

## The Impact of Imposter Phenomenon and Procrastination on Social Media Use: A Cyclical Relationship

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### ABSTRACT

As social media increasingly becomes an inseparable part of life, the concern about its impact on mental health is also rising. The purpose of this study is to explore the influence of imposter phenomenon and procrastination on social media use. The study was carried out on 180 early adults residing in Kerala. The Clance imposter phenomenon scale, Lay's general procrastination and Compulsive internet usage scale were used to measure respective variables. Pearson's correlation of social media use with procrastination and imposter phenomenon indicates significant positive relations. Additionally, a negative correlation was found between social media use and age. Multiple regression analysis showed significant positive impact of imposter phenomenon and procrastination on social media use. In summary, the study points to an interconnection between these psychological and behavioral factors and social media usage. The findings suggest the necessity of addressing these issues in mental health initiatives.

**Keywords:** *Imposter Phenomenon, Procrastination, Social Media Use, Digital Behaviour, Young Adults*

People with a tendency to disregard their achievements, set high standards for themselves, and exert pressure to achieve that standard are considered to have imposter phenomenon. They feel inadequate and fraudulent while achieving something with their abilities (Clance & Imes, 1978). They tend to have a self-diminishing attributional style (McElwee & Yurak, 2007; Ross et al., 2001) which sustains the cycle and affects performance and wellbeing. They also have self-doubt and a tendency to procrastinate, a deliberate delaying of activities even though the individual identifies the detrimental effect of their action (Yadav & Raj 2024).

Worry about not meeting expectations can lead to avoidant behaviour (Sümer & Büttner, 2022). Those who procrastinate tend to focus on immediate distractions. Therefore, they are more prone to getting involved in social media, which easily satisfies their temptations (Alblwi et al. 2021). Research supports that procrastination is maintained by immediate gratification and emotional escapism. Students and remote workers are more likely to

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cyberslack which involves using work time for non-work related purposes on internet especially in social media (Lavoie & Pychyl, 2001).

The compensatory internet use theory (Kardefelt-Winther, 2014) suggests that individuals use the internet to cope with negative emotions or unmet needs. This can reinforce the reliance on social media, potentially leading to social media addiction. Those with imposter phenomenon and procrastination experience chronic anxiety, guilt, and stress, making them prone to social media addiction. The algorithms of social media platforms are specifically designed to keep the user engaged longer by providing gratifying content.

As of 2024, 62.3% of world's population are social media users (Kemp 2025). In India, the number has grown to 31.56% of the Indian population (World Population Review, n.d.). Young adults are the most active demographic group on social media platforms. Understanding the psychological mechanisms underlying usage can provide insights into digital behavior.

There have been efforts to link imposter phenomenon and procrastination, but very few have linked it with social media use; even less among young adults. Imposter phenomenon and procrastination are becoming common among young adults, impacting their academic and professional performance. This study aims to identify the relation of social media use with imposter syndrome and procrastination and whether procrastination and imposter syndrome contribute to social media use.

### METHODOLOGY

#### *Sample*

The sample comprised of 180 smartphone-owning residents of Kerala, aged 18 to 40 years who use different social media platforms.

#### *Instruments*

- 1. Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS):** CIPS is a tool developed by Clance (1985) to measure the individual's experience of Impostor Phenomenon (IP). It assesses a person's thoughts regarding his incompetence even though he/she is externally seemed to be successful. The scale has 20 items. Cronbach's alpha ranges between 0.85 and 0.96.
- 2. General Procrastination Scale (GPS):** Developed by Lay (1986) the GPS evaluates the delay an individual takes in starting or completing tasks, even when they intend to finish them on time. It is a 20 item scale. The Cronbach alpha is 0.82.
- 3. Compulsive Internet Use Scale (CIUS):** The CIUS originally developed by Meerkerk et al (2009) was adapted by changing the term 'internet' in the scale to 'social media' to better suit the study. It contains 14-items. Cronbach's alpha of 0.89 indicating strong reliability.

#### *Procedure*

Participants were selected using purposive sampling method. To reduce potential bias individuals working in social media related professions were excluded. Data was collected through survey method after obtaining informed consent. Statistical package for social science (SPSS) was used to analyse the obtained scores.

