



# The profound impact of Imposter Syndrome on women in the workplace, with a particular focus on mentorship's role in shaping their experiences.

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## **Abstract:**

This qualitative study explores the views and experiences of female executives in non-banking businesses around Impostor Syndrome. An individual's sense of self-worth, wellbeing, and self-esteem can all be significantly impacted by the complicated emotional phenomena known as impostor syndrome. It may take on many different forms, each with its own set of difficulties and outcomes, such as perfectionist, superwoman, natural genius, soloist, and expert kinds.

The purpose of our study is to investigate the real-world experiences of female leaders who have fallen victim to imposter syndrome. To get rich, narrative data, we conducted semi-structured in-depth interviews with forty distinguished female executives in non-banking businesses. Participants were able to discuss their experiences, difficulties, and coping mechanisms for Impostor Syndrome during these interviews.

We examined the transcripts of these interviews using a phenomenological method to find recurring themes and characteristics among the subjects. We were able to learn more about the subjective experiences and the ways that Impostor Syndrome impacts the professional life and general well-being of these women thanks to the use of a qualitative technique.

Our research sheds light on the characteristics of impostor syndrome and how it affects female leaders outside of the banking sector. In order to lessen the impacts of Impostor Syndrome, the study emphasizes the value of mentoring, organizational support networks, and individual coping mechanisms. These realizations can guide the creation of focused initiatives meant to uplift female leaders and promote an inclusive and encouraging workplace culture.

## **Keywords:**

Imposter syndrome, Mentorship, Workplace Diversity, Women's career advancement, Inclusive Leadership.

## **Introduction:**

Women in the workforce are disproportionately affected by imposter syndrome, a widespread psychological pattern marked by persistent self-doubt and the anxiety of being revealed as a phony despite obvious achievement. The 1970s saw the identification of this phenomena by American psychologists Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes. It is especially noticeable in high-achieving women, who tend to internalize their triumphs in a different way than their male peers.

The crippling effects of impostor syndrome, which may result in missed opportunities for job progress, decreased productivity, and increased stress and anxiety, are particularly dangerous for women in fields where males predominate. Perfectionism, self-criticism, fear of failure, and a propensity to minimize one's own accomplishments are all signs of impostor syndrome, and they can all impede teamwork, hinder innovation, and erode confidence.

Women often experience impostor syndrome at work, which weakens their self-esteem and impedes their ability to advance in their careers. A powerful way to deal with this is through mentoring. Mentors provide direction, support, and empowerment that help women gain insightful viewpoints, increase their self-assurance, and widen their network of professional contacts. Through this mentorship relationship, they may overcome self-defeating thoughts and temporary self-perceptions about their skills, and be inspired to see and seize their full potential.

Mentorship ought to play a big role in an organization's diversity and inclusion strategies. To support women in advancing in their professions, formal mentorship programs and an environment that fosters safety, openness, and vulnerability at work are essential. Additionally, businesses need to understand how "imposter syndrome" might prevent women from realizing their full potential in the workplace.

By appreciating mentoring, organizations may foster an inclusive culture that gives women more authority. Through mentoring, women may overcome barriers in their careers and realize their full potential. Both the company and society at large gain from this. In order to create an atmosphere where women may succeed, companies should prioritize mentorship as part of their diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Through comprehending the support systems and coping techniques available, we may endeavor to establish work environments where women feel appreciated, encouraged, and equipped to realize their maximum potential. This conversation will explore the unique obstacles that women encounter as a result of impostor syndrome and the significant influence that mentoring has had on their lives, eventually emphasizing the significance of incorporating mentoring into corporate diversity and inclusion policies.

### **Background Information:**

A common psychological condition known as "imposter syndrome" causes people to mistrust their achievements and worry about being discovered as frauds, even in the face of their obvious success. Due to prejudices, preconceptions, and a dearth of female leadership roles, this illness is more common among women in the workforce.

### **The Impact of Imposter Syndrome on Women**

Working women frequently have particular difficulties that exacerbate the symptoms of impostor syndrome. They consist of:

- **Stereotypes related to gender:** Gender stereotypes and societal expectations can make women feel as though they must put in more effort to prove themselves, which can breed feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt.
- **Lack of Representation:** Women find it difficult to feel like they belong in leadership posts since there aren't enough of them, which exacerbates impostor syndrome.
- **Double Standards:** Women are more likely than males to face harsher criticism for their errors, which makes it more difficult for them to accept that they are fallible and feeds into the impostor syndrome.
- **Perfectionism:** Women may have feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt as a result of feeling pressured to do well in both their personal and professional life.

