JURNAL PSIKOLOGI
PERSEPTUAL

http://jurnal.umk.ac.id/index.php/perseptual

Unveiling The Unseen Struggle: Impostor Phenomenon in Intermediate Level Students

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Abstract

The aim of this study is to investigate impostor phenomenon among intermediate-level students, analyzing their unseen struggles within their academic performance. The mixed method, particularly the explanatory sequential design, was utilized to gather data from the intermediate-level students of Cabanatuan East Central School. Through the comprehensive analysis of gathered data from survey questionnaires to semi-structured interviews, the study reveals that intermediate-grade level students exhibit a moderate level of impostor phenomenon, indicating occasional feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. The researchers also discovered the emergence of five themes summarized as FLARE, which highlights various aspects of the participants' experiences in navigating academic challenges. However, the study also highlighted the intricate interplay of personal satisfaction, aspirations, and social dynamics in academic and personal development.

Moreover, the study findings suggest that factor birth order factor shows a notable relationship. The researchers came up with the idea of creating the Flare-Up program as an intervention to empower students by helping them recognize impostor phenomenon, fostering a positive self-image, equipping them with coping tools, promoting a growth mindset, and creating a supportive environment. Recommendations were also provided to create a strong parental support system that may help children set realistic expectations for themselves.

Keywords: academic challenges, FLARE, flare up program, impostor phenomenon, intermediate level students

INTRODUCTION

The impostor phenomenon—an internal psychological experience in which individuals perceive themselves as intellectual or professional frauds despite objective evidence of success—has garnered increasing attention in educational and organizational psychology (Cuncic, 2023). First described by Clance and Imes (1978) in their seminal work, "The Impostor Phenomenon in High Achieving Women," this construct illuminates the paradox of self-doubt amid high achievement.

In classroom settings, manifestations of the impostor phenomenon are common. Students who consistently earn top marks may attribute their success to luck or external effort, remarking, "If I hadn't studied, I would surely fail," or minimizing their abilities by stating, "I'm not really intelligent—you just think I am."

Approximately 70% of individuals encounter Impostor phenomenon at least once in their lives (Owens, 2021), with this phenomenon being particularly prevalent among highly accomplished perfectionists. Even notable figures such as scientist Albert Einstein, athlete Serena Williams, singer Jennifer Lopez, and actors Natalie Portman, Lupita Nyong'o, and Tom Hanks have not been immune to experiencing Impostor phenomenon (Benisek, 2022).

Impostor phenomenon exerts a significant impact on those who experience it. In their insightful blog titled "Real Stories: Impostor phenomenon" on Medium, The Kip Team conducted interviews with individuals navigating this phenomenon. One respondent candidly admitted, "I almost talked myself out of taking a promotion because I didn't think I deserved it or could handle the new responsibilities." Another participant revealed, "This feeling compels me to consider leaving my current career and contemplate returning to school for a different job" (The Kip Team, 2016). Delving into Impostor phenomenon, Clance and Imes brought to light the experiences of individuals confronting these challenges. A participant in their study, having spelling difficulties, recounted a memory of feigning illness for three consecutive Fridays during spelling bees, driven by the fear of her parents' discovery of her inability to win. Another participant reflected on pretending to engage with art materials while studying, especially when her mother entered the room, influenced by the belief that intelligent individuals do not need to study (Clance and Imes, 1978).

The roots of Impostor phenomenon can be traced back to early childhood experiences within the family environment. Children exposed to constant comparisons and pressures are highly susceptible to experiencing this phenomenon. The child may either be consistently compared unfavorably to a labeled intelligent family member, creating doubts about her intellectual capabilities. Despite proving herself at school, her family remains unimpressed, fostering the impostor phenomenon. Alternatively, the family may excessively praise the child, creating an unrealistic image of perfection. As the child encounters challenges, they realize the

p-ISSN: 2528-1895
e-ISSN: 2580-9520

disparity between expectations and reality, leading to self-doubt and the emergence of an intellectual impostor perception.

Parents often compare their children to successful peers with the intention of motivating them to achieve more. However, this practice may inadvertently convey the message that something is inherently wrong with their own child. Dr. Gail Reyes Galang, Chair of the Family Studies program at Miriam College and a faculty member in the College's Department of Psychology, notes, "Parents naturally desire the best for their children. Witnessing other kids' happiness and success sparks a wish for the same for their own children. Yet, such social comparisons can have detrimental effects, leading to resentment if the child perceives it as a clear indication of their shortcomings" (Galang, 2022).

The cognitive, emotional, physical, and social development of a child evolves significantly during their formative years, specifically in school age of intermediate grades. Persistent parental criticism can leave children with enduring negative self-perceptions, augmenting their susceptibility to mental health issues such as depression well into adulthood. Conversely, parental commendation often fosters positive sentiments, bolsters motivation, and cultivates self-esteem, self-efficacy, and self-worth (Dev Cogn Neurosci, NIH, 2022).

