TO STUDY THE EFFECTS OF PARENTIFICATION ON IMPOSTER SYNDROME AND IDENTITY DISTRESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of the Degree of M.A. Psychology (clinical and counselling) of MIER College of Education (Autonomous), is an authentic record of my own research work carried out under the supervision of Dr Priya Choudhary.

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List of Abbreviations

APA	American Psychological Association
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
BIPS	Brief Impostor Phenomenon Scale
BSI-18	Brief Symptoms Inventory–18
CBT	Cognitive Behavioural Therapy
CI	Confidence Interval
CIPS	Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale
RSES	Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale
SD	Standard Deviation
SEM	Structural Equation Modelling
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
STEM	Science, Technology, Engineering, and Mathematics
YIS	Young Imposter Scale

ABSTRACT

The transition to college represents a critical developmental phase during which students are expected to explore their identities, establish autonomy, and navigate heightened academic and social demands. For students with histories of parentification — a family dynamic involving role reversal wherein children assume adult-like emotional or instrumental responsibilities — this period may be particularly challenging. The present study was designed to investigate the effects of parentification on imposter syndrome and identity distress among college students, and to examine the mediating role of parentification in the relationship

between imposter syndrome and identity distress.

A quantitative cross-sectional correlational research design was employed. The sample comprised 150 college students (52% female, 48% male) aged 18–25 years, recruited through purposive sampling from urban academic institutions. Three psychometrically validated self-report instruments were administered: the Parentification Scale (PS; Mika et al., 1987), the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS; Clance, 1985), and the Identity Distress Survey (IDS; Berman et al., 2004). Data were analysed using SPSS and PROCESS MACRO (Model 4).

Results revealed a strong and statistically significant positive correlation between imposter syndrome and identity distress ($r = .64$, $p < .01$). Regression analysis confirmed that imposter syndrome was a robust predictor of identity distress ($\beta = .64$, $t = 10.15$, $p < .001$), accounting for approximately 41% of the variance ($R^2 = .41$). In contrast, parentification did not significantly correlate with either imposter syndrome ($r = .03$, $p > .05$) or identity distress ($r = .09$, $p > .05$), and the mediation analysis revealed a non-significant indirect effect ($ab = .003$, 95% Boot CI [−.020, .042]), indicating that parentification does not mediate the imposter syndrome–identity distress relationship.

These findings highlight imposter syndrome as a primary psychological pathway to identity distress in college students. The study carries significant implications for campus mental health services, counselling psychologists, and educational policymakers, underscoring the need for targeted imposter syndrome interventions — including cognitive-behavioural approaches, peer mentoring programs, and identity-focused therapeutic strategies — to reduce identity-related distress and promote psychological well-being among emerging

adults. Future research should employ longitudinal designs, culturally adapted measures, and multi-mediator structural equation models to further illuminate these complex developmental relationships.

Keywords*: Parentification, Imposter Syndrome, Identity Distress, College Students, Mediation Analysis, Emerging Adulthood.*

CHAPTER-I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 INTRODUCTION

The transition to college life marks a significant developmental milestone in a young person's life, as it often brings both newfound independence and increased responsibility. For many students, this period is characterized by exploration, self-discovery, and the formation of identity. However, not all college students experience this phase equally. Those who have faced parentification in their earlier years may struggle with additional psychological burdens that affect their academic, emotional, and social functioning especially for college students, these challenges may become evident as they adjust to a new environment that demands independence and self-reliance. Students who have previously taken on adult-like responsibilities within their families might find it difficult to balance personal goals with academic and social expectations and this struggle can heighten feelings of self-doubt and confusion about their identity, making them vulnerable to impostor syndrome and identity distress. During the college years, students are expected to make crucial life decisions about careers, relationships, and personal beliefs however, those burdened by early caregiving roles may struggle to separate their own identity from family responsibilities.

The inability to establish clear boundaries between self and others can lead to internal conflict, emotional exhaustion, and identity confusion. moreover, for students with a history of parentification, these stressors may intensify feelings of incompetence and anxiety. They might find it difficult to seek help or express vulnerability due to their learned habit of self-reliance and emotional suppression and consequently, their psychological well-being and academic performance can be significantly affected. Understanding the effects of parentification on imposter syndrome and identity distress is crucial, particularly in the context of college students, who represent a population at risk for mental health difficulties. This constant pressure to achieve perfection can trigger imposter feelings especially in competitive academic environments leading to chronic stress, fear of failure, and avoidance of challenges (Parkman, 2016). College students therapeutic strategies to reduce Identity related distress and promote psychological well-being among emerging

adults. Future research should employ longitudinal design, culturally adapted measures, and multi-mediator structural equation models of further illuminate these complex developmental relationship.

1.2 PARENTIFICATION

Parentification refers to the transition to college life that marks a significant developmental milestone in a young person's life, as it often involves role reversal within the family, where a child assumes adult-like responsibilities emotionally or instrumentally to meet the needs of parents or siblings (Hooper, 2007). Although it can sometimes foster maturity and empathy, excessive or prolonged parentification can lead to psychological distress, identity confusion, and low self-worth. College students who experienced parentification often enter higher education with a sense of duty, guilt, or over-responsibility carried from their family systems. They may feel compelled to take care of others, suppress their own needs, and overachieve to gain validation. This emotional pattern often contributes to the development of imposter syndrome, a psychological experience where college students doubt their competence and fear being exposed as a "fraud" despite evident success (Clance & Imes, 1978). For parentified college students, the constant pressure to meet unrealistic expectations—both internal and external—can reinforce feelings of inadequacy, leading them to believe their accomplishments are undeserved or based on luck rather than ability. In addition, parentified college students often face difficulties in forming a stable sense of self, resulting in identity distress—a state of confusion, uncertainty, and conflict regarding one's personal goals, values, and roles (Berman et al., 2004).

Parentification has been increasingly recognized in psychological literature as a subtle yet powerful form of role reversal that can have long-term implications for mental health and identity development. While some individuals may perceive early responsibility as fostering maturity and competence, research suggests that chronic and unacknowledged parentification may lead to emotional burden, identity confusion, and psychological distress in later life.

These effects often become more pronounced during emerging adulthood, particularly among college students, as this developmental stage involves critical identity exploration, autonomy, and self-definition. While occasional responsibility may be developmentally beneficial, chronic parentification, especially when it is not recognized or

appreciated, can be detrimental. Emotional parentification is considered particularly harmful, as it places the child in a psychologically demanding position without adequate emotional resources or support. Such children often suppress their own needs to meet the expectations of others, leading to difficulties in emotional regulation, boundary formation, and self-concept clarity. Parentification is more commonly observed in families experiencing stressors such as marital conflict, mental illness, substance abuse, financial instability, or single-parent households. Cultural factors may also influence the normalization of child responsibility, making parentification less visible yet deeply internalized.

