

Research Paper

The Impact of Imposter Syndrome in Teaching Professionals and their Job Satisfaction

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ABSTRACT

This study explores the connection between Imposter Syndrome (IS) and job satisfaction among teaching professionals. Imposter Syndrome, which involves persistent self-doubt and a sense of inadequacy despite clear evidence of competence, is commonly observed in high-pressure professions like teaching. The research aims to investigate how IS affects teachers' satisfaction with their work. A total of 170 teaching professionals (N = 170) participated in the study, completing established scales for assessing Imposter Syndrome (Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale - CIPS) and job satisfaction (Job Satisfaction Index - JSI). Findings revealed a mean IS score of 54.94 (SD = 15.55), with participants' scores ranging from 26 to 90, highlighting a wide range of IS experiences. The mean job satisfaction score was 117.41 (SD = 9.86), with a range of 91 to 140, indicating relatively high satisfaction levels among the sample group. Notably, the analysis identified a significant positive correlation between Imposter Syndrome and job satisfaction ($r_s = 0.552$, $p < 0.01$). This suggests that higher levels of IS are associated with increased job satisfaction among teachers. The results challenge common assumptions about IS being predominantly detrimental, instead highlighting a potential relationship where IS may foster stronger professional engagement or motivation, leading to higher job satisfaction in certain contexts.

Keywords: *Imposter Syndrome, Teacher, Job Satisfaction*

Imposter syndrome, a term coined by psychologists Pauline Clance and Suzanne Imes in the 1970s, is a pervasive feeling of self-doubt that makes individuals question their position within society and whether or not they are truly worthy of whatever successes have brought them to where they currently stand. Even though it is first seen observed in accomplished women, the imposter phenomenon has since been identified for men and they more importantly are present across law careers that require superior performance. However, for teachers these feelings of self-doubt can be more pronounced and also cause an imposter phenomenon which leads them to believe that they are going to get 'found out' as not good enough in the face of receiving praise and positive performance feedback (Clance & Imes, 1978; Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017).

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The Impact of Imposter Syndrome in Teaching Professionals and their Job Satisfaction

Imposter syndrome works its magic over and over beyond self-perception, colouring a teacher's confidence, professional vocation or call to teaching in the first place. This could lead to teachers overworking themselves out of a sense that they need to make up for lost time or it may cause them avoid new challenges altogether as they fear the likelihood of failing in some way due to fatigue being past their tipping point already. Furthermore, imposter syndrome can inhibit their willingness to be innovative more generally which, in turn affects not only how content and motivated the teacher feels within their own job role; but also, what learning opportunities are established for students too. This understanding is crucial for fostering supportive work environments that encourage confidence and resilience amongst teachers, all of which benefit educators and students alike (Gullifor et al., 2023; Bravata et al., 2020).

In the performance-driven field of teaching, teachers are often assessed by their peers, parents, administrators, and students. Teachers are especially vulnerable to imposter syndrome because of this ongoing monitoring, which frequently exacerbates feelings of inadequacy. Despite having a high level of talent, this psychological pattern makes people question their abilities and worry about being perceived as "unqualified". Teachers are under pressure to perform to high expectations in areas including classroom engagement, student performance, and instructional innovation (Mak et al., 2019; Kark et al., 2022).

These demands cause a persistent sense of self-doubt in many educators. Even seasoned teachers with a track record of achievement may feel unworthy or unqualified for their positions. Because it limits their confidence and willingness to take on new tasks, this self-doubt might lower their job happiness and possibly even cause burnout. It is essential to comprehend the effects of imposter syndrome on educators since it has an impact on both their professional development and the caliber of instruction they deliver. Educational institutions can foster a positive climate that values instructors' skills and boosts their confidence by identifying and addressing imposter syndrome, which will benefit both teachers and their students.

Imposter syndrome and job happiness have been found to be significantly correlated by research, especially in the teaching profession where ongoing self-doubt can result in decreased levels of engagement and fulfillment. Teachers who suffer from imposter syndrome sometimes struggle with internal pressure and feelings of inadequacy, which leads to persistent stress and a decline in their enthusiasm for teaching. The quality of education that students receive is impacted by this fight, which also affects their work satisfaction and may lead to greater turnover rates. Understanding the impact of imposter syndrome is crucial to developing efficient support networks that assist teachers in gaining self-assurance and staying dedicated to their jobs. Educational institutions can create a more positive atmosphere and improve student learning outcomes and instructor well-being by tackling these issues.