In Southeast Asian collectivist cultures, humility is highly valued, as it fosters social harmony and prioritizes group welfare over individual recognition (Bernardo et al., 2016). However, this cultural emphasis on modesty can sometimes be mistaken for impostor phenomenon, a psychological pattern in which individuals doubt their achievements and fear being exposed as frauds despite external validation (Bravata et al., 2020).

Humility involves a balanced self-perception, where individuals recognize both strengths and weaknesses while maintaining openness to learning (Owens & Hekman, 2016). In contrast, impostor phenomenon is characterized by chronic self-doubt, attributing success to luck or external factors rather than competence (Sakulku & Alexander, 2011). While humility aligns with cultural values, impostor phenomenon can lead to anxiety, burnout, and reluctance to embrace new opportunities (Cokley et al., 2018).

For example, a Filipino professional may downplay achievements to show respect for colleagues, which reflects humility. However, when self-doubt prevents them from acknowledging their own abilities, it becomes impostor phenomenon (Reyes, 2015). In highly collectivist settings, societal expectations to remain modest may reinforce impostor feelings, particularly among high achievers (Bernardo et al., 2016).

To differentiate the two, individuals should practice self-awareness—embracing humility while also accepting personal achievements without guilt (Cokley et al., 2018). Encouraging a cultural mindset that balances humility with self-confidence can help individuals navigate success in a collectivist society (Bravata et al., 2020).

Impostor phenomenon exerts a notable influence on a child's well-being, particularly with regard to their educational pursuits. It can either propel them toward academic success or thwart their progress. This study aims to investigate impostor phenomenon among intermediate-level students, analyzing their unseen struggle within their academic performance.

METHOD

The researchers used a mixed-methods approach, combining both quantitative and qualitative research methods. The quantitative part involved collecting numerical data, such as statistics and percentages, to study the impostor phenomenon. This data was gathered through specific questions and analyzed using statistical methods (Subudhi, 2016).

p-ISSN: 2528-1895
e-ISSN: 2580-9520

On the other hand, the qualitative part focused on understanding the impostor phenomenon in more depth by analyzing non-numerical data. This was done through methods like interviews and observations to gain a clearer understanding of the subject (Bhandari, 2023).

The study followed an explanatory sequential design. First, a survey questionnaire was used to measure the prevalence of impostor phenomenon among intermediate-level students. Afterward, semi-structured interviews were conducted to explore the hidden struggles these students face, particularly how impostor phenomenon affects their academic performance. This combination of quantitative and qualitative methods helped to provide a more complete picture of the phenomenon.

The researchers employed purposive sampling to select participants for both the survey and interviews. A total of 34 students, aged 9 to 12 years old and enrolled during the School Year 2023–2024, participated in the study. The selection criteria were as follows: (1) students enrolled in special sections or Section One of Grades Four, Five, and Six; (2) students who received academic excellence awards during the 2022–2023 school year, in accordance with DepEd Order No. 36, s. 2016, which grants this recognition to students with an average of at least 90 in all subjects; and (3) students who, despite receiving academic awards, were observed to exhibit low self-efficacy in class. These students were identified by their class advisers using the Self-Efficacy Formative Questionnaire developed by Gaumer Erickson and Noonan (2018), which is designed to assess the development of students' self-efficacy.

Given that the participants were minors, the study strictly adhered to ethical research guidelines to ensure the protection of children's rights and well-being. Prior to data collection, the researchers obtained informed consent from the parents or legal guardians of all participants using a Parent/Guardian Informed Consent Form, which clearly outlined the study's objectives, procedures, potential risks, and the voluntary nature of participation. Additionally, student assent was secured through a Child Assent Form, which was written in age-appropriate language to ensure that the participants fully understood their involvement. All procedures were reviewed and approved by the school's research ethics committee, ensuring the ethical soundness of the study.

To measure the presence of impostor phenomenon, the researchers adapted and modified the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale. The scale, developed by Dr. Pauline Rose Clance in 1985, assesses individuals who appear successful but feel personally incompetent. To ensure the validity and reliability of the adapted impostor phenomenon assessment tool for intermediate students, several statistical procedures were applied.

First, the Content Validity Index (CVI) was utilized to evaluate the relevance and clarity of the localized items through expert review, following the guidelines by Polit et al. (2007). A panel of five experts in psychology and education rated each item on a 4-point scale (1 = not relevant, 4 = highly relevant). The item-level CVI (I-CVI) values ranged from 0.80 to 1.00, indicating high item relevance. The scale-level CVI, calculated as the average of the I-CVIs (S-CVI/Ave), was 0.93, surpassing the recommended threshold of 0.90, thus confirming excellent content validity.

Following content validation, item analysis was conducted to ensure the appropriateness of each item for the target population. The Difficulty Index (p-value) for the items ranged from 0.42 to 0.78, suggesting that the items were of moderate difficulty and suitable for elementary school students. Furthermore, the Discrimination Index (D) ranged from 0.32 to 0.61, indicating that the items effectively differentiated between students with high and low levels of impostor tendencies. According to Wasserman and Bracken (2013),

discrimination indices above 0.30 are considered acceptable and demonstrate good item performance.