As a result, individuals may not consciously identify their experiences as problematic, even when they continue to impact psychological functioning in adulthood. In recent years, there has been growing interest in understanding how early family dynamics contribute to internal psychological experiences such as impostor phenomenon and identity distress. Both constructs are particularly relevant in academic and professional contexts, where individuals are expected to perform, self-evaluate, and establish a coherent sense of self. College students who have experienced parentification may struggle with feelings of inadequacy, self-doubt, and uncertainty about their identity, despite objective achievements.

Parentification is a complex family dynamic that can shape an individual's emotional and psychological development well into adulthood. While some degree of responsibility may foster resilience, chronic and emotionally burdensome parentification can compromise identity development and mental well-being, particularly among college students navigating academic and personal transitions.

1.2.1 Types of parentifications:

Parentification manifests in two primary forms, each with distinct characteristics and developmental implications, the two main types of parentifications are Instrumental parentification and emotional parentification.

Jurkovic (1997) distinguishes between instrumental and emotional parentification, each of which related with different consequences such as adult personality and future relationships.

Instrumental parentification: Instrumental parentification applies to the situations where children are assigned duties regarding functional tasks, such as running errands, cooking, clearing bills, and looking after the whole household chores. This subtype is majorly found in family systems when it occurs in isolation, wherein one or both of the caregivers are unable or impaired in a way that they perform these duties because of some illness or other causes, such as needing to work to keep the family's finances. This type of parentification is considered to be the least detrimental of the two subtypes, as it can promote a sense of achievement or competence in the child if daily parental encouragement and appreciation is accessible.

Emotional parentification: Emotional parentification is more destructive than the instrumental parentification as in this the infant is tending to meet a parents' particular emotional or psychological need. For example, during periods of psychological distress, the child may be required to measure and respond to the parent's emotional needs, act as a confident and unwavering means of help, and provide intervention. This is more commonly seen in the family wherein a parent suffers from a severe disorder or attachment disorders which often occurs together with instrumental parentification. The parent is in constant need for emotional and psychological help to cope with his or her own deficits. This type of parentification is more closely correlated negative effects for the parentified child as a result of the inconsistency between parental expectations and the development of the child (Hooper, 2007a). Aetiology of Parentification in children Most investigators do not consider the parentification method to be necessarily pathological.

1.3 IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Imposter syndrome involves persistent self-doubt and fear of being exposed as "not good enough", even when one's achievements are evident. Students who were parentified often internalize the belief that they must constantly prove their worth or succeed to gain acceptance (Clance&Imes,1978) impostor syndrome is particularly relevant because parentification may contribute to impostor feelings. Parentified individuals often grow up receiving validation only for fulfilling responsibilities rather than for who they are. As a result:

- Self-worth becomes performance-based
- Success is never felt as “enough”
- Achievements are accompanied by guilt and fear of failure

This dynamic may continue into college life, where students doubt whether they truly deserve academic success. Impostor syndrome is closely linked to identity distress, as both involve confusion about one’s abilities, roles, and sense of self. Students experiencing identity distress may Feel uncertain about their career path and abilities Struggle to integrate achievements into their self-concept Experience heightened impostor feelings due to lack of a stable identity. Impostor syndrome is believed to originate from early developmental experiences, including family dynamics, parenting styles, and internalized expectations. Family environments characterized by high expectations, inconsistent validation, or role confusion—such as parentification may contribute significantly to the development of impostor feelings.

Parentified individuals often receive recognition for responsibility and performance rather than emotional expression. Consequently, they may internalize the belief that their worth is conditional upon achievement. This conditional self-worth can persist into adulthood, manifesting as chronic self-doubt and fear of failure, even in objectively successful individuals. Imposter syndrome is commonly found among students, professionals, and high achievers who feel that they do not genuinely deserve their success. These individuals may believe that they are “faking” their competence and worry about being exposed as inadequate. Research shows that imposter syndrome can lead to emotional distress, reduced self-esteem, academic anxiety, and avoidance of new opportunities. Research indicates that students experiencing impostor feelings often report higher levels of anxiety, stress, depression, academic burnout and reduced self-confidence. Despite strong academic performance, these students may experience psychological distress that interferes with learning, participation and overall well-being. Therefore, understanding imposter syndrome is essential for examining its impact on young adults in educational settings. Impostor syndrome is especially prevalent among college and university students, as this period involves identity exploration, academic competition, and increased performance expectations. Students often compare themselves to peers, which intensifies feelings of inadequacy.

Examining impostor syndrome in relation to parentification and identity distress can provide valuable insights into how early caregiving roles affect self-perception, competence beliefs, and identity formation during emerging adulthood.

1.4 IDENTITY DISTRESS

Identity distress refers to the confusion or difficulty a student faces while trying to understand who they are, what they have, and what they want to become. According Erikson's theory, late adolescence and early adulthood are very important stages for identity development. When students enter college, they expected to explore new roles and form clear sense of self. However, students who experienced parentification often struggle with this process. Because they were used to talking adult responsibilities at a young age, they may feel unsure about their personal goals, interests, and future direction. They may also base their self-worth on taking care of others, rather than focusing on their own needs. This inner confusion creates identity distress, where students become uncertain about who they truly are versus who they feel pressure to. For those with a background of parentification, these stressors can feel magnified. They may struggle with time management because of perfectionist tendencies. They may avoid seeking help, believing they must handle problems alone. They often experience emotional exhaustion and self-doubt, leading to poor self-esteem and psychological burnout. This makes them particularly vulnerable to imposter syndrome and identity distress, affecting both mental health and academic performance. College students represent a population particularly vulnerable to identity distress due to the convergence of developmental, academic, and psychosocial challenges.

The college environment demands increased autonomy, decision-making, and self-definition, often for the first time. Students are required to make critical choices regarding career paths, academic

specialization, relationships, and personal values, frequently under conditions of uncertainty and performance pressure. For many students, this period coincides with separation from family and familiar support systems, leading to increased reliance on internal resources for identity consolidation. When students feel ill-equipped to manage these demands, identity distress may intensify. High expectations, fear of failure, and comparison with peers can further exacerbate uncertainty about self-worth and

competence, deepening identity-related distress. Importantly, identity distress has been associated with feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt, which may overlap with constructs such as impostor syndrome. When students lack a coherent identity, they may struggle to internalize their achievements, leading to persistent feelings of being a "fraud" despite objective success.

Understanding identity distress is crucial in examining the psychological well-being of college students, particularly those with histories of parentification. Identity distress serves as an important indicator of developmental disruption and emotional struggle during a critical life stage. In the present study, identity distress is conceptualized as a key outcome variable that reflects the extent to which early role reversals and excessive responsibility may interfere with the formation of a coherent and stable identity. Identity distress is crucial in the present study as it provides insight into how early family dynamics, such as parentification, influence later psychological outcomes among college students. By examining identity distress alongside impostor syndrome, the study aims to provide a comprehensive understanding of how early family dynamics influence self-perception, emotional functioning, and identity development in college students.

This focus contributes to existing literature by emphasizing the importance of addressing identity-related difficulties in educational and counselling settings. Early identification and intervention can support healthier identity development, improve self-confidence, and enhance overall well-being among college students.