The quality of their instruction and the learning results of their students may suffer if teachers who suffer from imposter syndrome are less willing to take innovative chances or participate completely in class activities. Imposter syndrome has consequences that go beyond the health of the particular instructor; they can have a big impact on how well students do in the classroom as a whole. Teachers who struggle with self-doubt may avoid trying new things or be afraid to take on challenging themes head-on. This hesitancy may result in a less participatory and interesting classroom setting, which would eventually detract from students' educational experiences. In order to improve teachers' professional

The Impact of Imposter Syndrome in Teaching Professionals and their Job Satisfaction

satisfaction and create a more productive and engaging learning environment for their pupils, it is imperative that they handle imposter syndrome.

The purpose of this study is to examine the effects of imposter syndrome on teachers, with an emphasis on their efficacy and job satisfaction. By examining this link, the study hopes to clarify the psychological difficulties faced by educators and contribute to the creation of supportive, focused solutions. Imposter syndrome must be addressed in the teaching profession in order to improve educational outcomes and the wellbeing of teachers. Understanding and successfully addressing these challenges is crucial because a positive and long-lasting work environment can promote both teacher satisfaction and student performance.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

This study examines the workplace experiences of female facility managers (FMs) in Singapore, with a focus on gender-related challenges, including stereotypes and imposter syndrome, and compares them to male FMs. A survey of 34 female and 35 male FMs managing public housing properties highlights potential gender issues. Pearson's correlation analysis suggests that improving female FMs' job knowledge, providing greater welfare support, and fostering a healthy work environment could enhance their work outcomes. The findings contribute to understanding gender dynamics in facility management, affirming the presence of gender issues and offering recommendations for workplace improvements (Ling et al., 2023).

This study investigates the impact of imposter syndrome on job involvement, with a focus on structural empowerment as a mediating factor. Conducted in 2021 among employees at Isfahan University of Medical Sciences, a sample of 297 respondents was chosen using stratified random sampling. Data were gathered using validated questionnaires on imposter syndrome, job involvement, and structural empowerment. Findings show that imposter syndrome negatively affects both job involvement and structural empowerment, with path coefficients of -0.349 and -0.856, respectively. Structural empowerment positively influences job involvement (path coefficient 0.452). These results suggest that enhancing structural empowerment could mitigate imposter syndrome's adverse effects on job engagement (Aslani et al., 2023).

This thesis explores imposter phenomenon (IP) among ethnic minority employees, examining its psychological and environmental roots and impact on career progression. A systematic literature review (15 studies) and a qualitative study focusing on South Asian employees reveal that factors such as racism, discrimination, stereotypes, and lack of belonging contribute to IP. Interviews with 15 South Asian employees identified themes of inauthenticity, risk aversion, and well-being issues related to IP. Findings indicate that organizational exclusionary practices exacerbate IP, impacting minorities' career advancement and well-being. The research provides critical insights into the roles of sociocultural norms and workplace dynamics in ethnic minorities' IP experiences (Ranautta, 2024).

This study examines professional identity formation (PIF) among early-career faculty physicians during the transition from residency to independent practice, highlighting links between PIF, imposter syndrome, and burnout. Using constructivist grounded theory, interviews with 11 physicians revealed themes of striving to "fit in" and "stand out," often accompanied by imposter syndrome and self-doubt. Participants connected these feelings, as

well as academic pressures, to burnout. Institutional support promoting autonomy and career development was found to help mitigate burnout and foster PIF. Findings emphasize the need for institutional awareness to support physicians' identity formation during early career transitions (Vaa Stelling et al., 2024).

METHODOLOGY

Participants

Sampling has been selected through convenience sampling method from various parts of India. 101 adults met the eligibility criteria for participation. Adults from the age group above 20 who are working in teaching profession were only taken in the study, both males and females were included in the study.

Inclusive and Exclusive Criteria

Inclusive Criteria:

In this study we include,

- Targeted population: between the age group above 20 years.
- Gender: both male and female subjects were selected.
- Designation: all the subjects are working and retired adults.
- Ethnicity: urban and rural population.
- Adults in various parts of India.
- Adults who were willing to take part in the study.

