

**NAME:** Chinyelu Iwenofu, chinyelu.i.iwenofu@vanderbilt.edu

**PI:** Kaczurkin, Antonia

**First theme choice:** Clinical/Behavioral/Intervention

### ***Hope for the Future Can Reduce Anxiety, Perfectionism, and Feelings of Imposter Syndrome***

**Authors:** Chinyelu I. Iwenofu, Randolph M. Dupont, Antonia N. Kaczurkin

**Introduction:** Hope plays a significant role in reducing anxious and depressive symptoms, which are associated with feelings of imposter syndrome and perfectionism (2). Prior studies have shown that high levels of anxiety are associated with more severe imposter syndrome and perfectionism, while high levels of hope are associated with lower levels of anxiety(1,6,5,3,4). However, the current literature provides no information on how hope impacts the severity of an individual's imposter syndrome, and the findings on hope's relationship with perfectionism are mixed. Additionally, no studies have examined whether anxiety mediates these relationships. Thus, the objectives of this study were to examine 1) the relationship between hope and imposter syndrome, 2) the relationship between hope and perfectionism, and 3) whether trait anxiety, the trait of being anxious, mediates these relationships.

**Methods:** Data were pre-collected through surveying 272 individuals from a predominantly undergraduate population using a self-report online questionnaire; these data were analyzed using multiple regression and bootstrapped mediation analyses in SPSS statistics software. The Herth Hope Index (Cronbach's alpha = .87) was used to assess feelings of hope. Perfectionistic behaviors and thoughts were probed through the Perfectionistic Cognitions Inventory (alpha = .95). Imposter syndrome was measured using the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale. The State-Trait Anxiety Inventory's trait anxiety scale (alpha = .93) was used to examine trait anxiety, how anxious a person generally feels.

**Results:** Analyses showed that as feelings of hope increase, feelings of imposter syndrome and perfectionism decrease ( $p$ -values < .001). Additionally, trait anxiety was found to mediate the relationship between hope and imposter syndrome ( $CI = -1.66, -.98$ ), and between hope and perfectionism ( $CI = -2.93, -1.68$ ). In other words, greater levels of hope lead to less trait anxiety, which in turn, leads to lower endorsement of imposter syndrome or perfectionism. Together, these findings suggest that those with higher levels of hope tend to have lower levels of anxiety and as a result, they are less impacted by perfectionism and imposter syndrome.

**Discussion:** Consistent with previous findings, our results showed that high levels of anxiety are associated with more severe imposter syndrome and perfectionism. This study further demonstrated that increasing hope is instrumental in reducing levels of anxiety, imposter syndrome and perfectionism and also suggests that interventions aimed at increasing hope may be useful in reducing these maladaptive symptoms and feelings. Colleges may consider implementing interventions to increase hope, such as goal setting and progress tracking, early in students' college careers to mitigate the adverse consequences of low levels of hope.

**References, if any:** 1) Bernard, N. S., Dollinger, S. J., & Ramaniah, N. V. (2002). Applying the Big Five personality factors to the impostor phenomenon. *Journal of Personality Assessment*, 78(2), 321-333. [https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa7802\\_07](https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327752jpa7802_07); 2) Chang, E. C., Yu, T., Chang, O. D., & Hirsch, J. K. (2016). Hope and trauma: Examining a diathesis-stress model in predicting depressive and anxious symptoms in college students. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 96(2016), 52-54. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.paid.2016.02.060>; 3) Kawamura, K., Hunt, S., Frost, R. O., & DiBartolo, P. M. (2001). Perfectionism, Anxiety, and Depression: Are the Relationships Independent? *Cognitive Therapy and Research*, 25(3), 291-301. <https://doi.org/10.1023/A:1010736529013>; 4) McDermott, R. C., Cheng, H., Wright, C., Browning, B. R., Upton, A. W., & Sevig, T. D. (2015). Adult attachment dimensions and college student distress. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 43(6), 822-852. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011000015575394>; 5) Morgan-Lowes, K. L., Clarke, P. J., Hoiles, K. J., Shu, C. Y., Watson, H. J., Dunlop, P. D., & Egan, S. J. (2019). The relationships between perfectionism, anxiety and depression across time in paediatric eating disorders. *Eating Behaviors*, 34(2019), 101305. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.eatbeh.2019.101305>; 6) Tigranyan, S., Byington, D. R., Liupakorn, D., Hicks, A., Lombardi, S., Mathis, M., & Rodolfa, E. (2020). Factors related to the impostor phenomenon in psychology doctoral students. *Training and Education in Professional Psychology*. <https://doi.org/10.1037/tep0000321>

**Keywords:**

Hope, Imposter syndrome, Perfectionism