1.5 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK:

The study is likely to be primarily guided by Family Systems Theory and Attachment Theory, with a focus on how disruptions in early development (parentification) influence later psychological outcomes (impostor syndrome and identity distress).

1.**Family System Theory and Role Reversal**

Family Systems Theory posits that the family is an emotional unit and the behaviour of individual members is best understood in the context of family dynamics and roles. Healthy family functioning requires clear boundaries and a stable power hierarchy, where parents are the caregivers and children are the recipients of care. Role reversal occurs when the expected roles within the family system are inverted or disrupted. In healthy family systems, there is a clear hierarchical structure where adults provide care, guidance, and

emotional support to children. Role reversal disrupts this natural order by placing children in positions typically reserved for adults, thereby violating the fundamental principle of appropriate developmental boundaries.

2**. Attachment Theory**

Developed by John Bowlby and Mary Ainsworth, this theory emphasizes the importance of a secure attachment figure in early childhood for healthy emotional and self-development. Secure attachment fosters a positive "internal working model" of the self as worthy and competent.

3. **Impostor Phenomenon**

Originally termed the "impostor phenomenon" by Clance and Imes (1978), it is described as an internal experience of intellectual phoniness, where individuals are unable to internalize their achievements and live in fear of being exposed as a fraud. Empirical research has established a moderate correlation between childhood parentification and impostor feelings in adulthood. The sense of inauthenticity and inadequacy learned in childhood, where the child performs tasks, they feel unqualified for, persists into adulthood.s

4. **Identity Formation Theory**

Identity development involves exploring different roles and integrating various aspects of the self into a cohesive identity (e.g., Erik Erikson's stages of psychosocial development, or James Marcia's identity statuses). This process requires autonomy and self-exploration. Parentification impedes "normal" development and the process of individuation and autonomy. The child develops an "adapted self" to please others, sacrificing their own needs and identity formation. This can lead to an impaired or "distressed" sense of identity in young adulthood.

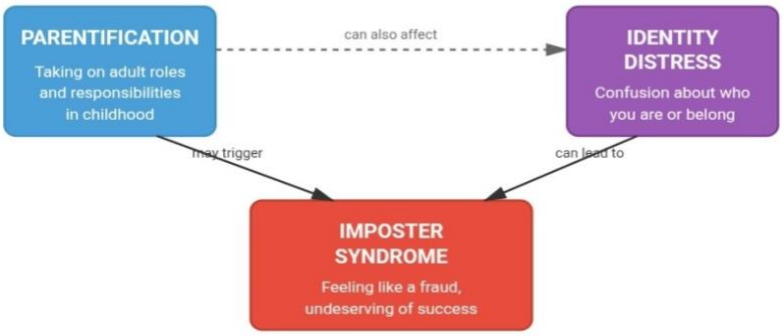


Figure 1. 1Model Shows Relationship between Parentification, Imposter Syndrome and Identity Distress.

1.6 CONCEPTUAL MODEL PATHWAY FROM PARENTIFICATION TO IDENTITY DISTRESS

The pathway from parentification to distress involves a role reversal where kids take on adult duties (instrumental/emotional), leading to stress, burnout, anxiety, depression, guilt, perfectionism, and difficulty with boundaries/relationships, often mediated by poor parent-child relationships, with potential protective factors like support buffering the impact but leaving long-term challenges in self-regulation and healthy connection.

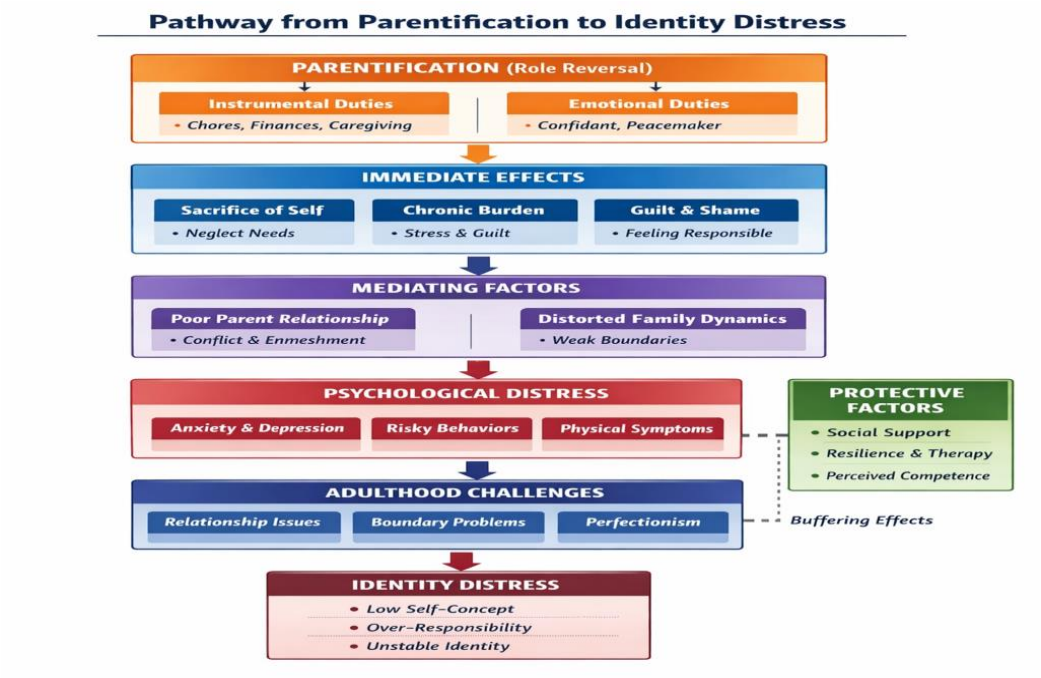


Figure 1.2 Conceptual Pathway from Parentification to Identity Distress

1.7 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

"A STUDY ON PARENTIFICATION, IMPOSTER SYNDROME AND IDENTITY DISTRESS ON COLLEGE GOING STUDENTS"

1.8 NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The college years represent a critical phase of psychological development, where students are expected to form a stable identity, build academic confidence and transition into independent adulthood. However, this developmental process is frequently disrupted by unresolved childhood experiences. One such experience is parentification a family dynamic in which a child is compelled to assume adult caregiving responsibilities that are inappropriate to their developmental stage. Parentification deprives children of the psychological space necessary for healthy self-development. When these individuals enter college, the consequences of such early role reversal become increasingly visible. Having spent their formative years prioritizing others over themselves, parentified students often struggle to recognize their own worth and competence, making them particularly vulnerable to Imposter Syndrome a pattern of persistent self-doubt, attribution of success to luck rather than ability, and a constant fear of being exposed as inadequate despite demonstrated achievement. Equally significant is the effect of parentification on identity formation. Since parentified children are denied the autonomy and self-exploration essential to building a coherent sense of self, they frequently enter college already experiencing Identity Distress deep psychological discomfort arising from confusion and conflict surrounding one's values, goals, beliefs, and personal identity. Although each of these constructs has received independent scholarly attention, empirical research examining parentification as a contributing factor to both imposter syndrome and identity distress specifically among college-going students remains limited. Addressing this gap is essential, as it can open pathways for early psychological intervention and strengthen mental health support systems within academic institutions. Therefore, the present study aims to examine the impact of parentification on imposter syndrome and identity distress among college-going students.