Exclusive Criteria:

- Children below 20 years, and adults who are not in teaching profession.
- Subjects who were not willing to participate.

Research design

- The current study uses correlational and quantitative approach.
- It is a correlational study.
- It is quantitative research framework.
- The statistical tool like correlation coefficient is been used.

Quantitative Study:

It focuses on the numerical form of data that is in the form of statistics and percentages.

Correlation Study:

Correlation research design is used to study the relationship between fear of negative evaluation, social adjustment and resilience. Correlation study finds the relationship between three variables using statistical analysis of the data provided.

Sample:

Our target population of adults ranges from the age group of above 20 years. A total of 101 samples with participants providing informed consent. I used Clance Imposter Scale and Job Satisfaction Survey. The samples were collected from in and around India. Convenience sampling method was adopted in this study.

Instruments

- 1) **Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale:** Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) is a 20-item questioner with each consisting of 5 parameters showing severity from none to very severe levels (1-5). The twenty component scores are then added to yield a global CIPS score in the range of 20 to 100; the higher the score is, the worse the imposter syndrome. All symptoms of imposter syndrome were evaluated on basis of these parameters. The data collected was entered and analysed on SPSS v.20.
- 2) **Job satisfactory inventory:** The Job Satisfaction Survey or JSS, has some of its items written in each direction--positive and negative. Scores on each of nine facet subscales, based on 4 items each, can range from 4 to 24; while scores for total job satisfaction, based on the sum of all 36 items, can range from 36 to 216. Each item is scored from 1 to 6 if the original response choices are used. High scores on the scale represent job satisfaction, so the scores on the negatively worded items must be reversed before summing with the positively worded into facet or total scores. A score of 6 representing strongest agreement with a negatively worded item is considered equivalent to a score of 1 representing strongest disagreement on a positively worded item, allowing them to be combined meaningfully.

Data collection and presentation

The questionnaire was distributed online via Google Forms to the academic professional informants. The informants were informed of the study's objectives. Participants provided informed consent before proceeding with the survey, ensuring that they were aware of their voluntary involvement and the confidentiality of their responses. The survey was available for one week, during which time informants completed the questionnaire at their convenience. Responses were recorded anonymously to protect informants' identities and to encourage honest, unbiased answers. This anonymity allowed for a more open and reflective contribution from participants regarding their job satisfaction. After the data collection period, the responses were collated and prepared for further analysis to understand the impact of imposter syndrome in teaching professionals and their job satisfaction in India.

RESULTS

A total of 170 participants ($N = 170$) from the teaching profession completed the survey. Descriptive statistics were computed for both Imposter Syndrome (CIPS) and Job Satisfaction (JSI) scores. The mean Imposter Syndrome score was 54.94 ($SD = 15.55$), with scores ranging from 26 to 90. The mean Job Satisfaction score was 117.41 ($SD = 9.86$), with scores ranging from 91 to 140.

Normality Test

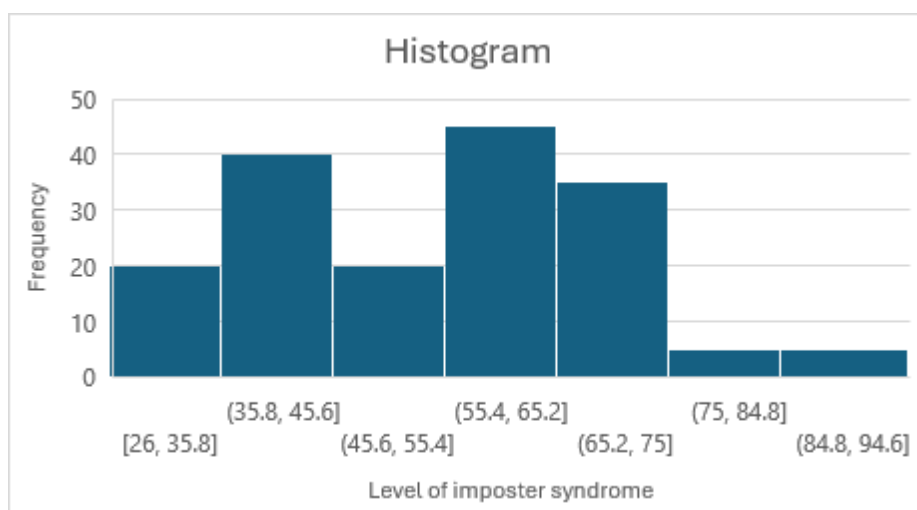
Prior to conducting any correlation analysis, normality tests were performed to assess the distribution of the variables. Both the Imposter Syndrome and Job Satisfaction scores were assessed for normality using the Shapiro-Wilk test. The results indicated significant deviations from normality for both variables (Imposter Syndrome: Shapiro-Wilk = 0.965, $p < 0.001$; Job Satisfaction: Shapiro-Wilk = 0.948, $p < 0.001$). As the data did not meet the assumption of normality, non-parametric methods were used for further analysis.