To assess reliability, Cronbach's Alpha was computed to determine the internal consistency of the instrument. The overall Cronbach's Alpha coefficient was 0.89, exceeding the minimum acceptable value of 0.70 (DeVellis, 2012), thus confirming that the items were coherent and reliably measured the impostor phenomenon.

Lastly, Factor Analysis was performed to examine the underlying structure of the assessment and validate the presence of hypothesized subscales. Using Principal Component Analysis with Varimax rotation, the results supported a multi-dimensional structure consistent with theoretical constructs related to the impostor phenomenon. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin (KMO) measure of sampling adequacy was 0.84, and Bartlett's Test of Sphericity was significant ($p < .001$), indicating that the data were suitable for factor analysis (Osborne, 2014).

These procedures ensured that the adapted tool was culturally relevant, statistically sound, and appropriate for intermediate learners.

The researchers employed a modified version of the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale to assess the potential presence of impostor phenomenon in intermediate-level students, aiming to gauge the extent to which they might have experienced this phenomenon. The scale was contextualized in the language students use for easier understanding.

Moreover, semi-structured interview consisted of open-ended questions tailored to the age of the students was used. This instrument aimed to identify challenges and struggles faced by intermediate-level students who had encountered impostor phenomenon, particularly in relation to their academic performance.

Frequency count and percentage scores were used to describe the demographic profile of the participants. Moreover, the experience of intermediate grade level students was characterized by computing mean scores. Further, Thematic analysis, particularly reflexive thematic analysis, was utilized to determine the academic challenges of the students in having impostor phenomenon. Lastly, Spearman Rho Correlation was employed to identify the relationship between the demographic profile of intermediate grade level students and the prevalence of Impostor phenomenon.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1. Distribution of Participants according to Age

Age	f	%
9	4	12
10	11	32
11	9	26
12	10	29
Total	34	100

Based on the data provided in Table 5, it can be observed that 9-year-old participants comprised 4 out of 34, representing 12% of the sample. The largest group was 10-year-old participants, with 11 out of 34, making up 32% of the sample. Participants aged 11 constituted 9 out of 34, or 26%, while 12-year-old participants numbered 10 out of 34, accounting for 29%. Consequently, the majority of participants fall within the 10-year-old age group.

Based on the analysis of the data concerning the age distribution of intermediate level students, it is evident that the largest group consists of 11 students, representing 32%, who are 10 years old. Conversely, the smallest group comprises 4 students, or 12%, who are 9 years old. Considering the Department of Education's suggested age range for intermediate level

p-ISSN: 2528-1895
e-ISSN: 2580-9520

students, which is 9-11 years old, it logically follows that there are no participants aged 8 years old.

The Philippine K-12 curriculum specifies that intermediate-level students are generally aged 9 to 11 years old, corresponding to Grades 4 to 6. This age range is intentionally set to align with students' cognitive and social development. Research by Orbeta and Paqueo (2017) highlights that the structure of the K-12 system considers both age appropriateness and developmental readiness, ensuring students can successfully meet the demands of the intermediate curriculum.

Table 2. Distribution of Participants according to Grade Level

Grade Level	f	%
4	12	35
5	8	24
6	14	41
Total	34	100

Table 2 shows that it was evident that there were 12 respondents out of 34, making up 35%, at the grade 4 level. The grade 5 level had 8 respondents out of 34, constituting 24%, while the grade 6 level had the highest number of respondents, with 14 out of 34, accounting for 41%.

Based on the data regarding the grade levels of participants among intermediate-level students, it's notable that the majority, 41% of the total, are grade 6 students. Interestingly, teachers have identified most students in the 6th grade as having low self-efficacy in their class.

A study by Kaur and Dhawan (2021) delves into the self-efficacy beliefs of middle school students, including those in 6th grade. It provides insights into factors influencing students' self-efficacy and how teachers perceive and identify low self-efficacy among students in this age group. One possible explanation for why 6th graders may have low self-efficacy could be attributed to the transitional nature of this grade level. Students in 6th grade often experience significant changes, such as transitioning to a new school environment, increased academic expectations, and social adjustments. These changes can contribute to feelings of uncertainty and self-doubt, impacting students' self-efficacy beliefs. Additionally, the academic challenges and new responsibilities that come with advancing to 6th grade may also influence students' perceptions of their capabilities, further contributing to low self-efficacy. This study supports the observation of low self-efficacy among 6th-grade students as indicated in the data.

Table 3. Distribution of Participants according to Birth Order

Birth Order	f	%
Oldest Child	8	24
Middle Child	5	15
Youngest Child	16	47
Solo Child	5	15
Total	34	100

From the table above, it's evident that the frequency of the oldest child is 8 out of 34, accounting for 24%. The middle child comprises 5 out of 34, or 15%, while the youngest child has the highest frequency with 16 out of 34, representing 47%. Similarly, the solo child also makes up 5 out of 34, or 15%.