1.9 OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Parentification: Parentification refers to a family dynamic in which a child assumes developmentally inappropriate caregiving roles — either emotional, such as providing psychological support to parents, or instrumental, such as managing household responsibilities.

Imposter Syndrome: Imposter Syndrome refers to a persistent psychological pattern in which an individual chronically doubts their own achievements, attributes success to luck or external factors rather than personal ability, and fears being exposed as incompetent despite consistent evidence of capability. In this study, imposter syndrome is a dependent variable, measured through a validated self-report instrument assessing the frequency and intensity of impostor feelings in an academic setting.

Identity Distress: Identity Distress refers to significant and sustained psychological discomfort arising from confusion, uncertainty, or conflict surrounding core aspects of one's personal identity, including values, beliefs, life goals, and sense of self.

1.10 OBJECTIVES OF THE RESEARCH:

1.To study the effect of parentification on identity distress.

2.To study the effect of imposter syndrome on identity distress.

3.To study the relationship between parentification, imposter syndrome and identity distress.

4.To study the mediating effect of parentification in relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress.

1.11 HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY:

HA1. There will be a significant effect of parentification on identity distress in college students.

HA2. There will be a significant effect of imposter syndrome on identity distress in college students.

HA3. There will be a positive relationship between parentification, imposter syndrome and identity distress in college students.

HA4. There will be a significant mediating impact of parentification in the relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress

1.12 DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

- The study was limited to college-going students and does not include school students, working professionals, or older adults.
- Data was collected only from selected location/college.
- The study focuses solely on quantitative data. No interviews or qualitative methods were included to keep the research concise and within time constraints.
- Participants were limited to specific age group typical of college students.

CHAPTER-II

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The exploration of parentification, imposter syndrome, and psychological distress has garnered substantial attention from researchers across diverse geographical contexts and theoretical frameworks. This comprehensive review synthesizes empirical investigations, theoretical developments and conceptual advancements that have shaped our understanding of these interconnected psychological phenomena. The literature encompasses studies conducted both within national boundaries and across international settings, reflecting the universal yet culturally nuanced nature of these experiences.

The different studies are as under:

2.2 REVIEW OF RELATED STUDIES

Castro et al. (2004) examined the relationship between parentification and the impostor phenomenon among graduate-level college students. Using a cross-sectional quantitative design with a sample of 213 participants, the study employed standardized self-report scales including the Parentification Questionnaire and the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale and result indicated that higher levels of parentification significantly predicted increased impostor feelings, with a moderate positive correlation ($r = .37$, $p < .001$). The findings suggest that early family role reversals, where children assume emotional or instrumental responsibilities typically reserved for parents, may disrupt the development of self-worth and authenticity in adulthood.

Cope-Watson et al. (2010) examined the Imposter Syndrome among women doctoral students through a qualitative self-study using autoethnography. Grounded in Clance and Imes's (1978) concept of the impostor phenomenon, the study analysed eight months of email conversations to explore how their experiences reflected persistent impostor feelings. The thematic analysis revealed three central themes—fear, family, and fellowship—highlighting how emotional vulnerability, familial expectations, and peer support shape doctoral students' struggles to internalize academic success. This study expands the literature by illustrating the deeply personal and relational nature of impostor experiences among graduate students and emphasizes the role of supportive academic communities in mitigating these challenges

Samuoli et al. (2015) explored the relationship between identity distress and mental health issues among college students. An online survey assessed whether students had been diagnosed with or treated for anxiety, depression, substance use, or other mental health problems in the past year. It also measured identity distress in areas such as long-term goals, friendships, career choice, sexual orientation, religion, values, and group loyalties. Students who reported a mental health diagnosis or treatment showed higher levels of identity distress. Findings also revealed that mental health issues strongly predicted distress related to long-term goals and friendships.

Cho & Lee (2019) explored the effects of childhood parentification on adult depressive symptoms in a sample of South Korean college students (N = 316; ages 18–29; 66.1% female). Participants completed retrospective parentification ratings that captured dimensions (instrumental vs. emotional), age of onset, duration, and perceived fairness, alongside standardized measures of depressive symptoms. Results showed that earlier onset and longer duration of parentified roles were significantly associated with higher depressive symptom scores in adulthood; however, when timing and duration were controlled, perceived unfairness of the parentification experience remained the only dimension that significantly predicted depressive symptoms.

Canning et al. (2019) examined how perceived classroom competition influences the daily psychological experiences of first-generation (FG) college students, particularly in STEM learning environments. The study highlight that STEM courses are often structured around competitive norms that emphasize comparison, ranking, and high performance. Such environments may be especially challenging for firs-generation(FG) students, who typically value collaboration and communality more strongly than their continuing-generation peers.

Schubert et al. (2019) examined the relationship between the impostor phenomenon, self-esteem level, and self-esteem instability. In a sample of 304 undergraduates, impostor scores were strongly negatively correlated with self-esteem ($r = -.62$) and positively correlated with both self-reported ($r = .32$) and statistical instability ($r = .57$). Regression results showed that individuals with low self-esteem were more vulnerable to impostor feelings, while those with high but unstable self-esteem also experienced elevated impostorism. The study highlights that both low self-esteem and fluctuations in self-worth

are significant predictors of impostor tendencies, emphasizing the central role of self-esteem problems in the phenomenon.

Yaffe (2020) explored the relationship between parenting styles and impostor phenomenon among adult female students, with self-esteem as a mediating variable. Data collected from 182 female education students were analysed using mediation and correlation analyses. Results indicated that low self-esteem was strongly and inversely correlated with impostor syndrome scores, suggesting that self-esteem plays a crucial role in moderating impostor feelings. Furthermore, self-esteem mediated the relationship between both maternal and paternal parenting styles and impostors, highlighting the significance of early parental influence on self-concept development.

Navarro et al. (2020) investigated the relationship between maternal and paternal parenting styles and impostor syndrome among adult female students, focusing on the mediating role of self-esteem. The sample comprised of 182 female students (Mage = 27.85, SD = 7.25) who completed the Parental Bonding Instrument (PBI), the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS), and the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES). Structural equation modelling (SEM) analyses revealed that parental care was linked to lower impostor feelings through higher self-esteem, whereas paternal overprotection was related to greater impostor feelings through reduced self-esteem. These findings suggest that parental care and overprotection influence impostor feelings indirectly by shaping self-esteem.