Histogram for Imposter Syndrome

The histogram for **Imposter Syndrome** (CIPS) shows a roughly symmetrical distribution with a slight flattening at the tails, suggesting that the data follows a near-normal distribution. However, as the Shapiro-Wilk test indicated significant deviations from normality, the histogram reveals a subtle platykurtic tendency (a distribution with less peak

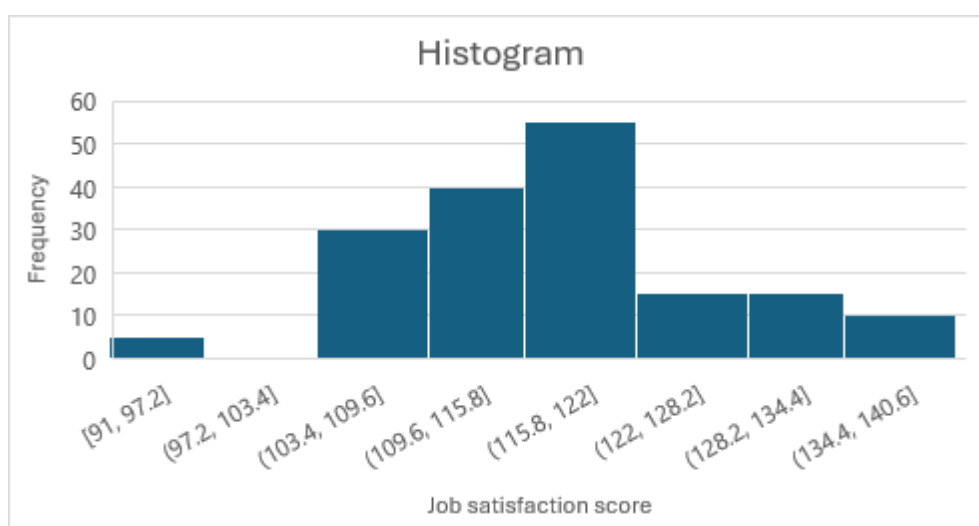
The Impact of Imposter Syndrome in Teaching Professionals and their Job Satisfaction

than a normal distribution). This flattening indicates that there may be some extreme values (outliers), which is common in **Imposter Syndrome** data, where some individuals report very high scores due to feelings of inadequacy or self-doubt.



Histogram for Job Satisfaction

The histogram for **Job Satisfaction** (JSI) also reveals a distribution that appears approximately normal with a slight positive skew. This suggests that most participants reported relatively high levels of **Job Satisfaction**, with a smaller proportion experiencing lower levels. Despite the slight skew, the Shapiro-Wilk test showed significant deviations from normality, which suggests that the data does not perfectly follow a normal distribution. The histogram further illustrates this positive skew, where the majority of the respondents have high job satisfaction scores, and fewer participants have scores at the lower end of the scale.



Correlation Analysis

Spearman's Rank Correlation was performed to assess the relationship between Imposter Syndrome and Job Satisfaction. The analysis revealed a moderate positive correlation between the two variables, $r_s(170) = 0.552$, $p < 0.01$, indicating that higher levels of Imposter Syndrome were associated with higher levels of Job Satisfaction.