Interpreting the data regarding the birth order of the respondents, it's apparent that the youngest child is the most prevalent, constituting 47% of the sample. Interestingly, the data suggest that younger children, in general, are more susceptible to self-doubt.

Alfred Adler's Birth Order Theory (1928) emphasizes that birth order can have a significant influence on an individual's personality, behavior, and self-perception. According to Adler, youngest children often receive an abundance of attention, care, and support from their parents and older siblings. This nurturing environment can foster positive traits such as charm, creativity, and sociability. However, it can also lead to certain vulnerabilities. Because youngest children frequently rely on others for guidance and approval, they may develop a dependency on external validation, which can result in feelings of self-doubt and a perceived lack of independence.

Compared to their older siblings, youngest children may feel overshadowed or less capable, reinforcing their susceptibility to self-distrust. Studies support this idea, showing that youngest children are particularly prone to experiencing self-doubt and insecurity in comparison to their peers. This dynamic suggests that while youngest children may excel in certain areas, they are also at a higher risk of struggling with self-confidence and a sense of competence.

Table 4. Distribution of Participants according to General Weighted Average

GWA	f	%
90	12	35.29
91	8	23.53
92	6	17.65
93	3	8.824
94	3	8.824
95	2	5.882
Total	34	100

From the table provided, it's evident that 12 out of 34 respondents have a GWA (General Weighted Average) of 90, accounting for 35.29%. Eight respondents have a GWA of 91, making up 23.53%, while six respondents have a GWA of 92, representing 17.65%. Three respondents each have a GWA of 93 and 94, constituting 8.824% each, and two respondents have a GWA of 95, accounting for 5.882%.

The data indicates that the most frequent GWA among the respondents is 90, with 35.29%, while the least frequent is 95, with 5.882%.

The distribution of GWAs among the respondents reflects the criteria set by DepEd Order No. 36, Series of 2016, for the Academic Excellence Award. DepEd Order No. 36, Series of 2016, outlines guidelines for awarding academic honors and recognitions to K to 12 students in the Philippines, emphasizing fairness and transparency. With a significant portion of the respondents achieving a GWA of 90 or above, it is clear that a considerable number of students meet the threshold for academic recognition. This aligns with the DepEd's aim to promote academic excellence and provide recognition to students who consistently perform well. The presence of higher GWAs, such as 93, 94, and 95, although in smaller proportions, underscores the diversity in student performance levels, highlighting the rigorous standards upheld by the education system This structured recognition system not only motivates students to strive for academic excellence but also ensures that the awarding process remains fair, transparent, and reflective.

Table 5. Mean Scores of Intermediate Student using Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale

Item No.	Question	Mean	Verbal Description
1.	I worry about a test or task, but then I end up doing really well.	3.44	Often

p-ISSN: 2528-1895
e-ISSN: 2580-9520

2.	I might act like I'm super good at something, even if I'm not totally sure.	2.62	Sometimes
3.	I get nervous when someone is going to check my work, and I try to avoid it if I can.	3.24	Sometimes
4.	When someone says I did great, I worry I won't do as well next time.	2.97	Sometimes
5.	I feel like I only did well because of luck or knowing the right people, not because of my own skills.	3.18	Sometimes
6.	I'm afraid that people who are important to me may find out that I'm not as capable as they think I am.	3.82	Often
7.	I tend to remember the times in which I have not done my best in school tasks more than those times I have done my best.	3.32	Sometimes
8.	I don't finish my school projects or tasks as nicely as I want to.	2.97	Sometimes
9.	I feel like my good grades in exams or scores in school activities happened by unintentional mistake.	2.62	Sometimes
10.	It's hard for me to feel happy when people say nice things about how smart or good I am at school.	2.88	Sometimes
11.	I think that I received high scores in exams because of luck.	3.29	Sometimes
12.	I feel disappointed by my academic achievements because I think I should have received more awards in school than what I have achieved now.	2.94	Sometimes
13.	I'm afraid that others will find out about the things that I don't know and the things that I'm not capable of doing.	3.44	Often
14.	I'm often afraid that I may fail at new school tasks even though I do well if I try to do it.	3.41	Often
15.	Whenever I do something really well in my school task and people say nice things about it, I start wondering if I can do it again as good as next time.	4.06	Often
16.	If I receive a lot of compliments for something I've accomplished in school, I tend to set aside the importance of what I've done.	3.09	Sometimes
17.	I look at my other classmates and think they might be smarter than me.	3.56	Often
18.	I worry about not doing well on a school project or test, even though others around me believe that I'm capable of doing it.	3.91	Often
19.	If I know something good is going to happen to me, like getting a prize or a special award in school, I can't tell other people about it yet until it actually happens.	3.85	Often
20.	I feel bad and discouraged if I'm not the best or if my efforts are not well recognized in situations involving school.	3.50	Often
	Total	3.31	Sometimes

Note: Verbal interpretation of Clance Impostor Phenomenon Likert scale: 1- not all true, 2- rarely, 3- sometimes, 4- often,5- very true.