Levant et al. (2020) examined the impostor phenomenon among third-year medical students during their transition into clinical training. Using a cross-sectional survey design, the researchers assessed impostor feelings and perceived stress through the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale and the Perceived Stress Scale. The results indicated that a considerable number of students experienced moderate to frequent levels of impostors during this transitional phase. Female students reported significantly higher levels of impostor feelings and perceived stress compared to male students. Furthermore, impostors showed a strong positive correlation with perceived stress across both genders, highlighting the substantial emotional burden associated with clinical training. Overall, the study underscores the close relationship between impostor feelings and psychological stress within highly demanding academic and professional training contexts.

Eddleman et al. (2021) explored the relationship between perfectionism and academic achievement among adolescents over time. Previous research has mostly focused on university students and relied on short-term data or self-reported grades. To address these gaps, 604 Canadian students were followed from Grade 7 to Grade 12, with teachers providing academic ratings. Results showed a positive link between academic achievement and perfectionism. Students with higher grades were more likely to develop both self-oriented and socially prescribed perfectionism at each stage. The strongest link appeared during the transition from middle to high school. Overall, the findings indicate that academic success led to increase perfection, which could heighten adolescents stress level.

Berman et al. (2021) examined the associations between identity distress, psychological symptoms, and university adjustment (academic, social, and personal-emotional) among undergraduate students in Spain and Canada. The study sample included 241 Spanish students (Mage = 19.0, SD = 1.6; 84% female) and 531 Canadian students (Mage = 19.8, SD = 2.2; 82% female). Using standardized self-report measures, the researchers explored how contextual differences influenced students' adjustment experiences. Results indicated significant positive relationships between identity distress, psychological problems, and maladjustment across academic, social, and emotional domains.

Hajjar (2021) investigated the effects of past and ongoing destructive emotional parentification and perceived unfairness on mental health and identity development among Lebanese university students. Using a convenience sample of 157 students recruited from Haigazian University (n = 71), Arab Open University (n = 45), and online platforms (n = 41), participants completed the Filial Responsibility Scale–Adult (FRS-A), Identity Distress Scale (IDS), and Brief Symptoms Inventory–18 (BSI-18). A one-way ANOVA revealed that participants who reported ongoing caregiving exhibited significantly higher levels of mental health symptoms and identity distress compared to those who reported low levels of parentification.

Rachel et al. (2021) reviewed and meta-analysed longitudinal research on the relationship between identity development and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and eating disorders—collectively referred to as social-emotional disorders—during adolescence and emerging adulthood. A total of 20 studies involving 13,787 participants (mean age = 14.48 years) were included. Most studies were rated as fair (55%) or poor (45%) in quality.

Narrative synthesis revealed bidirectional relationships between identity synthesis/confusion and symptoms of depression, anxiety, and eating disorders. However, meta-analyses and meta-regressions (based on nine studies) found no significant associations between identity synthesis/confusion and symptoms of anxiety or depression. The findings highlight the need for more high-quality longitudinal research to clarify these relationships.

Rosenthal et al. (2021) examined the prevalence of the Impostor Phenomenon (IP) among first-year medical students and its relationship with psychological variables. Using the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS), the study found very high levels of IP (87%) among rematriculating students. IP was also shown to increase significantly by the end of the first academic year. Higher IP scores were associated with lower self-compassion, lower sociability, lower self-esteem, more interpersonal difficulties, and higher neuroticism/anxiety and loneliness. The study found gender differences, with women scoring higher on IP than men. This confirms earlier patterns in medical education, where high-achieving environments intensify impostor feelings

Naser et al. (2022) investigated the relationship between impostor phenomenon (IP) and self-esteem among medical students in an international university setting. The study was conducted at a European medical college located in the Middle East, which hosts a culturally diverse student population representing 28 nationalities. Using a cross-sectional design, 290 medical students (58.3% female; median age = 19 years) completed Clance's Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) and Rosenberg's Self-Esteem Scale (RSES) to assess the prevalence and correlates of impostor feelings. Results revealed that 45.2% of participants traits indicative of Imposter Phenomenon IP, while 18.6% low self-esteem. No significant differences were found across gender, age, academic year, or prior higher education experience. The findings suggest that low self-esteem serves as a key predictor of impostor tendencies, while cultural background may influence students' self-perception and adjustment within international educational contexts.

Bolton et al. (2022) explored impostor syndrome (IS) and its developmental roots by examining the relationship between recalled parenting styles and adult impostor feelings. Participants included professional dancers, meteorologists, and a general-population sample. Using standardized self-report measures, the study found that impostor feelings

were positively correlated with controlling and intrusive parenting during adolescence and negatively correlated with authenticity, mindfulness, and self-compassion. These findings suggest that impostor syndrome can emerge from early family environments characterized by conditional acceptance and high parental control, which contribute to internalized self-doubt and inauthentic self-concept formation.

Khan et al. (2022) highlight Imposter Syndrome (IS) as a growing psychological concern among medical students in Bangladesh, marked by persistent self-doubt and difficulty accepting achievements. Using data from 500 students measured through the Young Imposter Scale (YIS), the study applies machine learning to improve IS prediction—an approach less explored in existing literature. The researchers compared three models: neural networks, random forests, and ensemble learning. Findings showed that ensemble learning achieved the highest accuracy (96.4%), slightly outperforming neural networks (96.3%) and random forests (93.5%). This supports previous evidence that ensemble methods often enhance predictive performance. The study also identified key predictors within the models—Y7 emerged as the most important feature in the neural network model, while Y2 ranked highest in the random forest. By pinpointing influential factors, the research adds to current literature emphasizing the need for early identification of IS symptoms.

Roach et al. (2022) conducted a focus-group based evaluation to explore how the Imposter Phenomenon (IP) influences college students' academic experiences and perceptions of future opportunities. Using the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale and a Delphi-based focus group, the researchers studied P5 pharmacy interns at Ohio Northern University. Findings showed that high-IP scorers frequently compared their achievements with peers and experienced internalized feelings of inadequacy. Although most participants reported that Imposter Phenomenon (IP) did not significantly affect academic performance or future career perceptions, high-IP students noted that it negatively impacted peer relationships. Students identified support systems—especially peers within the same field—as the most effective coping strategy. The authors recommend conducting similar studies on a larger student population to better understand IP's academic and career implications

Khan et al. (2022) examined the use of machine learning to predict Imposter Syndrome (IS) among medical students in Bangladesh. Using a cross-sectional design with 500

participants, the researchers applied three predictive models—neural networks, random forest, and ensemble learning—to identify IS based on the YIS scale. Their results showed that the ensemble model achieved the highest accuracy (96.4%), outperforming the neural network (96.3%) and random forest (93.5%) approaches. The study also highlighted key predictive features, with being most influential in the neural network model and ranking highest in the random forest model.

Ruziana et al. (2023) explore the concept and outcomes of parentification, and (ii) identify factors that make it adaptive for children. A narrative review of 61 studies was conducted using sources such as Scopus, PubMed, Dimensions AI, and Google Scholar, along with reference tracking, using the keywords "parentification" and "parentification and children." The review followed the Literature Review Synthesis Process and the Scale for the Assessment of Narrative Review Article (SANRA). Findings suggest that parentification can be adaptive and empowering under certain conditions. Positive factors include emotional support, strong relationships with siblings and grandparents, clear delegation of age-appropriate roles by parents, parental validation, and children's positive perception of their caregiving roles.

