

Research Paper

## Sense of Belonging and Imposter Phenomenon among Orphaned Individuals: A Correlational Study

Denna G.<sup>1\*</sup>, Manoj R.<sup>2</sup>, Abida K.<sup>3</sup>

### ABSTRACT

This research looked into how Sense of belonging relates to impostor phenomenon in people who grew up without parents. Using a quantitative approach, it involved 150 individuals through purposive sampling method. Information came from two tools: one measuring sense of belonging, another tracking impostor phenomenon. Results showed a slight but clear inverse pattern those reporting stronger belonging tended to report fewer impostor phenomenon ( $r = -.270$ ,  $p < .01$ ). Instead of strong links, the data pointed to modest associations overall. On average, participants scored mid-range on both measures. The numbers suggest being anchored socially may ease inner uncertainty. Finding hints at belonging shielding some from inner uncertainty. Environment rich in support appears key for mental wellness when young have lost parents.

**Keywords:** *Sense of Belonging, Impostor Phenomenon, Orphaned Individuals*

**B**elongingness and impostor feelings deeply influence personal self-perception, social exchanges, and emotional regulation. Instinct shapes how people seek connection, respect, a sense of belonging. In places like homes, schools, offices, being seen fosters strength, focus, calm within. Absence of welcome brings isolation; uncertainty spreads, emotions dip slowly. When backing vanishes into quiet, feelings frequently weaken over time.

Within a gathering, ease appears only when recognition and worth are present. Quantity of presence means little; what counts is whether connections offer warmth and reliance. Even crowded spaces fall quiet if listening never happens. Trust forms where truth finds shelter, letting ideas rise without hesitation. Behavior shifts under support more openness, fewer defenses appear. Stillness arrives once acceptance takes hold. Within quiet moments, confidence grows where criticism once stood, there is now room.

Beginning another way, individuals stuck in the impostor loop often doubt their value despite clear evidence of ability. Victory seems accidental since luck is credited more than talent. Such beliefs grow stronger inside settings where results are visible, especially classrooms or offices. With passing months, unrelenting demands create strain, enforce strict

<sup>1</sup>Research Scholar, Department of Psychology, Dr. M.G.R Educational and Research Institute

<sup>2</sup>Head of the Department, Department of Psychology, Dr. M.G.R Educational and Research Institute

<sup>3</sup>Deputy Head – Assistant Professor, Department of Psychology, Dr. M.G.R Educational and Research Institute

\*Corresponding Author

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expectations, then lead straight into fatigue. Eventually, quiet disbelief replaces confidence, one small moment at a time.

Beneath the surface, belonging shapes inner experience. Inclusion tends to quiet personal concerns. Doubts gain strength if connection fades. Isolation often brings imposter thoughts forward. Within India, societal expectations visibly influence personal feelings. Where mutual recognition occurs, assistance tends to deepen. Emotional safety often emerges in environments of belonging. Inner strength gains ground when people feel welcomed. Such conditions commonly lead to a sense of balance.

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

During 1978, research by Clance and Imes explored why certain accomplished women reported inner uncertainty despite evident success. Appearing in *Psychotherapy: Theory, Research & Practice*, the study emphasized subjective feelings existing beneath external performance. Instead of assurance, a recurring theme involved skepticism results perceived as luck rather than skill. The subjects were largely drawn from scholarly and career-oriented environments, amounting to approximately 150 people. Close monitoring alongside therapeutic interactions revealed tendencies to silently downplay recognition. Timing or assistance often explained achievement, rather than ability. Even with solid results, confidence in competence stayed weak throughout. Effort was frequently minimized in personal accounts, whereas random events were highlighted. Unexpectedly, fear of failure coexisted with strict expectations and ongoing uncertainty about worthiness. These feelings arose more from skewed thought processes than outside validation achievements barely softened them, indicating that addressing internal models could matter.

A 2013 piece by Cokley et al., appearing in the *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, explored how minority stress and impostor emotions relate to mental health among varied college learners. Rather than focusing only on individual traits, attention moved toward external pressures tied to social belonging. Outside factors gained prominence over internal attributes during analysis. The work underlined context more than character. Social positioning shaped outcomes in ways personal features could not fully explain. Emphasis landed on environment, not just mindset. Participants represented multiple ethnic minorities within higher education settings. Through structured surveys and numerical analysis methods were applied. When inclusion felt uncertain or exclusion grew stronger, distress signals emerged more clearly. Alongside such conditions arose heightened levels of self-doubt, unease, sadness, and weakened confidence in scholarly ability. What stood out was the weight of context especially how welcomed one feels in shaping inner experience. Though internal thoughts mattered, surroundings played a pivotal part in emotional stability. Results pointed to broader forces behind the sense of being inadequate despite evidence of success.