Mentorship's function in helping people get over their Imposter Syndrome  
One effective method for assisting people in overcoming impostor syndrome is mentoring. Mentors can offer:

- **Counseling and direction:** Doable methods for overcoming self-doubt and boosting confidence.
- **Encouragement and Support:** A secure space where people feel free to express their uncertainties and worries without fear of repercussions.

- **Empowerment:** Chances for career advancement and development, assisting people in realizing and appreciating their accomplishments.

### Advantages of Mentoring Initiatives

Businesses may greatly improve workplace well-being and gender equality by funding mentorship programs. These initiatives can: - Reduce Gender Disparities: Mentorship programs can aid in closing the gap in women's representation in leadership roles by giving them access to role models and assistance.

- **Promote a Healthier Workplace:** By removing barriers and addressing the root causes of impostor syndrome, a well-designed mentoring program may boost productivity and pave the way for professional progression.
- **Encourage Confidence and Career Growth:** In the end, mentoring benefits society and the company by helping people get over self-doubt, feel more confident, and progress in their jobs.

### The Value of Making Mentoring a Priority

Organizations must give mentorship programs top priority if they want a safe and equitable workplace. The following reasons these projects are important:

- **Treating impostor Syndrome:** Mentorship programs can assist people in overcoming persistent self-doubt and realizing their full potential by addressing the root reasons of impostor syndrome.
- **Improving Workplace Dynamics:** Collaboration, creativity, and innovation within teams may all be enhanced via mentoring, which promotes a more inclusive and successful workplace culture.
- **Long-Term Career Advancement:** Mentorship programs may help people grow personally and professionally by lowering the hurdles brought on by impostor syndrome. This is advantageous for both the individual and the company.

Women in the workplace have a lot of challenges due to impostor syndrome, but mentoring programs provide a workable answer. Organizations may improve workplace well-being, advance gender equality, and create an atmosphere where all workers can succeed by funding these initiatives.

### Research Problem:

While it is well established that mentorship and impostor syndrome affect women's experiences at work, it is not evident how exactly they are related. Research questions or problems can be developed to investigate the following in order to close this knowledge gap that does not seem to be changing the subject:

What is the role that mentoring plays in helping women in the workplace overcome the difficulties that come with feeling like an impostor?

### Objectives of the Study:

1. Examine the individual experiences of women in a variety of professions and work environments with impostor syndrome and how it affects their careers.
2. Gain insight into how female staff members view the function of mentoring programs in resolving the psychological difficulties brought on by impostor syndrome.
3. Examine women's stories on how, in the context of impostor syndrome, mentoring affects their mental health, career advancement, and work happiness.
4. Examine women's real-world experiences to find mentorship programs that reduce the impact of impostor syndrome by implementing successful techniques and strategies.
5. Examine how mentoring relationships help women feel respected and empowered, helping them to get past self-doubt and succeed in their jobs while emphasizing the need of fostering an inclusive and supportive work environment.

### Literature Review:

Research and the media have given the Impostor Syndrome (IP) phenomena a lot of attention since Clance and Imes first described it in 1978. In spite of their successes, people with IP have feelings of inadequacy. They fear that they may be revealed as scammers since they think that dishonest tactics have helped them succeed. This pervasive issue adds to tension, worry, and feelings of uncertainty in professionals from a variety of specialties.

An elevated level of anxiety and sadness in the workplace is linked to the impostor phenomenon, according to a recent study by Haar and de Jong (2024). They also discovered that the impostor phenomenon has a less negative impact on those who feel well supported by the company. The study also highlights how common the impostor problem is, impacting individuals from a wide range of organizational backgrounds.

In their 2024 study, Holden and colleagues observed no statistically significant differences in stress levels or impostor syndrome between first-generation and continuing-generation college students. They also found

that among students in the continuing generation, impostor syndrome is exacerbated by perfectionism. This implies that students of all backgrounds, regardless of their upbringing, frequently worry about impostor syndrome, which is exacerbated by stress and perfectionism.

