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"Is Success a Bigger Burden for Women?": Examining the Imposter Phenomenon-Gender Connection in India

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Abstract

The imposter phenomenon (IP) is a self-perception of intellectual fraudulence despite having objective and consistent accomplishments in a career. While IP emerged as a part of female psychology, some recent research revealed no significant sex difference in this matter. The current study attempted to understand whether there exists any sex difference in terms of IP level in India. This quantitative survey-based study was conducted on Indian young adults (N=941, Males=470, Females=471; Age=19-37 years) with Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) as the measurement tool. For ensuring the factor structure of CIPS in the Indian sample, an exploratory factor analysis (Principal Component Analysis with oblique rotation technique) was used, followed by confirmatory factor analysis. These analyses confirmed a one-factor model of CIPS. There was no sex difference in the scale's factor structure; items 1, 2, and 5 were excluded for lower factor loadings among both males and females. However, in terms of the total scores, males scored significantly higher (p<.01) on CIPS than females. This finding is contradictory to the existing literature in this area, especially the western-based studies. The study further tested the connection of IP with gender roles (measured through the Bem Sex Role Inventory) among a section of the participants (N=354; Males=201, females=153). The result revealed that conformity to feminine roles was positively correlated with IP among males, whereas conformity to masculine roles had no significant correlation with IP. Among Females, on the contrary, conforming to masculine roles was negatively correlated to IP. The findings are discussed in the context of the culture-gender-achievement dynamic.

Keywords: confirmatory factor analysis, gender roles, imposter phenomenon, success, quantitative