievement goal theory.					
27 Impostor syndrome among Russian students: The link between perfectionism and psychological distress	(Wang, Sheveleva, & Permyakova, 2019)	Personality and Individual Differences, 143, 1-6	Russia	. Relationship between perfectionism and impostor syndrome. It shows that there is a nominal link between impostor syndrome and depression	5
28. Connecting Gender and Mental Health to Impostor Phenomenon Feelings.	(Cusack, C. E., Hughes, J. L., & Nuhu, N., 2013)	Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research, 18(2).		Gender, Mental health, perfectionism have a relationship with the impostor syndrome.	39
29. The relationships between impostor phenomenon and mental health in Isfahan Universities students	(Kananifar, et al., 2015)	International Medical Journal, 22(3), 144-146	Ershfaan	Positive correlation between the impostor and mental health	7
30. Adolescent attributes contributing to the impostor phenomenon	(Caselman, Self, & Self, 2006)	Journal of adolescence, 29(3), 395-405		For females friend support parents support whereas for male only friend support have negative correlation with impostor syndrome.	58

Research Gap

Review of literature suggests that their various studies which have been carried to study impostor phenomenon. Moreover, most of the studies have been mainly undertaken to understand the impostor phenomenon in medical interns or high achieving individuals. The scope of the most study is limited to certain geographical regions. Moreover, very few studies have done among the management students. The research gap taken through this literature review is a study of self-esteem and impostor phenomenon among students in India.

Research objective

After reviewing articles and journals, there are a lot of people who experience impostor phenomenon. This phenomenon is not only seen in physicians or medical interns or high

A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

achieving women but also in student's medical interns. With the increasing impostor phenomenon there are various factor associated to it there is increase in anxiety depression emotional exhaustion and burnout. There are various factors which are the causes of increase in the impostor syndrome it can be gpa, family or peers. Few studies also show that the impostor syndrome is highly seen in females as compare to males. Impostor phenomenon is also an obstacle and leads to avoid higher achievable goals. Various higher levels of impostor syndrome lead to depression. The impostor can be reduced with the help of good mentorship and communication with the closed ones.

The research objective for the study is

1. To find the relationship between self-esteem and Impostor phenomenon among the management students.
2. To identify the association of total number of sleep hours, GPA and age with the impostor phenomenon.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Type of research –

- The study is correlational in nature
- The study is cross-sectional.

Research design

The study is quantitative and casual in nature.

Research Hypothesis

H_{0a}–There is no relationship between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem.

H_{1a}- There is significant relationship between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem.

H_{0b}- There is no relationship between impostor phenomenon and total number of hours sleep.

H_{1b} – There is significant relationship between impostor phenomenon and total numbers of hour sleep

H_{0c}- There is no relationship between impostor phenomenon and GPA.

H_{1c}-There is significant relationship between impostor phenomenon and GPA

H_{0d}-There is no relationship between impostor phenomenon and age

H_{1d}-there is significant relationship between impostor phenomenon and age.

Population for the research – The student pursuing management as a career,

- Population – The population for the research included all the management student's in the age group of 18-25
- Sample element – Individuals studying management were taken as sample element
- Sampling unit- Management students from different colleges and age groups
- Sample size calculation – In order to determine the sample size, the Cronbach (1977) is used., Thus of the infinite population 386 individuals were selected as the sample group for the study.
- Sampling techniques- simple random sampling was used to sample the population.

Variables – The study contains 5 variables namely Age. Total number of hours sleep, GPA, Impostor phenomenon, Self-esteem.

A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

There are independent and dependent variable taken for the study.

Independent variable- Self-esteem, GPA, Total number of hour sleep.

Dependent Variable- Impostor phenomenon

1. Demographic variable (Continuous variable)– Age.
2. Continuous variable – Total Number of Hour Sleep, GPA.

Scales – The scale used in the study.

