

EFFECT OF IMPOSTER SYNDROME ON WOMEN GRADUATES IN MILLENNIAL GENERATION

Dr.Ch.V. Rama Krishna Rao, Professor, Department of MBA, RISE Krishna Sai Prakasam Group of Institutions, Ongole.

Afreen Mohammad, Student, II MBA, RISE Krishna Sai Prakasam Group of Institutions, Ongole.

Abstract

An intimidating and unhealthy environment clubbed with multiple factors is leading to Imposter syndrome also termed as Imposter Phenomenon (IP)¹. It is a fast-growing psychological condition where individuals constantly doubt their abilities, underestimating themselves, and feeling of incomplete. It is not an actual mental health condition but it describes uncomfortable feeling we experience when we think we're unqualified and incompetent. Unfortunately, it is more often diagnosed in women than men. So, the prime motive of this study is to assess the awareness levels of this health-harming syndrome on women groups and analyze the statistics to assist victims with corrective guidance and support and to prevent it at the root level. This study used a questionnaire-based online survey with three customized measures²: Chi-Square Test³, Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS)⁴ and Demographic Survey⁴. The study reveals that women graduates are more prone to Imposter Phenomenon than men.

Key Words: *Imposter Syndrome, Mental Health, Psychological effect.*

1. IP is abbreviated as Imposter Phenomenon 2. Customized measure is referred to author's own adoption or customization of existing calculative measures 3. Chi-Square Test: It's used to estimate how likely the observations made would be, by considering the assumption of the null hypothesis as true, by referring to level of significance value 4. CIPS: It's a standard measurement developed to improve measurement of Imposter Phenomenon and to better account for study attributes

Introduction

To simplify, Imposter syndrome is just not a psychological pattern, there are multiple things associated with it like, social conditioning, anxiety, parenting, social taboos, biased opportunities and a lot more things making this issue more complicated. To understand it better, people who suffer from imposter syndrome tend to tag their achievements to sheer luck, not knowing self-worth. A ground breaking research paper work by Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne A. Imes three decades ago is now grows more popular and relevant than it was earlier. According to a survey, it is found that 70% of the women interviewed suffered from imposter syndrome as opposed to 52% of the male participants.

A study of employees at Hewlett Packard reveal that men were hired based on their potential while women were hired based on their experience, and since most of women don't feel they are not worthy and they are not good enough, despite their skills. This persistent inability to recognize one's credibility and success even in the face of hard evidence, though not technically a disorder, can lead to stress, anxiety, low self-esteem, and even depression. Imposter Syndrome is found in all age people, including students, teachers, employees, entrepreneurs, engineers, physicians, activists etc.

Millennial Generation

Millennial is generally applied to people who were born in the years between 1980 and 1995. This group of people given the name Millennials because they would be the first batch of new millennium i.e. 2000, they have also been referred to as echo boomers. The major reason for this is that there was a spike in birth rates in the 80s and 90s.

Issues of Imposter Syndrome

- It creates life harming situations like individual attempting for suicides, addiction to drugs, behavioral issues, it lets individuals to lose financial discipline, productivity and potentiality, it disturbs work-life balance, it affects individual's career, health and relationships and family dynamics.
- It prevents individuals from being innovative and risk taking, fear of failure consumes their abilities,

people develop self-doubt and low self-esteem and start to downplay their performance and show unwillingness to get appreciated or praised.

- It doesn't just impact individuals, it impacts partners, families, colleagues, teams and businesses they are part of. They may also become self-deprecating, and express greater uncertainty, causing to build more of unhealthy environment around them.
- It majorly impacts women, as they are constantly ignored and undervalued in men dominating work-settings, it affects their mental health, creativity.
- Individuals dealing with imposter syndrome are exposed to a constant fear of being of being discovered as less intelligent or competent than others believe them to be.

Literature Review

Literature on Imposter Syndrome w.r.t women from millennial generation is limited and It's hardly studied from women graduates perspective. So, it's a catch that gives an advantage to explore more on this area and compare the data to derive differences. Below are some previous study articles and insights indicating how imposter syndrome affecting women and how it boxing women with multi challenges.