#### ***Need for the Study***

Growing up without steady care, some children in group homes face gaps in close human connections. Because of this, forming trust with others becomes harder over time. Low levels of connection might lead a child to question personal worth seeing achievement as accidental rather than earned. Moments like these echo patterns seen in what researchers call the imposter phenomenon. Studies about such doubts tend to focus on university learners or professionals building careers. Little attention has been paid to those raised outside family environments. Emotional uncertainty may take deeper root when daily life lacks consistent affirmation. Feelings of being unworthy could grow stronger where encouragement is rare. This matters because isolation often travels alongside poor confidence and school struggles.

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Recognizing links between environment and inner voice helps clarify unseen hurdles. This research seeks clarity on if deeper connections might lessen feelings of not being good enough in youth raised in care homes. When results emerge, those who guide these young lives may adjust how they offer comfort, shape bonds rooted in safety, and form spaces where worth, skill, and inner strength grow quietly but clearly.

### **METHODOLOGY**

#### ***Problem Statement***

The study was attempted to find the relationship between Sense of Belonging and Imposter Phenomenon.

#### ***Aim***

This study aims to determine the relationship between Sense of Belonging and Imposter Phenomenon among orphaned individuals.

#### ***Objectives***

1. To determine the extent of sense of Belonging among orphaned individual.
2. To determine the extent of Imposter phenomenon
3. To examine the relationship between the extent of Sense of Belonging and Imposter Phenomenon among orphaned individual

#### ***Hypothesis***

- **H<sub>0</sub>**: There will be no significant relationship between Sense of Belonging and Imposter Phenomenon.

#### ***Research design***

The present study adopts a quantitative correlational research design to examine the relationship between sense of Belonging and imposter phenomenon among orphaned individuals.

Instead of altering conditions, researchers observe existing emotional states as they occur naturally. Statistical methods later process the gathered responses, supporting accurate interpretation. This way, results gain strength through structured analysis rather than subjective judgment.

#### ***Sample size and sampling technique***

This investigation includes a group of 150 people without parental care. Selection occurs through Purposive sampling methods, focusing on those meeting specific conditions. From this approach emerges an opportunity to explore links between belongingness and imposter feelings. Individuals are included only when fitting defined requirements. The focus remains fixed on how personal connection relates to self-doubt experiences.

#### ***Inclusion Criteria***

- Those without parents live within structured residential facilities designed for children lacking family support.
- Those residing within the facility long enough to encounter its care practices form part of this group. Duration matters when immersion shapes perception of daily support structures. Staying beyond a threshold allows firsthand awareness of routines and staff approaches. Length of stay defines exposure to the inner workings, not

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mere observation from outside. Experience accumulates only after repeated interactions with caregivers over time

- Those taking part must have the ability to comprehend written English, since all study materials appear in that language. Proficiency becomes necessary because instructions and questions follow only in English format. Understanding every detail matters when responses shape outcomes. Without clear reading skills, accurate participation may not occur. The process relies on exact interpretation of texts presented solely in English.
- Those taking part must give clear agreement, showing full understanding of the research. Willingness to join comes first, without pressure or obligation. Participation rests on personal choice, made freely at any stage. Understanding what the study involves is essential before moving forward. Consent stands only when knowledge and intent align together.

### ***Exclusion Criteria***

- Individuals with severe mental health conditions may encounter difficulties in fully engaging with survey tasks. Intense psychological symptoms could impair accurate interpretation of assessment items, while significant psychiatric diagnoses may diminish clarity in completing structured forms. Affected persons might provide inconsistent responses, as cognitive disruptions associated with such disorders hinder question processing.
- Some individuals experiencing intellectual challenges might find it hard to share steady personal details. Because thinking abilities differ, what they report about themselves could lack precision at times. Expressing thoughts clearly becomes difficult when development affects mental functions, leading occasionally to answers that shift or miss clarity. Not every response stays firm under such constraints.
- Excluded from the study were people undergoing intense psychiatric treatment. Those dealing with serious physical illnesses during survey administration also fell outside inclusion criteria. Individuals who could not agree to participate or chose not to were left out entirely. Without their agreement, evaluations went unfinished. This absence may have shifted how well results reflect the broader population.

### ***Variables of the study***

- Independent Variable – Sense of Belonging
- Dependent Variable – Imposter Phenomenon

### ***Statistical analysis***

The data collected will be analyzed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics such as mean and standard deviation will be used to summarize demographic variables and scale scores. Pearson's product moment correlation coefficient will be applied to examine the relationship between sense of Belonging and imposter phenomenon. The level of significance will be set at 0.05.