According to research done in 2017 by Abbas and Bashir, a leader's connection (known as Leader-Member Exchange, or LMX) with their subordinates may have an impact on the likelihood that those subordinates may use impression management (IP). Higher IP is linked to a good LMX, which fosters understanding and respect between parties. However, the locus of control of the subordinate influences this relationship: - Subordinates who feel they have limited control over their surroundings (an external locus of control) are more prone to employ IP in high-quality LMX partnerships. This is because they could have anxiety about living up to their boss's standards, which could result in guilt and an impression that the leader is manipulative and controlling. The aforementioned research papers considered constructs as either independent or mediating variables. In this particular context, nonetheless, we have classified them as moderators. These concepts have an impact on organizational settings, which may help or impede the adoption of inclusive practices (IP).

Trait-state theory forms the basis of our knowledge of intellectual property (IP), which we comprehend using Higgins' (1987) theory of self-discrepancy. According to this notion, people have several perspectives of who they are, and when those perspectives diverge, it can be uncomfortable. Our opinions and those of others, such as coworkers or superiors, can help us build our self-views. We will mainly focus on how people see themselves (real self) and how others see them (significant other), even if there are several viewpoints on self-identity (such as who we are, who we aspire to be, and who we believe we should be). During an interpersonal encounter, this attention to the real self represents the qualities that both parties sincerely feel to be true about the other.

#### **Methodology:**

The purpose of this study is to investigate how mentoring affects women's experiences with impostor syndrome in the workplace. Given that impostor syndrome is a serious issue that can impair performance at work, the researchers will use qualitative techniques to get a comprehensive understanding of the individual experiences and tales of women who have dealt with impostor syndrome. The study will collect rich narrative data on women's perceptions of the emotional support they receive from mentorship and how that impact affects their professional identity and confidence through in-depth interviews and focus groups. In order to illuminate the complex ways in which mentoring supports participants' coping mechanisms and career development, the analysis will concentrate on locating major themes and patterns in the participants' testimonies.

#### **Findings:**

Three key topics emerged from the analysis:

1. **Impostor syndrome manifestation:** Despite their successes, participants expressed emotions of inadequacy, dread of failing, and self-doubt. Workplace issues including gender prejudice and underrepresentation in leadership positions frequently made these sentiments worse.
2. **Effect on job and Well-Being:** It has been shown that Imposter Syndrome significantly affects both mental health and job advancement. The participants talked about how their self-doubt resulted in stress levels rising, missed chances, and a reluctance to pursue promotions.
3. **Mentoring Plays a Key Role:** Research has shown that mentoring can help lessen the impacts of Imposter Syndrome. A stronger sense of confidence, a more proactive attitude to professional growth, and a deeper sense of belonging were indicated by women who had supportive mentors. Mentors assisted individuals in reframing their ideas of themselves, establishing reasonable objectives, and overcoming obstacles at work.

#### **Discussion:**

The research indicates that Imposter Syndrome is a major obstacle to women's job progress, but that its effects may be mitigated in large part by mentoring. Mentors assist women identify their abilities and accomplishments by offering them emotional support in addition to professional advice. The research emphasizes how crucial it is for businesses to set up official mentoring programs in order to help women overcome the feeling of being an impostor and promote an inclusive workplace environment.

#### **Conclusion**

In the workplace, impostor syndrome still has an effect on women's confidence, ability to advance in their careers, and general well-being. But mentoring provides an effective weapon to address these issues.

Mentorship initiatives that empower women, assist them in overcoming self-doubt, and foster a more equal workplace atmosphere have to be given top priority by organizations.

### Recommendations

1. **Establish Formal Mentorship Programs:** Associations ought to create formal mentorship initiatives to assist women, especially those who are feeling like they are not good enough.
2. **Promote Awareness and Training:** Hold seminars and training sessions to educate people about Imposter Syndrome and provide mentors with the resources they need to properly assist mentees.
3. **Promote an Inclusive Culture:** Encourage an environment in your company that promotes diversity, inclusion, and honest communication in order to lessen the stigma attached to imposter syndrome.
4. **More Research:** Upcoming research ought to look at the long-term effects of mentoring on women who suffer from Imposter Syndrome as well as other elements that could affect how they view the workplace.

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