Ménard et al. (2023) Examinedthe impostor phenomenon (IP) involves persistent self-doubt and the belief that one's success is undeserved, despite clear achievements. It is common among university and college students, especially women and marginalized groups. Research shows that IP is often linked to low self-esteem and poor mental health, while its relation to academic performance is mixed. These findings highlight the need to raise awareness and provide support for students experiencing IP. Further research is needed to better understand its causes and effects in academic settings.

Bews et al. (2023) explore the imposter phenomenon among Indigenous women working in academic libraries, focusing on how both internal experiences and external sociocultural pressures shape their feelings of inadequacy. The authors share personal narratives illustrating how their Indigenous identities intersect with professional roles, leading to heightened self-doubt. The study highlight that imposter syndrome is intensified by expectations—both self-imposed and externally imposed—to appear "more Indigenous" for academic legitimacy, representation, and hiring practices. This includes pressures to fit stereotypical Indigenous appearances or behaviours, especially amid increasing

institutional emphasis on hiring Indigenous staff and the growing scrutiny surrounding "pretendians.

Samuolis (2024) explored the link between psychological distress and identity distress among college students during a COVID-19–related campus lockdown. An online survey conducted 30 days after the lockdown began revealed that many students reported severe identity distress regarding long-term goals (42.1%), friendships (33.1%), and career choices (27.7%). Psychological distress significantly predicted identity distress across various domains, including long-term goals, career choice, friendships, values or beliefs, and group loyalties (all $p < 0.01$). Overall, psychological distress was a strong predictor of total identity distress ($B = 0.279$, $p < 0.01$). The findings highlight the importance for college clinicians and health professionals to assess identity distress during public health crises and to provide identity-focused interventions to support students' mental health and development.

Holden et al. (2024) explored the relationships among impostor syndrome, perfectionism, and stress in first- and continuing-generation college students. Participants were 388 students, including 184 (47.4%) first-generation students. Findings revealed that impostor syndrome and stress levels were similar across both groups. Socially prescribed perfectionism showed significant correlations with both impostor syndrome and stress among all participants. However, impostor syndrome was more strongly linked to stress among first-generation students. These results underscore the need for further research and highlight implications for promoting college student mental health and academic retention.

Jameel et al. (2024) examined the impact of parent–child relationships, parental autonomy support, and social support on students' mental well-being in the post-COVID-19 context. Results indicated that both social support ($\beta = 0.43$, $t = 7.57$, $p < .01$) and parental autonomy support ($\beta = 0.31$, $t = 5.016$, $p < .01$) were significantly and positively related to students' mental well-being. The study highlights the crucial role of supportive social and familial environments in promoting student mental health during and after crises such as the COVID-19 pandemic. Findings suggest that fostering strong parent–child relationships and autonomy-supportive parenting can serve as protective factors enhancing students' psychological resilience and overall well-being

Rinn et al. (2024) examined the relationship between online social comparison and the impostor phenomenon (IP) among undergraduate music education students. In the first phase, students completed measures of online social comparison, Facebook use, and the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale. Results showed that Facebook-based social comparison was the only significant predictor of IP, explaining 13.3% of the variance in impostor scores. In the second phase, focus groups revealed four themes: students compared themselves to peers online, used Facebook for professional purposes, experienced psychological effects from comparison, and often withdrew from social media to reduce negative impacts. The study highlights how online interactions influence students' identity development and well-being in music education programs.

Buathong et al. (2024) investigated the impostor phenomenon (IP), mental health, and coping strategies among medical students in Southern Thailand during the transition to online training. The study, conducted with 272 students, found a 46% prevalence of IP, indicating that nearly half of the participants experienced feelings of self-doubt despite objective achievements. Anxiety (14.1%) and depression (5.2%) were also present at notable levels. Students predominantly used confrontive coping, yet palliative coping, low self-esteem, higher anxiety, and stronger perceived social expectations significantly predicted greater IP levels. The authors concluded that IP is closely associated with poor mental health indicators and inadequate coping styles, emphasizing the need to strengthen self-esteem, promote adaptive coping strategies, and reduce unrealistic academic and social expectations among medical student.

Shin (2025) examined impostors among 80 graduate women in STEM programs across U.S. institutions. Findings revealed that 97.5% experienced at least moderate levels of impostor feelings. Regression analyses showed that impostors predicted poorer mental health, greater burnout, and higher dropout consideration but was unrelated to academic achievement (number of publications and GPA). These results highlight the psychological costs of impostors and suggest directions for future research and intervention.

Chaudhary et al. (2025) investigated the prevalence of the impostor phenomenon among 193 undergraduate nursing students enrolled at two nursing colleges in Chitwan, Nepal. Using a descriptive cross-sectional design and total enumerative sampling, the researchers assessed impostor experiences with the 20-item Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale. Their

findings showed that the majority of students experienced moderate levels of impostor phenomenon (56%), while 23.6% showed few characteristics, 18.8% experienced frequent impostor thoughts, and 1.6% reported intense experiences. Notably, first-year students demonstrated significantly higher impostor levels, as indicated by ANOVA results ($p = 0.001$). The authors concluded that awareness-building and confidence-enhancement programs are essential to help nursing students manage impostor feelings effectively.

2.3 RESEARCH GAP

Despite considerable scholarly attention to parentification, imposter syndrome and identity distress as separate constructs, research integrating all three variables within a single empirical framework remains scarce. While Castro et al. (2004) established a link between parentification and imposter feelings, and Hajjar (2021) explored parentification's effects on identity distress, no study has simultaneously examined parentification's direct effects on both imposter syndrome and identity distress among college students, nor has the mediating role of parentification in the imposter syndrome–identity distress relationship been adequately investigated. Moreover, the majority of existing studies have been conducted in Western cultural contexts, leaving Indian populations where family caregiving responsibilities are often culturally normalized significantly underrepresented in the literature. Prior research has predominantly focused on broad psychological outcomes such as anxiety, depression, and low self-esteem, with limited attention to self-concept–related constructs during emerging adulthood. The present study therefore addresses these gaps by empirically investigating parentification, imposter syndrome, and identity distress together within an Indian college student sample, contributing both theoretical advancement and culturally relevant insights to the field.

CHAPTER- III

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1 INTRODUCTION

Research methodology constitutes a systematic and scientific framework that guides the collection, measurement, and analysis of data to generate valid and reliable knowledge about psychological phenomena (Creswell, 2008). In psychological research, a well-defined methodology is essential to ensure that abstract constructs are operationalized accurately and examined through empirically sound procedures. The present study adopts a rigorous quantitative methodological approach to investigate the effects of parentification on impostor syndrome and identity distress among college students.