1. Ruchika Tulshyan and Jodi-Ann Burey from Harvard Business Review said that, for many women feelings like an outsider isn't an illusion – it's the result of systematic bias and exclusion.
2. Emilia D'Anzica from Forbes writes that, stopping comparison, focusing on strengths and celebrating achievements will help to cope up better with Imposter Syndrome.
3. S. Mullangi R.Jagsi said that Imposter syndrome is a psychological term that refers to a pattern of behavior wherein people (even those with adequate external evidence of success) doubt their abilities and have a persistent fear of being exposed as a fraud.
4. KPMG study finds 75% of executive women experience imposter syndrome at all levels of work
5. Christine MacDonald, director of The Hub Events, stressed that the cure of imposter syndrome cannot be done in an individual level but there needs to be a wider environment of acceptance and positive reinforcement.
6. In an interview, former U.S. first lady Michelle Obama urged girls and women to resist the "imposter syndrome" she had felt on the way up and fight men for power, saying plenty of them didn't deserve it. It just reveals that how this condition is taking over women abilities and how the society is not structuring an environment to make them succeed and worthy.
7. "It's almost like, the better I do, the more my feeling of inadequacy actually increases, because I'm just going, any moment, someone's going to find out I'm a total fraud, and that I don't deserve any of what I've achieved. I can't possibly live up to what everyone thinks I am and what everyone's expectations of me are. It's wired- sometimes success can be incredibly validating, but sometimes it can be incredibly unnerving and throw your balance off a bit, because you're trying to reconcile how you feel about yourself with how the rest of world perceives you" says Emma Watson, very renowned actress from Harry Potter movie series. And she opened-up how she experienced this syndrome.

Study Objective

- To study or identify the problem that women facing and their feedback on this imposter syndrome.
- To Analyse the effects of imposter syndrome and how it is impacting them professionally and personally.
- Measures to be taken to overcome this imposter syndrome.

Study Problem

The real challenge or problem of imposter syndrome is identifying and labelling it and then equipping individuals with correct awareness to overcome it, there are other aspects that contribute to this problem like parenting mishaps, trivializing early signs of this condition, lack of emotional support system etc.

Study Method

A carefully developed questionnaire introducing the study is made available via Google Forms. Link

is shared with a large pool of online graduate students and invited them to participate, prior to it, an announcement email has been sent in one-to-one mode that led them to the informed consent and questionnaires. Post completion of the survey, participants were acknowledged and debriefed.

Types of data: The data used in this study is categorized into two sets one: Primary Data, second: Secondary Data

Source of data: The primary data is sourced from through the Google Survey Form and on the other hand secondary data is sourced from online

Study Design: This study is mostly in descriptive format with illustration of Survey Pie-Charts

Measures Used/Adopted:

Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) – The CIPS consists of 5 questions to assess the various aspects of Imposter Syndrome. Participant rate their agreement or disagreement using a 5-point scale (*1 = Always, 2 = Often, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Rarely, 5 = Never*), so it translates to higher score corresponding to more severe imposter syndrome

Customized Awareness Quotient Scale – It consist of 4 questions to assess the awareness levels of participant providing 5 options to choose from. Every option categorically placed to know the weightage and estimate participant awareness.

Participants

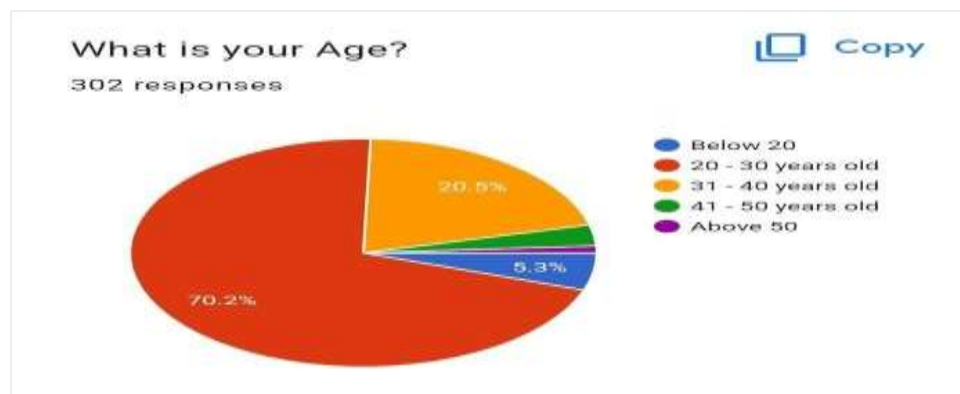
Participants were 300+ graduate from multiple community like housewife's, employees, students and working women from multiple locations.