Table 5 shows the overall mean for the study results is 3.31, which falls under the verbal description "Sometimes." This indicates that, on average, the participants sometimes experience impostor phenomenon-related thoughts and feelings in their academic setting. While they do not experience these feelings all the time, there is a moderate presence of self-doubt, fear of failure, and attributing success to external factors like luck rather than their own

p-ISSN: 2528-1895
e-ISSN: 2580-9520

abilities. The findings suggest that while impostor tendencies are not constant, they occur frequently enough to impact students' confidence and perception of their achievements.

Specifically, items 2 and 9 received the lowest weighted mean of 2.62, indicating that students sometimes experience acting confident in skills despite uncertainties and attributing success to luck. Conversely, item 15 received the highest weighted mean of 4.06, suggesting that students often experience doubts about replicating past successes.

Interpreting the data, it's evident that intermediate grade level students generally experience impostor phenomenon at a moderate level. Overall, they sometimes feel like impostors, but there are particular areas, such as doubts about replicating past successes, where these feelings are more prevalent.

Research by Cokley et al. (2023) on impostor phenomenon in educational settings provides relevant insights into the patterns observed in the data. Their research highlights the dynamic nature of impostor feelings, where individuals may fluctuate between moments of confidence and periods of self-doubt, aligning with the variations seen in the students' experiences across different aspects of impostor phenomenon in the table.

Furthermore, a study by Park and Kim (2019) investigated how the fear of failure influences the impostor phenomenon and patterns of self-handicapping behaviors among individuals. Their findings indicate that the fear of failure can exacerbate impostor feelings and lead to behaviors aimed at avoiding failure or protecting one's self-esteem, such as self-handicapping. The fear of failure may contribute significantly to these doubts and intensify impostor feelings among students. As students strive to maintain high academic standards, the pressure to consistently perform well can become a source of anxiety. This study directly relates to the observed patterns in item 15 of the table, where students often experience doubts about replicating past successes. The fear of not living up to previous achievements can be overwhelming, causing students to question their abilities and fear being exposed as frauds.

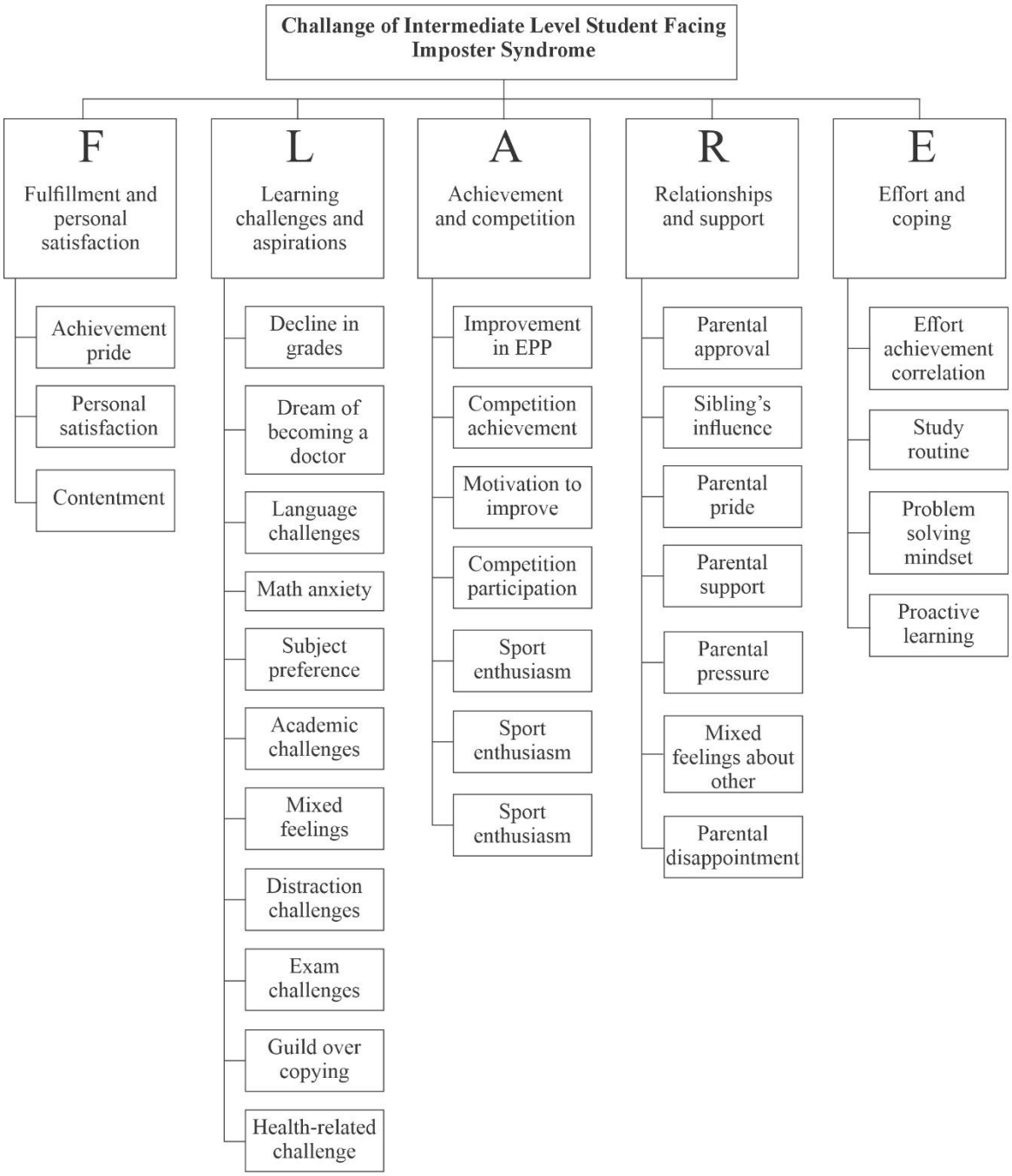
The interview was based on the mean of Item 15 rather than the overall participants' mean because Item 15 had the highest mean (4.06, "Often"), indicating that it was the most frequently experienced impostor phenomenon-related thought among students. This item states:

"Whenever I do something really well in my school task and people say nice things about it, I start wondering if I can do it again as good as next time."

Focusing on this specific item for the interview allowed for a more in-depth exploration of a key concern among participants—the fear of not being able to replicate success. Since this thought pattern was the most prevalent among students, it provided a strong basis for qualitative analysis, helping to understand their experiences, coping mechanisms, and potential academic or emotional impacts.

Using the overall mean (3.31, "Sometimes") as a basis for interviews might have resulted in a broader but less focused discussion, as it includes a mix of high and low-scoring items. By selecting the highest-scoring item, the interview could target the most relevant and impactful impostor-related experience among the participants.

Figure 1: Themes Emerged



As a result of the thickness and depth of the participant's experience, a number of distinct elements have emerged in relation to the lived experiences of the participants. Their level of participation in the interview process was evident from the spontaneity and tact of their answers. After doing thematic analysis, five themes, summarized as FLARE emerged. An acronym highlights various aspects of the participant's experiences, emphasizing fulfilment and personal satisfaction, learning challenges and aspirations, achievement and competition, relationship, support, effort and coping mechanisms.

Fulfilment and Personal Satisfaction

In exploring participants' perspectives, a significant theme that emerged was fulfilment and personal satisfaction, reflecting the profound sense of accomplishment and contentment they derive from their studies. The research data indicates that some participants express personal pride and fulfilment in their academic success. During interviews, several participants mentioned feeling a strong sense of accomplishment when they achieve good grades or complete challenging assignments. These were evidenced in the following responses:

> Proud po ako sa sarili ko. Nung nalaman ko pong honor ako. Parang po yung hardwork ko po. Nagpapaysoff po sila. (I'm proud of myself. When I found out that I was an honor student, it felt like my hard work paid off.)

> Magaling naman po. Mataas-taas naman po. Okay naman po. Medyo nagnadami yung assignment, pero okay lang po. (It's good, my grades are quite high, and everything's okay. The assignments increased a bit, but it's fine.)

These expressions of personal pride and fulfilment suggest a deep connection between academic success and emotional well-being among the participants.

Learning Challenges and Aspirations

Struggling with subjects like language and math can be quite common among the participants, and there are several factors that can contribute to these challenges. This was mentioned by some of the participants when they said:

> Kinakabahan po (sa grade ko sa Math). (Sa) Science po (pinakamataas na grade). 95 po. (Sa Math) eighty-nine po. (I'm nervous (about my grade in Math). My highest grade is in Science, 95. In Math, it's 89.)

> Mahirap lalo na po kapagka yung hindi po maintindihan, tas magbabago pong lesson, madali minsan, (Nahihirapan ako) Sa science at math po. (It's difficult, especially when I don't understand something, and then the lesson changes. Sometimes it's easy. I struggle with Science and Math.)

Despite these challenges, students also articulate their aspirations which implies that students are aware of their future goals. This was mentioned by one of the participants when she said:

> Pangarap ko po kasi maging Doctor. (My dream is to become a doctor.)

Achievement and Competition

Many participants, mainly from special sections and section 1, also discuss their achievements in school competitions and extracurricular activities to maintain high grades. This can be evidenced by the following claims:

> Eh... Inaano ko po.. Para po mapunta po ako sa natataas ko na grades, nag co..compete po ako sa mga competitions po. Mga Gymnastics, feature writing. (Well... what I do to get higher grades is I compete in competitions, like gymnastics and feature writing.)

> Okay lang po. Pero hindi po ako masyadong magaling sa math. Sa science po. Yan yung magaling po ako. Tapos English. Science po (favorite ko). With high (honor), po (ako), kasi po yung mga competition nasalihan ko. (It's okay, but I'm not very

p-ISSN: 2528-1895
e-ISSN: 2580-9520

good at Math. I'm good at Science, and also in English. Science is my favorite. I'm a high honor student because of the competitions I've joined.)

