Impostor Syndrome

Idea In Short

Impostor syndrome affects high achievers across genders and industries, causing them to doubt their accomplishments despite clear evidence of competence. Understanding its origins and manifestations is the first step toward managing its impact on professional and personal development.

Impostor syndrome (also known as impostor phenomenon, fraud syndrome or the impostor experience) is a concept describing individuals who are marked by an inability to internalize their accomplishments and a persistent fear of being exposed as a fraud. The term was coined in 1978 by clinical psychologists Pauline R. Clance and Suzanne A. Imes. Despite external evidence of their competence, those exhibiting this syndrome remain convinced that they are frauds and do not deserve the success they have achieved. Proof of success is dismissed as luck, timing, or as a result of deceiving others into thinking they are more intelligent and competent than they really are. According to economist and blogger Kate Bahn, the term Imposter Syndrome first appeared in 1978, when:

> a pair of psychologists detected this phenomenon ‘in high-achieving women.'

According to Kate, there are many high-achieving women in higher education, but this sector is far from a level playing field. Gender and race-based discrimination persist, despite policies designed to eliminate them. While early research focused on the prevalence among high-achieving women, impostor syndrome has been found to affect both men and women, in roughly equal numbers. In its mildest forms, Imposter Syndrome can manifest itself in feelings of uncertainty and self-doubt. In its more extreme forms, Imposter Syndrome can destroy careers. In the management sphere, there is no magic bullet to expunge this condition, but that the condition can be reduced, and even work to a new manager's benefit. The most effective option is to discuss the topic with other individuals early on in the career path. Mentors can discuss experiences where impostor syndrome was prevalent. Most people who experience impostor syndrome are unaware that others feel inadequate as well.

Once the situation is addressed, victims no longer feel alone in their negative experience. Making a list of accomplishments, positive feedback and success stories will also aid to manage impostor syndrome. Finally, developing a strong support system that provides feedback on performance and has discussions about impostor syndrome on a regular basis is imperative for those experiencing this syndrome.

Summary

Addressing impostor syndrome early through mentorship, self-reflection, and peer support can reduce its impact. Building a network that regularly discusses performance and shared experiences helps individuals recognise they are not alone in feeling inadequate.