Results and Data Analysis

A total of 301 responses were received and the data interpretation has been done with charts.

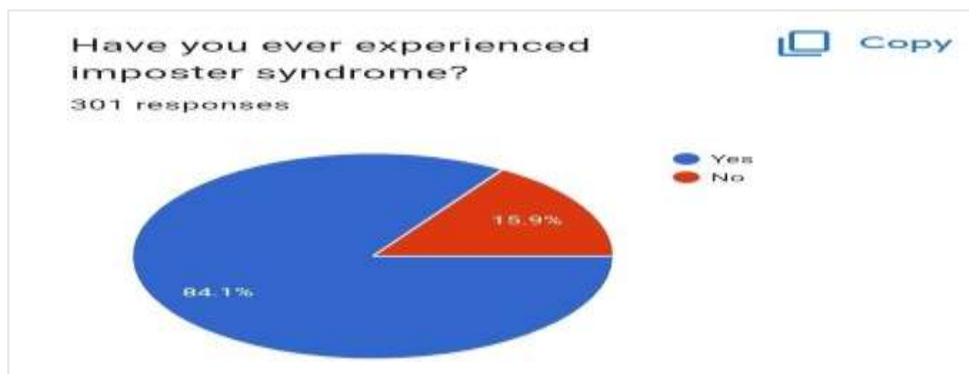
Question1: What is your age? was asked to note demographic information of participants and categorize participant generation.

As per responses, 70.2% of participants are 20-30 years old. Results indicated a statistically significant ~~women~~ graduates millennial generation are participated.

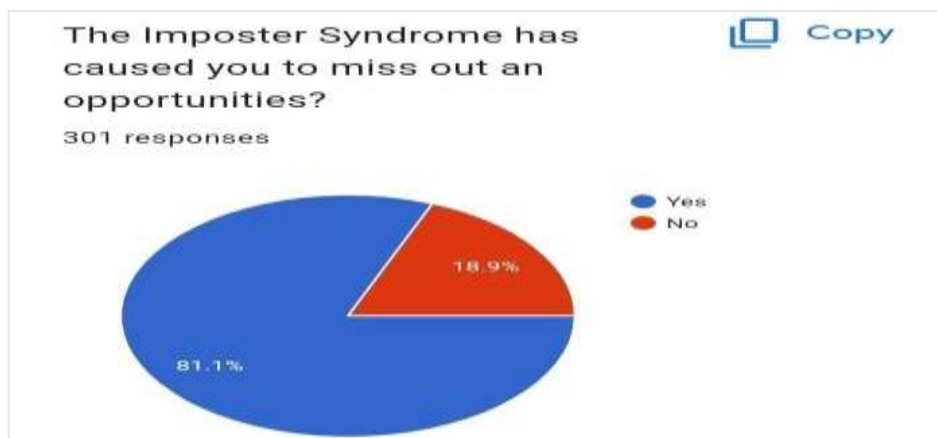


Question2: Have you ever experienced imposter syndrome? was asked to know if the participant ever experienced the symptoms of imposter syndrome.