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### RESULTS

**Table No. 1 Correlation between Social Media use, Procrastination, Imposter Phenomenon, and Age**

Variable	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
Age	27.9	7.3	1			
Social media use	25.32	9.8	-0.319**	1		
Imposter phenomenon	55.54	13.6	-0.244**	0.394**	1	
Procrastination	55.52	9.9	-0.202**	0.392**	0.371**	1

There is a significant relation among social media use, procrastination, and imposter phenomenon, and age. A positive relationship was found between social media use and procrastination ( $r = 0.392$   $p < 0.01$ ), and between social media use and imposter phenomenon ( $r = 0.394$   $p < 0.01$ ). A negative relationship is found between social media use and age ( $r = -0.319$   $p < 0.01$ ).

**Table No. 2 Regression analysis with social media use as dependent variable**

	B	Std Error	Beta	t	P value
Constant	-1.912	3.947		-0.484	0.629
Imposter phenomenon	0.209	0.052	0.289	4.051	0.000
Procrastination	0.281	0.070	0.285	4.001	0.000

F value = 25.782\*\*, P value < 0.001

Coefficient of multiple correlation (R) = 0.475

Coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) = 0.226

The F-value of 25.782 is statistically significant ( $p < 0.001$ ), which means that the combination of imposter phenomenon and procrastination significantly predicts social media use. Coefficient of determination ( $R^2$ ) is 0.226. Thus 22.6% of the variation in social media use can be explained by the combined influence of imposter phenomenon and procrastination. The standardized beta coefficient of imposter phenomenon ( $\beta = 0.289$ ) and Procrastination ( $\beta = 0.285$ ) indicates that both these factors equally and positively contribute to social media use.

### DISCUSSION

This study investigated the impact of imposter phenomenon and procrastination on social media use among young adults of Kerala. The findings show that the impact forms a self-reinforcing cycle. Social media act as a coping mechanism and trigger for imposter phenomenon and procrastination.

Social media use is positively correlated with imposter phenomenon and procrastination. However, there is negative correlation between social media use and age. Multiple regression analysis indicates that the combination of imposter phenomenon and procrastination significantly predicts social media use.

Individuals experiencing higher levels of self-doubt or feelings of inadequacy are more likely to turn to social media for validation. Imposter thoughts lead to assuming different identities in social media that will increase followers and likes. This increases dependency on social media (Ibrahim et al., 2024). People with low self-esteem and self-liking are more prone to social media addiction (Mustafa et al., 2024; Kircaburun & Griffiths, 2018).

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Individuals who procrastinate are more likely to use social media to delay completion of task, allowing avoidance behaviors. Individuals while procrastinating used Facebook, Instagram, and YouTube the most. Some of the contributing factors for social media related procrastination are boredom proneness, decreased self - control and perseverance (Sümer & Büttner, 2022).

Results imply that the likelihood to engage in maladaptive social media use decreases with age. Social media is more integrated in daily life on younger adults compared to older ones. The attitudes and expectations of older adults towards social media make them less attentive towards its possible benefits (Gregor et al. 2002).

According to Clance & Imes (1978), individuals with imposter phenomenon try to get external validation in order to lessen their self-doubt. Social media becomes a source of external validation alleviating these feelings. But it inadvertently heightens their feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy in the long run as the curated content on social media sets a certain high standard for comparison (Przybylski et al, 2013). Procrastination via social media happens because it acts as a mood modifier, distractor, and an escape from real world (Alblwi et al., 2021).

Further studies can focus on broader demographic and formulating intervention strategies aiming to promote balanced digital habits addressing its underlying cognitive factors.

### CONCLUSION

The negative impact of social media use is intensified by the influence of procrastination and imposter phenomenon by changing the behavior and outlook of individuals. People with imposter phenomenon may use the social media for authentication and feel disheartened while observing the distorted version of reality and success in social media and comparing themselves with it. This can worsen imposter phenomenon as individuals may think that they are not up to the standard which they set by watching the contents in online. Procrastination and social media frequently fuel each other, producing a cycle where time is not used in a productive way. Procrastination due to the usage of social media may produce stress and guilt because of delays in addressing important tasks, worsening both procrastination and feelings of inadequacy.

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### ***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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