They exhibit motivation to improve their academic performance, as expressed by one of the participants who, although not awarded, stated:

Hindi po (ako) nasama (sa awarding). Napifeel ko pong kailangan ko pong magalingan po next time. Ganun yung napifeel ko po. Nagkaka-high hopes din po ako na baka po this quarter po matataasan ko na po. Sinusuporta naman po ako na inaano na po na tataasan ko na po next quarter. (I wasn't included in the awarding. I feel like I need to do better next time. That's what I feel. I have high hopes that maybe this quarter, I can improve. I'm being supported, and they're encouraging me to do better next quarter.)

Relationships and Support

Some participants described experiencing significant support from their parents in their academic endeavors that inspires them to excel in their academic performance. One of the participants surmised:

Uh, pagbutihan ko po daw po, para po makarating po ako na maayos sa buhay. Naging masaya po sila. Uh, may blow-out po. Ano yung... Minsan akong po nagbibili ng pizza, pag gano'n po eh, nugpupunta po kami sa mall. Masaya po. Masaya po. Masaya po dahil mataas. (Uh, they told me to do my best so that I can succeed in life. They were happy. Uh, there was a celebration. What I mean is... sometimes I buy pizza, and when that happens, we go to the mall. It's joyful. It's joyful. It's joyful because of the high grades.)

On the other hand, one participant also shared about how they receive pressure from their parents which makes them feel guilty for not performing well and also motivates them to do more in their studies, as evidenced in the response:

Ay yung mommy ko po yung nag pepressure sa akin, hindi po yung daddy ko. Hindi naman po maganda (yung reaction ng parents). Nung 1st quarter po 77 sa AP ko e. Nung nag 2nd quarter po tumaas naging 81. Nagalit po parang nadisappoint po pero sinabi po nila disappointed sila. Guilty? Hindi ko po alam kung ano yung word na sasabihin. Ah tumaas po. Yung AP ko po naging 81 naman nung 3rd quarter. Ah I think po yung average ko this year is 81. Try ko po, tinatry ko po pero sa AP po hindi po kami... hindi na po kami madalas nag-A-AP e. (Oh, it's my mom who pressures me, not my dad. My parents' reaction wasn't good. In the 1st quarter, I had a 77 in AP. In the 2nd quarter, it improved to 81. They were angry and seemed disappointed, but they said they were disappointed. Guilty? I don't know the word to use. Ah, it has improved. My AP grade was 81 in the 3rd quarter. Ah, I think my average this year is 81. I'm trying, but in AP, we don't do it as often anymore.)

Furthermore, rivalry among siblings also influences the perception and academic performance of the participants. One of the participants made remarks such as:

Ang pangarap ko po kasi maging high honor. Honor lang po (kasi ako). Gusto ko po kasi yung kagaya po sa kapatid ko. SPED po siya. SPJ po (ako). Okay lang daw po, di naman po nila po ako masyadong pina pressure. 'Pag po may mga assignment po, hindi naman po nila akong sinabi, gawin mo yung assignment po

p-ISSN: 2528-1895
e-ISSN: 2580-9520

na...hinahayaan n'ya lang po kami. (My dream is to become a high honor student. I'm just an honor student right now. I want to achieve what my siblings have, as they are in SPED. I'm in SPJ. It's okay; they don't pressure me much. When there are assignments, they don't tell me to do them; they just let us handle it on our own.)

This testimony underscores the crucial role of healthy relationships among families and parental support in shaping individuals' perspectives and aspirations.

Effort and Coping

Demonstrating dedication and resilience in academic endeavors is commendable and often leads to remarkable achievements. One of the participants made remarks such as:

Wala naman po kasi. Kaya ko naman pong isolve po yan dahil sabi daw po kasi nila (parents) every problem has a solution po. (There's nothing to worry about. I can solve it because my parents say that every problem has a solution.)

The participants also exhibited great effort in their studies. Another participant mentioned:

Alerted po kasi minsan po kailangan kong mag-review dahil sa mga tests, mga quiz at ano. Kailangan din pong alerted dahil pagka sa mga group activity po na kailangan pong dadalhin po. (I need to stay alert because sometimes I have to review for tests, quizzes, and so on. I also need to be alert for group activities that I need to participate in.)

This indicates a steadfast commitment to managing academic challenges effectively.

They tackle challenges head-on, seeking solutions that allow them to excel in their studies despite any obstacles they encounter.

Individuals facing FLARE challenges may be more susceptible to experiencing impostor feelings, influenced by a complex interplay of personal satisfaction, academic aspirations, social relationships, and coping mechanisms.

Table 6. Demographic Profile and Impostor phenomenon

Spearman's rho Correlation		Clance's Impostor phenomenon Scale Scores
Age	r-value	-.148
	p-value	.404
	N	34
Grade	r-value	-.166
	p-value	.349
	N	34
Birth Order	r-value	-.365*
	p-value	.034
	N	34
GWA	r-value	.069
	p-value	.697
	N	34

To determine if there is a significant relationship between the demographic profile of intermediate grade level students and the prevalence of impostor phenomenon, the researcher used Spearman rho Rank Correlation at 5% level of significance.