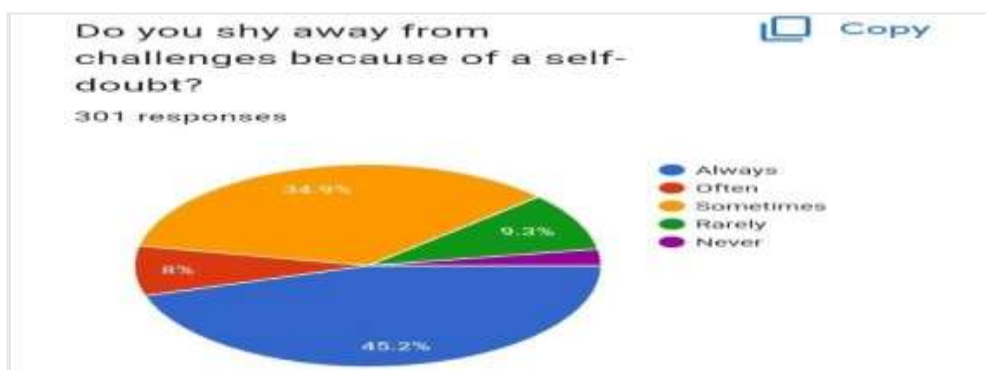
Results indicated that a whopping 84% of participants experienced it, so it hypothesizes that there is statistically significant effect of imposter syndrome on women of millennial generation.



Question3: The Imposter Syndrome has caused you to miss out on opportunities? was asked to if participants were missing out on potential opportunities compared to men. Below responses show that 81% of participants feel they are missing out on opportunities; it indicates that statistically imposter syndrome is significant factor this.



Question4: Do you shy away from challenges of self-doubt? was asked to if doubting one's abilities is making them downplay their performance and prohibiting them to take challenges. According to CIPS scale, responses indicated that 45% participants feel it always, 34% participants feel it sometimes, 9.3% participants feel it rarely and only 8% feel it very often. It is an indicator that there is statistically significant participants have higher rates of imposter syndrome affect.



Question5: The fear of failure paralyzes you? was asked to know if participants with imposter syndrome are with higher rates of fear of failure.



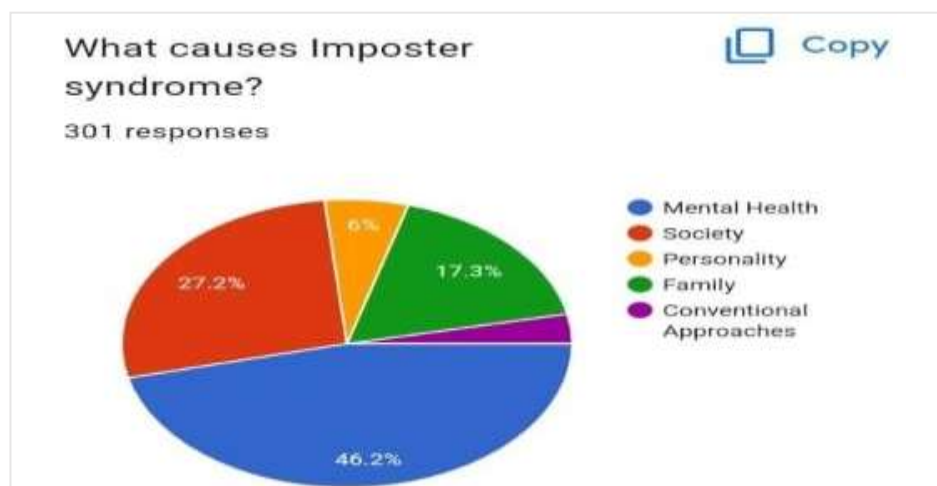
From below responses, it is noted that, 45% of participants state that fear of failure is affecting their lives. As per CIPS scale scoring, it is statistically significant indicator of imposter syndrome effect on millennials.

Question6: What causes imposter syndrome? was asked to know participants understanding of causes

of imposter syndrome.