General scale-

1. For the calculation of age- ratio scale has been used.
2. For the calculation of age ratio scale have been used as it starts from 0 and can take a number.
3. For the calculation of total number of hours sleep – Ratio scale have been used.
4. For the hours of sleep interval scale have been used because it can take any number from 0. But for the research purpose it was grouped into certain categories.
5. For the calculation of GPA- Interval scale have been used.
6. For the calculation of GPA interval scale have been used because GPA can take any value. But for the research purpose it was grouped.
7. For the measurement of the Impostor phenomenon and self –esteem the general scale used are as follows.
8. Likert scale has been used (1-5, where 1- strongly disagree, 2- disagree, 3 – neutral, 4- agree, 5- strongly disagree)

Attitude Measurement scale-

For the measurement of Impostor phenomenon attitude scale used are as follows-

1. To measure the impostor phenomenon among the respondents
2. Clance impostor phenomenon scale have been used. It has 20 questions. It is a validated scale to measure impostor phenomenon. CIPS have superiority with other developed impostor phenomenon scale with a good internal reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .92$) Each statement on the scale is answered on a five –point scale (Likert scoring 1-2-3-4-5) with a score ranging from 0-100. The higher the score, the greater the impostor characteristics. Total scores of 40 or less indicates low impostor levels, between 41-60 indicates intermediate impostor levels whereas scores higher than 60 indicates intense impostor levels. (Clance)
3. Self-esteem – To measure the self-esteem Rosenberg's self-esteem scale. It is a 10-item self-reported measure of global self-esteem assessing feelings of self-worth and self-acceptance. Items are answered on Likert scale. In this scale higher score represents higher self-esteem. Cronbach's α value for the RSES was found as .72 to .88

Data collection method

The study has been based on the primary data. The data has been collected through survey method through google forms.

Type of schedule – Structured Questionnaire with suitable scaling.

Type of questions – Likert scale, Open-Ended and Grid questions

Research instrument

For the purpose of primary data collection questionnaire were used. The questionnaire was divided into 3 parts.

A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

- Part A Had open ended questions related to GPA, Total Number of Hours Sleep and Age
- Part B- Had the questions related to Impostor Phenomenon
- Part C- Had the questions related to Self-Esteem.

Time –period – The responses were collected from 1 September to 1 October 2020.

Statistical tool to be used.

Data collected from scales will be entered into IBM SPSS for the further analytical analysis To study the relationship between impostor phenomenon, self-esteem, GPA, Total number of hours' sleep Spearman's rho correlation will be used.

To test the hypothesis two tailed test will be used.

Data analysis

H_{0a}- There is no relationship between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem

Two-tailed test used (At 5% level of significance)

Table- 2 Correlation and two tailed test between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem

			IMPOSTORPHENOMENON	SELFESTEEM
Spearman's rho	IMPOSTORPHENOMENON	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	-.794
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	386	386
	SELFESTEEM	Correlation Coefficient	-.794	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	386	386

Interpretation – The table -2, a correlation has been obtained between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem (r= -0.794) which is significant at the p<0.05 level. Therefore, null hypothesis is rejected, while H_{1a} is confirmed. Thus, it can be concluded that there is negative relationship between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem.

H_{0b}- There is no relationship between impostor phenomenon and total number of hours sleep.

Two-tailed test used (At 5% level of significance)

Table-3 Correlation and two-tailed test between impostor phenomenon and sleep hours.

			IMPOSTORPHENOMENON	SLEEPHOURS
Spearman's rho	IMPOSTORPHENOMENON	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.067
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.187
		N	386	386
	SLEEPHOURS	Correlation Coefficient	.067	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.187	.
		N	386	386

A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

Interpretation – The table-3, shows that there is no significant relationship between impostor phenomenon and sleep hours and hence the null hypothesis is accepted. As the value of $p > 0.05$

H_{0c}- There is no relationship between impostor phenomenon and GPA

Two-tailed test used (At 5% level of significance)

Table -4 Correlation and two-tailed test between impostor phenomenon and GPA

			GPA	IMPOSTORPHENOMENON
Spearman's rho	CGPA	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.076
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.136
		N	386	386
	IMPOSTORPHENOMENON	Correlation Coefficient	.076	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.136	.
		N	386	386

Interpretation – as seen in the table 4 $p > 0.05$ thus, there is no significant relationship between GPA and impostor phenomenon hence, null hypothesis is accepted.