The study's analysis revealed intriguing insights regarding age and its relationship with impostor phenomenon prevalence. Surprisingly, age did not demonstrate a statistically significant correlation with the prevalence of impostor phenomenon among participants. This finding aligns with developmental theories such as Piaget's concrete operational stage, where children between 9-12 years old begin to grasp abstract concepts but may not possess the cognitive capacity for complex self-evaluation characteristic of impostor phenomenon. Their self-concept appears to be grounded more in tangible achievements and immediate feedback rather than abstract comparisons with others, possibly contributing to the lack of a significant association between age and impostor phenomenon prevalence in this study.

While Piaget's Concrete Operational Stage suggests that children in this age range are beginning to understand abstract concepts, they may still struggle with complex self-evaluation (Piaget, 1952). However, research has shown that early signs of impostor phenomenon can manifest during late childhood and early adolescence as students start experiencing increased academic pressures, peer comparisons, and external validation (Gibson-Beverly & Schwartz, 2008; Kolligan & Sternberg, 2013).

This age range was chosen precisely because it represents a critical period where self-perceptions of competence begin to solidify. Children at this stage start developing achievement-related beliefs, which influence their future academic motivation and self-confidence (Eccles et al., 2015). By studying impostor tendencies at this point, we can gain insights into how early experiences shape self-doubt and how interventions can be designed to prevent long-term negative effects. Thus, while Piaget's theory suggests that children may not fully engage in complex self-evaluation, their growing awareness of competence and success makes them a crucial population for examining the early roots of impostor phenomenon.

Similarly, the study's exploration of sex differences did not yield a significant relationship with impostor phenomenon prevalence. Drawing from Albert Bandura's Social Cognitive Theory, which emphasizes the role of self-beliefs, observational learning, and social influences, the findings suggest that impostor feelings can impact individuals irrespective of sex due to societal norms and personal experiences. This aligns with the broader understanding that impostor phenomenon is shaped by individual psychological processes rather than demographic factors like sex.

Further analysis delved into the correlation between grade level and impostor phenomenon prevalence, revealing no statistically significant relationship. This observation resonates with Leon Festinger's Social Comparison Theory (1954), which posits that variations in impostor phenomenon prevalence across grade levels can be attributed to developmental readiness, exposure to challenging situations, differences in social contexts, and individual tendencies in self-comparison. Younger students may encounter fewer challenging situations and have different social dynamics compared to older students, contributing to differences in their experiences of impostor phenomenon.

Moreover, the study's examination of participants' General Weighted Average (GWA) did not reveal a significant relationship with impostor phenomenon prevalence. This finding is elucidated by Abraham Tesser and Edward Smith's Self-Evaluation Maintenance (SEM) Theory, which proposes that students manage their self-esteem through adjusting self-evaluations based on feedback, attributing success to external factors, and employing cognitive strategies. These mechanisms can lead to impostor feelings regardless of actual academic

performance, explaining the lack of a direct relationship between GWA and impostor phenomenon prevalence observed in the study.

However, there is a noteworthy association found with birth order ($p = .034$). The corresponding r-value of -.365 suggests moderate negative correlation, indicating that as birth order decreases, the prevalence of impostor phenomenon tends to increase but the relationship is not very strong. Specifically, first-borns demonstrate a higher prevalence of impostor phenomenon compared to last-borns.

This is connected to Adlerian Theory (1928). Adler proposed that birth order plays a significant role in shaping personality traits and behavior. He suggested that first-born children may tend to be more responsible, achievement-oriented, and dominant, as they initially receive undivided attention from parents and may act as leaders or authority figures within the family. Middle-born children, according to Adler, might develop characteristics such as competitiveness, sociability, and adaptability, as they navigate between older and younger siblings. Youngest-born children, on the other hand, may be more outgoing, creative, and rebellious, as they seek attention and strive to differentiate themselves from their older siblings. (Adler, 1928)

Program for the Prevalence of Impostor phenomenon

The researchers came up with the idea of creating an intervention titled Flare Up: Fighting Impostor Phenomenon *Fostering Learning, Acceptance, Resilience and Empowerment.*

CONCLUSION

The study reveals that intermediate grade level students experience occasional feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt. The variation in scores across different items highlights specific behavior associated with impostor phenomenon, such as doubts about replicating past successes. These feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt among intermediate grade level students may impact their ability to replicate past successes, potentially affecting their academic performance and overall well-being.

Based on the findings of this study, future research may explore the implementation

of the "Flare Up: Fighting Impostor phenomenon" intervention program within basic education. Teachers could incorporate activities into homeroom periods or advisory classes, fostering a supportive environment for students. Additionally, school-wide awareness campaigns could be organized to reduce the stigma surrounding impostor phenomenon and encourage students to seek help. Developing an online platform where students can access resources, engage in discussions, and track their progress would also enhance the program's reach. Furthermore, providing continuous training and support for teachers and staff would be essential to ensure the effective and sustained implementation of the program.

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