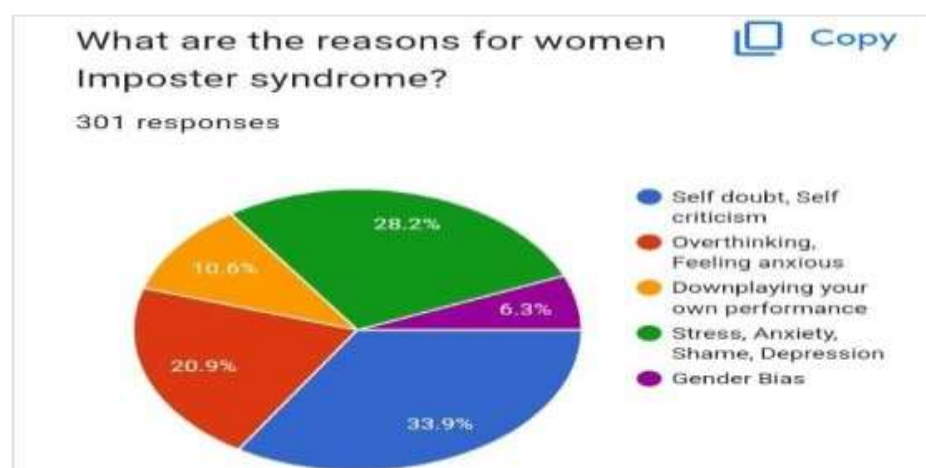
Responses show that, 46% participants feel it's due to mental health issue, 27% feel it's due to society, 17% feel it's due to family and parenting, 6% feel it's due to personality issues. It shows that majority of

participants feel it's due to mental health, it's a potential indicator to be exercised on, it helps us understand challenges from their perspective and provide an inclusive environment for them grow.



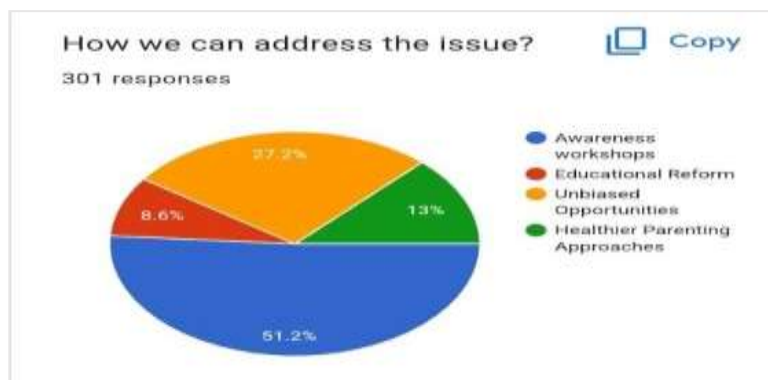
Question7: What are the reasons for women imposter syndrome? was asked to know participants awareness levels on reasons of imposter syndrome effect on women.

Results show that, 33% believe it's due to self-doubt and self-criticism, 28% feel it's due to stress, anxiety, shame and depression, 20% feel it's due to overthinking and feeling anxious, 10% feel it's due to downplaying your own performance, 6% feel it's due to gender bias. These are critical indicators to be noted on how and what's caging women.



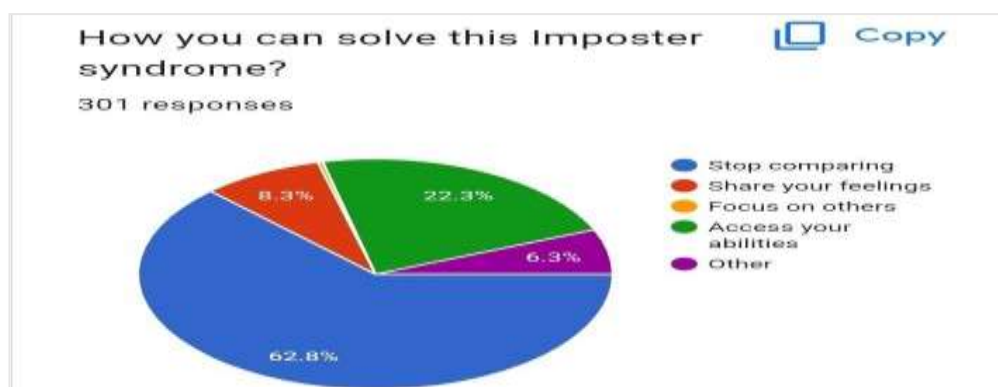
Question8: How we can address the issue? was asked to know how this issue can be brought to society's attention.