The methodology further emphasizes ethical rigor, statistical robustness, and cultural relevance. Data analysis is conducted using SPSS (Version 28.0), employing descriptive statistics, correlational analyses, and inferential testing to ensure comprehensive hypothesis testing. Through this structured methodological framework, the study aims to contribute meaningful empirical insights into how early family role distortions shape psychological functioning in emerging adults.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The present study employed a cross-sectional research design that includes college students of different age groups. This design allows for the systematic investigation of associations and impacts of parentification, impostor syndrome and identity distress.

3.2.1 Variables of the Study

The present study included following variables.

Independent Variable: Impostor Syndrome

Dependent Variable: Identity Distress

Mediating Variable: Parentification

3.2.2 Population

Population: Young adults (18–25 years) residing in Jammu and Kashmir were taken for the study.This population is considered appropriate as individuals in this developmental stage are actively engaged in identity formation and may experience psychological phenomena such as parentification, imposter syndrome, and identity distress.

Sample

The final sample comprised of 150 college students drawn from various academic disciplines across academic settings in Jammu and Kashmir. Both male and female participants were included to allow for demographic comparisons, with the sample consisting of 52% females and 48% males. The sample was restricted to students who were able to read and understand either Hindi or English. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and only those who provided informed consent were included

Inclusion/Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion:

- Young adults aged 18–25 years were taken for the study
- Residents of Jammu and Kashmir (≥ 2 years) were included.
- Those who were willing to provide voluntary informed consent were included for the study.

Exclusion:

- Individuals with a current psychiatric diagnosis or undergoing psychotropic medication, were not included.

3.2.3 Sample of the Study

The final sample comprised 150 college students drawn from various academic disciplines across academic settings in Jammu and Kashmir. Both male and female participants were included to allow for demographic comparisons, with the sample consisting of 52% females and 48% males. The sample was restricted to students who were able to read and understand either Hindi or English. Participation in the study was entirely voluntary, and only those who provided informed consent were included.

3.2.4 Data collection:

Data were collected using an online format through Google Forms to maximize accessibility among college students. The questionnaire included consent page, a demographic information sheet and the three standardized scales. A secure survey link was shared with participants through academic network and social platforms. Completing the survey required approximately 20-25 minutes. All participants were entirely voluntary and confidential throughout the data collection process.

3.3 TOOLS EMPLOYED AND THEIR DESCRIPTION

3.3.1 Parentification Questionnaire (PQ): The Parentification Questionnaire was developed by Jurkovic and Thirkield (1998) to assess the degree to which individuals assumed developmentally inappropriate caregiving roles within their family of origin during childhood and adolescence. It measures both instrumental parentification (such as managing household tasks and finances) and emotional parentification (such as providing psychological support to parents). The scale employs a self-report format with items rated on a Likert-type scale, with higher scores reflecting greater parentification experiences. It has good reliability and validity.

3.3.2 Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS): The Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale was developed by Clance (1985) to assess the frequency and intensity of impostor feelings in individuals. The scale comprises 20 items rated on a 5-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (not at all true) to 5 (very true), with total scores ranging from 20 to 100. Higher scores indicate more frequent and intense impostor experiences, including persistent self-doubt, attribution of success to luck, and fear of being exposed as incompetent. The CIPS has demonstrated strong internal consistency ($\alpha \approx .85–.96$) and good construct validity.

3.3.3 Identity Distress SCALE (IDS) The Identity Distress Survey was developed by Berman et al. (2004) to assess the degree of distress experienced in relation to identity-relevant domains during late adolescence and emerging adulthood. The scale measures subjective discomfort and confusion related to areas such as long-term goals, career choices, values and beliefs, friendships, sexual orientation, and group loyalties. Items are rated on a Likert-type scale, with higher scores indicating greater identity-related distress. The IDS has demonstrated good reliability ($\alpha \approx .80$).

3.4 STATISTICAL TECHNIQUES USED

- Descriptive statistics: Means, standard deviations, and frequencies were computed for all major variables and demographic characteristics.
- Inferential statistics: Pearson product–moment correlations were used to examine bivariate relationships among parentification, imposter syndrome, and identity distress.

- Regression analysis: Simple linear regression analyses were conducted to determine the extent to which imposter syndrome and parentification each predict identity distress among college students.
- Mediation analysis: Hayes' PROCESS Macro Model 4 in SPSS v28.0 was used to test the mediating role of parentification in the relationship between imposter variable) and identity distress (dependent variable).

CHAPTER- IV

ANALYSIS AND INTERPRTATION OF DATA

4.1 INTRODUCTION

The present study was conducted to examine the effect of parentification on imposter syndrome and identity distress among college students. In addition, the study aimed to explore the mediating role of imposter syndrome in the relationship between parentification and identity distress. The influence of demographic variables such as gender was also considered in understanding these relationships. A total of 150 participants completed the questionnaires used in the study. The data were analysed using descriptive statistics, correlation analysis and regression analysis to assess the relationships among the study variables. Furthermore, mediation analysis was conducted using PROCESS Macro (Hayes, 2013) to examine the indirect effect of parentification on identity distress through imposter syndrome. The results obtained from these analyses are presented in the following tables, followed by their interpretation and discussion.

4.2 RESULT AND FINDINGS

Table 4.1

Demographic Characteristics and Descriptive Statistics

Gender	**N**	**% age**
Male	48	48
Female	52	52
Total	100	100

The demographic characteristics of the participants were analyzed prior to the main statistical analyses. The descriptive statistics indicated that the sample consisted of 150 participants 52% females and 48% males as shown in fig 4.1.

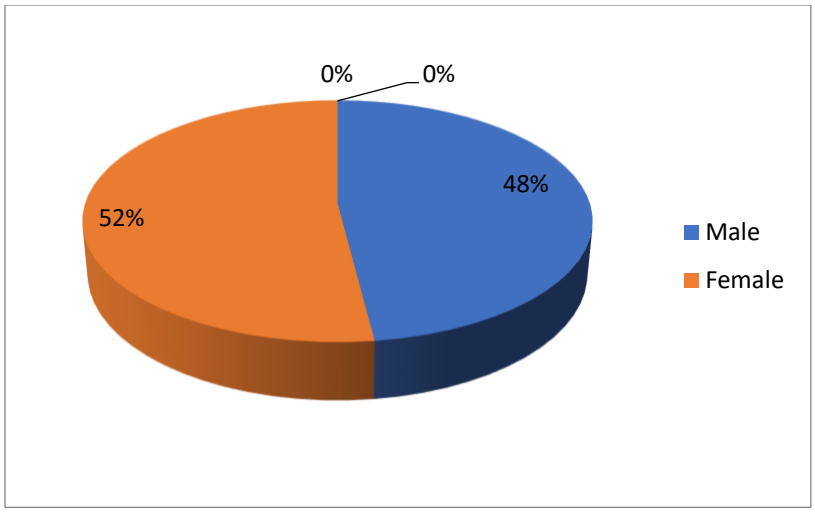


Figure 4. 1 *Gender Distribution of participants*

Table 4.2

Descriptive statistics variables of parentification, imposter syndrome and identity distress

Variables	Mean	SD	N
Identity Distress	86.29	18.69	150
Imposter Syndrome	65.59	13.10	150
Parentification	70.20	18.47	150

The mean score for identity distress was *M = 86.29* (*SD = 18.69*), indicating moderate level of distress. Imposter syndrome had a mean of *M = 65.59* (*SD = 13.10*), suggesting a. Parentification showed a mean score of *M = 70.20* (*SD = 18.47*), reflecting a moderate level of parentification experiences as illustrated in Fig 4.2.