Table 1

			Imposter Syndrome	Job Satisfaction Scale
Spearman's rho	Imposter Syndrome	Correlation Coefficient	1.000	.552
		Sig (2-tailed)	.	.000
		N	170	170
	Job Satisfaction Scale	Correlation Coefficient	.552	1.000
		Sig (2-tailed)	.000	.
		N	170	170

DISCUSSION

The results of this study demonstrated a significant positive correlation between Imposter Syndrome and Job Satisfaction among teachers, with a moderate strength of the relationship ($r_s = 0.552$, $p < 0.01$). This finding suggests that teachers who experience higher levels of Imposter Syndrome tend to report greater job satisfaction. This relationship was unexpected, as Imposter Syndrome is commonly associated with feelings of inadequacy, anxiety, and self-doubt (Clance & Imes, 1978). However, these findings align with previous studies that suggest Imposter Syndrome may have a dual effect, motivating individuals to work harder and potentially enhancing job satisfaction in certain contexts (Brazeau, Schuessler, & Steed, 2010; Cox, 2017).

Imposter Syndrome involves feelings of being an intellectual fraud despite evident success, and it has been linked to both negative outcomes, such as stress and burnout (Harvey, 2016), and positive outcomes, such as higher levels of motivation and professional achievement (Clance, 1985). The positive correlation found in this study suggests that, for some teachers, the anxiety and self-doubt associated with Imposter Syndrome may lead to greater effort in their teaching roles, which may, in turn, contribute to a higher sense of professional fulfillment and job satisfaction. These findings corroborate the work of Brazeau et al. (2010), who found that health professionals with higher levels of Imposter Syndrome often report working harder to compensate for their perceived inadequacies, leading to greater professional achievement.

Furthermore, this study's results suggest that Imposter Syndrome may not always be detrimental to job satisfaction, especially in contexts where individuals are driven by a desire for external validation and recognition. Teachers who experience Imposter Syndrome may engage more deeply with their work, seeking validation through their professional roles, which could explain the positive relationship with Job Satisfaction. Similarly, Cox (2017) observed that individuals with high levels of Imposter Syndrome often focus on proving their competence, which may result in increased job satisfaction through their accomplishments.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, this study found a significant moderate positive correlation between Imposter Syndrome and Job Satisfaction among teachers. The results suggest that, in the context of teaching, Imposter Syndrome may drive individuals to work harder and achieve greater job satisfaction through increased professional effort. While these findings align with some previous research, further studies are needed to explore the complex dynamics between Imposter Syndrome and job satisfaction. Recognizing the dual nature of Imposter

The Impact of Imposter Syndrome in Teaching Professionals and their Job Satisfaction

Syndrome—with both negative and positive effects—can help educators and institutions better support teachers in managing their professional experiences. Future research that includes a broader range of variables, such as professional support and teaching environment, will provide a deeper understanding of this relationship and its long-term implications for teacher well-being and effectiveness.

Limitations

This study has several limitations. First, the cross-sectional design of the study limits the ability to infer causal relationships between Imposter Syndrome and Job Satisfaction. While a correlation is observed, it is unclear whether Imposter Syndrome causes Job Satisfaction or if other variables, such as professional support, teaching environment, or personality traits, may influence both. Future research could use longitudinal designs to examine the directionality of the relationship between these variables.

Additionally, the sample was limited to teachers, which may limit the generalizability of the findings to other professions. Imposter Syndrome may manifest differently across various occupations, and job satisfaction might be influenced by different factors in other fields. Including participants from a broader range of professions could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the relationship between Imposter Syndrome and Job Satisfaction.

Implication

The results of this study have important implications for future research and practice. For educators and institutions, recognizing the role of Imposter Syndrome in shaping job satisfaction can inform professional development programs aimed at mitigating the negative aspects of Imposter Syndrome, such as stress and burnout, while also leveraging its positive motivational effects. Educational leaders might consider offering support systems that validate teachers' accomplishments and provide opportunities for skill development, helping teachers overcome feelings of inadequacy while fostering greater professional fulfillment.

Future research could explore the underlying mechanisms that drive the positive relationship between Imposter Syndrome and Job Satisfaction. Investigating other psychological factors, such as self-efficacy, coping strategies, and professional support, could provide a more nuanced understanding of how Imposter Syndrome impacts job satisfaction in the teaching profession. Longitudinal studies could also help identify whether Imposter Syndrome leads to lasting changes in job satisfaction over time.

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The Impact of Imposter Syndrome in Teaching Professionals and their Job Satisfaction

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Conflict of Interest

The author(s) declared no conflict of interest.

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