Results show that, 51% of participants believe they need awareness workshops, 27% feel unbiased opportunities required, 13% feel a healthier parenting approach required while 8% think educational reforms required. It is hypothesized that participants feel there need to be higher level of awareness on imposter syndrome is required.



Question9: How you can solve the imposter syndrome? was asked to know what participants think a major factor that provides comprehensive solution to imposter syndrome.

Results show that, 62% participants believe it's due to a constant comparison more specifically women vs. men, 22% believe that accessing our abilities with our fear would help them overcome imposter syndrome, 8% think that sharing feelings is required, 6% state other factors.



Conclusion: The analysis of imposter syndrome states that society and mental health are the major causes of it and with the further analysis we have identified that the main reasons were self-doubt, stress, overthinking and judgement of others. To address this, we need to conduct awareness programs and prevent this in the earlier stages. Healthier parenting approach plays very important role in addressing the issue. Study suggested that we should eradicate comparison and encourage women to share their opinions or feelings.

References

1. Laux, S. E. (2018). *Experiencing the imposter syndrome in academia: Women faculty members' perception of the tenure and promotion process* (Doctoral dissertation, Saint Louis University).
2. Tulshyan, R., & Burey, J. A. (2021). Stop telling women they have imposter syndrome. *Harvard Business Review*, 31.
3. Lee, E., & Morfitt, P. (2020). Imposter syndrome, women in technical services, and minority librarians: The shared experience of two librarians of color. *Technical Services Quarterly*, 37(2), 136-147.
4. Mullangi, S., & Jagsi, R. (2019). Imposter syndrome: treat the cause, not the symptom. *Jama*, 322(5),

403-404..

5. Schubert N, Bowker A. Examining the impostor phenomenon in relation to self-esteem level and self-esteem instability. *Current Psychology: A Journal for Diverse Perspectives on Diverse Psychological Issues*. 2017.
6. Peteet BJ, Montgomery L, Weekes JC. Predictors of imposter phenomenon among talented ethnic minority undergraduate students. *Journal of Negro Education*. 2015; 84(2): 175-186.
7. Patzak A, Kollmayer M, Schober B. Buffering impostor feelings with kindness: The mediating role of self-compassion between gender-role orientation and the impostor phenomenon. *Front Psychol*. 2017; 8.
8. Neureiter M, Traut-Mattausch E. Two sides of the career resources coin: Career adaptability resources and the impostor phenomenon. *J Vocat Behav*. 2017; 98: 56-69.
9. Neureiter M, Traut-Mattausch E. An inner barrier to career development: Preconditions of the impostor phenomenon and consequences for career development. *Front Psychol*. 2016.
10. V Rama Krishna Rao Chepuri, B Parameswara Rao, A Study On Impact Of Non Statutory Welfare Facilities On Employees Performance At Reliance Kg D6, Kakinada (A.P), *International Journal Of Research Culture Society*, ISSN: 2456-6683 Volume - 1, Issue - 08, Oct – 2017; 166-170
11. Lige QM, Peteet BJ, Brown CM. Racial identity, self-esteem, and the impostor phenomenon among African American college students. *J Black Psychol*. 2017; 43(4): 345-357.
12. Li S, Hughes JL, Thu SM. The links between parenting styles and imposter phenomenon. *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research*. 2014; 19(2): 50-57.
13. Rohrmann S, Bechtoldt MN, Leonhardt M. Validation of the impostor phenomenon among managers. *Front Psychol*. 2016; 7.
14. Leonhardt M, Bechtoldt MN, Rohrmann S. All impostors aren't alike— Differentiating the impostor phenomenon. *Front Psychol*. 2017; 8.
15. Kamarzarrin H, Khaledian M, Shooshtari M, et al. A study of the relationship between self-esteem and the imposter phenomenon in the physicians of Rasht city (Iran). *Eur J Exp Biol*. 2013; 3(2): 363-366.
16. Hutchins HM, Penney LM, Sublett LW. What imposters risk at work: Exploring imposter phenomenon, stress coping, and job outcomes. *Human Resource Development Quarterly*. 2017.