H_{0d}-There is no relationship between impostor phenomenon and age

Two-tailed test used (At 5% level of significance)

Table -5 correlation and two tailed test between impostor phenomenon and age

			IMPOSTORPHENOMENON	AGE
Spearman's rho	IMPOSTORPHENOMENON	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.009
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.857
		N	386	386
	AGE	Correlation Coefficient	.009	1.000
		Sig. (2-tailed)	.857	.
		N	386	386

Interpretation – as seen in the table-5 there is no significant correlation between impostor phenomenon and age hence null hypothesis is accepted.

DISCUSSION

Relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem

The present study suggest that greater experience of impostor phenomenon is related to the low self-esteem. In line with our hypothesis there is negative correlation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem ($r = -.794$, Table-2). In other words, the more impostor phenomenon the less self-esteem and vice versa. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and research hypothesis is confirmed. The finding is consistent with the findings of caselman et al (2005), want & Kleitman (2006), Senecal et al (2005). The result obtained can be explained, the individuals with high self-esteem attribute their achievement to their capabilities like intelligence, hard work, while people with impostor phenomenon attribute their success to chance, coincidence and external events. Also, people with impostor phenomenon are unable to consider themselves valuable.

A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

Relation between impostor phenomenon and total number of hour sleep

It was observed that there is no significant relationship between the impostor phenomenon and total number of hours sleep. As ($p > 0.05$, Table-3) the null hypothesis is accepted. The above result can be explained that the sleep hours doesn't have any relations with the impostor feelings.

Relation between impostor phenomenon and GPA

This present data shows that there is no significant relationship between impostor phenomenon and GPA. ($p > 0.05$ Table-4) And hence the null hypothesis is accepted. The study remains consistent with the earlier studies (Cozzarelli & major, 1990), (September et.al, 2001). The result can be explained that their students with higher GPA also have feelings of fraudulence and people with lower GPA may be having impostor feelings

Relation between impostor phenomenon and age.

The study shows there is no significant relationship between age and impostor phenomenon ($p > 0.05$, Table-5) and hence the null hypothesis is rejected. The result obtained can be explained, the it is not necessary as age increases the impostor phenomenon increases.

It is also suggesting that in future studies it is important to investigate between impostor phenomenon and other variables that predict the quality of sleep hours and academic achievement. As the study was limited to only the management studies. The study should be taken for the engineering and other streams too.

Some researchers have concluded that there is need to minimize the feeling of impostor phenomenon. The impostor feelings are an internal barrier to empowerment. And a cause for the lower self-esteem. Group therapy is a suggestive measure to reduce the impostor feelings among the individuals because it helps them to be aware of the issue and provides support.

CONCLUSION

It has been found that a large number of management students from high impostor phenomenon and self-esteem. They are unable to internalize their capabilities, success skills and achievement which leads to lower level of confidence. measures to increase the confidence and reduces the feelings of impostor should be implemented this can be in the form confidence building activities counselling and improvement in teaching style to focus on boosting the confidence among the management students, which will help them to become great managers and help them to achieve higher positions. This will result in the improvement of the performance and ensures that the students are fully capable of handling more demanding responsibilities.

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A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

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A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students

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Acknowledgement

I am over whelmed in all humbleness and gratefulness to acknowledge my depth to all the who helped me to put these ides well above the level of simplicity into something concrete. I want to thank each and every person who filled my survey with the outmost sincerity. I want to thank my parents, who helped a lot in gathering information and data despite being busy schedules. I would like to express my deep gratitude to Dr. Clance who allow me to use CIPS for the measurement of the impostor phenomenon and to Scholar Rosenberg who allow me to use Self-esteem scale for the measurement of the self-esteem.

Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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How to cite this article: Fabyani P. (2020). A study of the relation between impostor phenomenon and self-esteem among management students. *International Journal of Indian Psychology*, 8(4), 785-799. DIP:18.01.099/20200804, DOI:10.25215/0804.099