### ***Tools used***

- a) Sense of belonging Scale.
- b) Clance imposter phenomenon scale.

***Tool Description***

- a) **Sense of Belonging Scale:** Belonging can be measured through a structured questionnaire where people rate how they feel about fitting in. What one finds when answering lies not only in responses but also in subtle signs of emotional ties forming. Responses reflect moments of feeling seen, held close by those around them. Each statement on the form touches a different space connection, welcome, support, presence among peers. Scoring follows a patterned system allowing range across agreement levels per person. This method captures quiet truths behind daily interactions. Emphasis rests upon internal signals rather than outward displays. People mark what matches their lived reality without needing proof. Inner alignment with groups shows up clearly under this lens. Rated answers together paint an outline of belonging as felt internally. Scores that rise suggest deeper inclusion; when they fall, loneliness or separation from others may be present. Found trustworthy and accurate in earlier work involving many groups, the tool measures connection reliably. Administration requires little effort, understanding comes quickly, questions fit well within structured environments. Used here, it captures how strongly orphaned persons feel part of a community, generating consistent information on links to impostor thoughts.
- b) **Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS):** A common instrument in psychology remains the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale, developed by Pauline Rose Clance to measure feelings of personal inadequacy. Despite its age, it continues reflecting internal patterns such as doubt in ability, fear of failing expectations, or assigning success to chance rather than skill. While introduced years back, its relevance persists through these enduring markers of self-perception. Each person answers 20 items, marking how often those inner reactions appear using a numbered range that reflects frequency. When totals rise, so does the weight of impostor sensations; lighter sums point to less struggle in that space. Its consistency shows up clearly in diverse groups, making it common within both scholarly studies and therapy settings. Here, this method helps view how grown-up orphans carry such feelings and whether those connect to where they feel accepted.

***Procedure***

Approval must come first from the orphanage administration ahead of starting. What the research aims to do, along with how it will proceed, gets shared clearly with everyone involved; only then does agreement follow, if given freely. Privacy stays protected names hidden throughout and each person knows they can leave whenever, no penalty attached.

A set of tools namely the Sense of Belonging Scale and the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale will gather the necessary information, accompanied by a short form on background details. Participants will fill out forms either alone or in limited numbers, seated in a calm, relaxed space. Instructions, presented plainly, will ensure understanding; each person may take as much time as needed. Once gathered, every response will undergo review to confirm it is fully filled before receiving a code. Analysis begins after entry into SPSS, exploring how variables connect throughout the dataset.

**RESULT****Table 1** Indicates the descriptive statistics

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std. Deviation
Total SBS	150	1.0000	3.3125	2.197500	.4839648
Total IP	150	51	93	68.32	8.886

*Note.* This is a note about the table

Table 1 presents the descriptive statistics for the Sense of Belonging Scale and the Clance Impostor Phenomenon (IP) Scale among the participants. A total of 150 participants were included in the analysis. Scores on the Sense of Belonging Scale fell between 1.00 and 3.31; average performance settled at 2.19, with scores typically varying by about 0.48 points. Though central tendency hovered near 2.18 when measured by median, the trimmed estimate removing outliers a ticked up slightly to 2.21. Distribution patterns appear fairly balanced, as asymmetry was minor: skew registered weakly leftward at 0.368. Peakness, too, showed little deviation, sitting just above zero at 0.142 nearly mirroring a normal curve. Stability across indicators hints that unusual responses had limited effect on overall results. Scoring on the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale ran between 51 and 93, averaging at 68.32; variation across individuals showed up clearly through a standard deviation of 8.89. This spread hints that feelings of being an imposter were not evenly felt by everyone involved. With 150 people contributing data no dropouts affecting either measure the results rest on solid ground. From these numbers, we see the actual average for larger groups probably sits somewhere between 66.89 and 69.75.

**Table 2** Correlations

		Sense of Belongingness Total	Impostor Phenomenon Total
Sense of Belongingness	Pearson Correlation	1	-.270
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.001
	N	150	150
Impostor Phenomenon	Pearson Correlation	-.270	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.001	
	N	150	150

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

A Pearson product moment correlation revealed a significant weak negative relationship between sense of belongingness and impostor phenomenon,  $r(148) = -.270$ ,  $p = .001$ . This indicates that higher scores on sense of belongingness were associated with lower scores on impostor phenomenon. The coefficient of determination ( $r^2 = .073$ ) suggests that approximately 7.3% of the variance is shared between the two variables.

**DISCUSSION**

The present study investigated the association between sense of belonging and impostor phenomenon among orphaned individuals. Results indicated a statistically significant negative correlation ( $r = -.270$ ,  $p < .01$ ), suggesting that greater sense of belonging corresponds to diminished impostor feelings. Consequently, the null hypothesis was rejected.

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Findings highlight how connection shelters against uncertainty about one's worth. When those without parents feel included and respected, worry over failing fades credit for achievement feels more earned. Absence of such emotional anchoring often deepens unease; capability seems questioned from within. Where support lacks, feelings of being exposed as if pretending take root more easily.

The findings match earlier work showing lower sense of belonging links to stronger imposter phenomenon along with reduced mental health. Orphaned individuals fall into this pattern too, possibly more so because stable emotional bonds are often missing. What stands out is how gaps in close relationships might deepen these struggles within this group.

Descriptive analyses revealed moderate levels of sense of belonging and imposter phenomenon, implying that extant social connections, while present, may prove insufficient to fully attenuate adverse self-perceptions. Instead, such inner uncertainty seems shaped by more than peer ties alone. For instance, how one handles stress may play a role. Self-worth likely contributes as well. Past interactions with others might also influence these patterns. Notably, the statistical link remains weak, pointing beyond surface factors. In turn, hidden influences could be shaping the experience. Thus, broader psychological elements deserve consideration.

Ultimately, the results point to a necessity fostering spaces where orphans feel seen. When connection deepens, self-doubt may ease, mental health often follows. Rarely does isolation serve such groups; inclusion tends to shift inner landscapes. What emerges is less about fixing, more about allowing presence. Stability grows quietly when acceptance replaces doubt. Emotional weight lightens without fanfare.

### CONCLUSION

The present study examined the relationship between sense of belonging and imposter phenomenon among orphaned individuals. Findings revealed a statistically significant negative correlation ( $r = -.270$ ,  $p < .01$ ), indicating that higher levels of sense of belonging are associated with reduced imposter feelings.

Unexpectedly, strong emotional bonds help people see themselves more positively and reduce uncertainty about their abilities. When individuals feel accepted and supported by others, confidence tends to grow. On the flip side, lacking such connection often brings unease, fear of being seen as incapable, and persistent worry about failure. Without these ties, doubts can deepen quietly over time. Feeling excluded might subtly feed a sense that one does not truly belong. This underlying condition frequently aligns with experiences resembling imposter syndrome. So it turns out where people find community, they also tend to find steadier views of themselves. The data do not back the initial assumption. Results highlight how crucial it is to build spaces where orphans feel they belong. When connections between people grow stronger alongside better emotional aid and improved care systems feelings of being a fraud may fade, making room for healthier minds.

### *Limitations of This Study*

1. A limited number of subjects can restrict how widely results apply. With smaller groups, patterns seen might differ from those in more extensive populations.
2. Despite intentions to answer honestly, people sometimes adjust answers to appear more favorable. A tendency to view oneself through a flattering lens can affect how

information is shared. Responses relying on memory or self-assessment carry risk of distortion. How one sees their actions does not always match reality. Reports based solely on personal input lack full objectivity by nature.

3. Although younger participants form the core of this research, results might not reflect patterns seen among older populations. Depending on where one stands in life, reactions can differ noticeably. Findings rooted in youth may miss nuances relevant to seasoned workers or elderly individuals. Age shapes perception this work acknowledges that shift without extending claims beyond its scope.
4. Outside influences like how a person sees themselves, pressure from schoolwork, or struggles with emotions were not entirely accounted for here. It is possible these elements shape how connected someone feels to their environment along with their experience of feeling like an outsider despite evidence of ability.  
The research takes place in Tamil Nadu, where local customs could shape outcomes.
5. Depending on cultural context, feelings of inclusion or uncertainty may shift, which affects how widely findings apply across areas. Where traditions differ, personal views on acceptance might not align uniformly beyond studied populations.

### ***Future Scope of the Study***

1. One path ahead involves broader participant groups, expanding reach through variety. Findings gain wider relevance when scope increases unexpectedly. Greater inclusion may shape how results apply across different settings.
2. Over extended periods, observation of patterns may reveal shifts that suggest cause and effect. Tracking data across years offers insight into how variables evolve together.
3. One way to proceed involves testing broader populations beyond the initial sample.

Professionals might offer contrasting patterns when placed beside younger participants. A shift in setting could reveal how jobs influence outcomes differently. Another angle emerges through examining people at distinct life stages. Variation appears more clearly when comparing those in dissimilar roles. Insights often arise by pairing age related changes with career-based conditions. Different layers come into view where work and development intersect.

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***Conflict of Interest***

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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