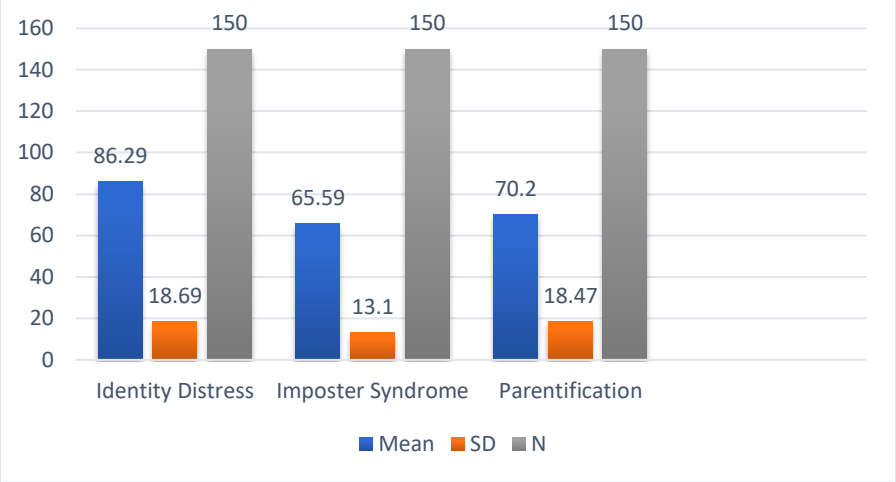


Figure 4.2 *Descriptive statistics for parentification, imposter syndrome and identity*

4.2.1 OBJECTIVE 1: To study the effect of parentification on identity distress

Table 4.3A

Linear Regression coefficient of Parentification Predicting Identity Distress

	Unstandardized Coefficients	**Standardized Coefficients**			
Predictor	***B***	***SE B***	***β***	***T***	***P***
Constant	80.07	5.97	—	13.40	< .001
Parentification	0.09	0.08	.09	1.08	.283

Note. IS = Imposter Syndrome; ID = Identity Distress. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. β = standardized coefficient.

Imposter Syndrome accounted for 41% of the variance in Identity Distress (R^2 = .41,) F (1,150) = 103.04, ** p < .01). This is a large effect size, indicating imposter syndrome is a robust predictor of identity distress among college students. Parentification accounted for only 1% of the variance in Identity Distress (R^2 = .01, Adjusted R^2 = .00, F (1,150) = 1.16, p = .283), which was not statistically significant. The adjusted R^2 of .00 indicates that parentification adds no meaningful predictive value.

Table 4.3B

Model Summary for Regression Analyses of parentification Predicting Identity Distress

Predictor	*R*	*R²*	*Adj. R²*	*F*	*P*
Imposter Syndrome	.64	.41	.41	103.04	<.001
Parentification	.09	.01	.00	1.16	.283

Note. IS = Imposter Syndrome; ID = Identity Distress. R^2 = coefficient of determination; Adj. R^2 = adjusted R^2. Dependent variable = Identity Distress.

The regression analysis examined whether Imposter Syndrome and Parentification predicted Identity Distress. Imposter Syndrome was a strong and significant predictor of Identity Distress ($R = .64$, $R^2 = .41$, $F = 103.04$, $p < .001$), explaining 41% of the variance. Parentification was not a significant predictor of Identity Distress ($R = .09$, $R^2 = .01$, $F = 1.16$, $p = .283$), explaining only 1% of the variance. These findings indicate that Imposter Syndrome plays a major role in predicting Identity Distress, whereas Parentification does not significantly contribute to it.

4.4.2 OBJECTIVE 2: To study the effects of imposter syndrome on identity distress

Table 4.4A:

Linear Regression Coefficients for Imposter Syndrome Predicting Identity Distress

	Unstandardized Coefficients	Standardized Coefficients			
Predictor	*B*	*SE B*	*β*	*T*	*P*
Constant	26.58	6.00	—	4.43	< .001
Imposter Syndrome	0.91	0.09	.64	10.15	< .001

Note. IS = Imposter Syndrome; ID = Identity Distress. Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. β = standardized coefficient.

A simple linear regression examined whether Imposter Syndrome significantly predicts Identity Distress. The results showed that Imposter Syndrome was a significant and strong predictor of Identity Distress (B = 0.91, β = .64, t = 10.15, p **< .01). For every one-unit increase in imposter syndrome scores, identity distress scores increased by 0.91 units. The standardized coefficient (β= .64) confirms a large effect. The constant (26.58) represents the predicted identity distress score when imposter syndrome is zero.

Table 4.4B

Model summary for regression coefficient of imposter syndrome predicting identity distress

Predictor	***R***	***R²***	***Adj. R²***	***F***	***R***
1	.088	.008	.001	18.676	.008

Note. R^2 = coefficient of determination; Adjusted R^2 = adjusted coefficient of determination. The model examined whether imposter syndrome significantly predicted identity distress.

The model shows that Imposter Syndrome was a statistically significant predictor of Identity Distress (R = .088, R^2 = .008, Adj. R^2 = .001, F = 18.676, p = .008).

However, Imposter Syndrome explained only 0.8% of the variance in Identity Distress, indicating that while the relationship is statistically significant, the practical effect size is very small.

Overall, these results suggest that although Imposter Syndrome does predict Identity Distress, its contribution in this particular model is minimal, and other variables may better account for identity-related distress among college student.

4.2.3 OBJECTIVE 3: To study the relationship between parentification, imposter syndrome and identity distress

Table 4.5

Correlation between study variables

Variable	***M***	***SD***	***1***	***2***	***3***
1. Identity Distress	*86.29*	*18.69*	—		
2. Imposter Syndrome	*65.59*	*13.10*	*.64***	—	
3. Parentification	*70.20*	*18.47*	*.03*	*.09*	—

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).*

A Pearson product–moment correlation analysis was conducted to examine the relationships among identity distress, imposter syndrome, and parentification. The results showed a significant positive correlation between identity distress and imposter syndrome, $r = .64$, $p < .01$, indicating that higher levels of identity distress are associated with higher imposter feelings among college students. However, parentification was not significantly correlated with identity distress, $r = .09$, $p > .05$, or with imposter syndrome, $r = .03$, $p > .05$ as illustrated in Table 2. These findings suggest that parentification is not significantly associated with either identity distress or imposter syndrome in the present sample.

4.2.4 OBJECTIVE 4: To study the mediating effect of parentification in the relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress

Mediation Analysis (PROCESS Model 4)

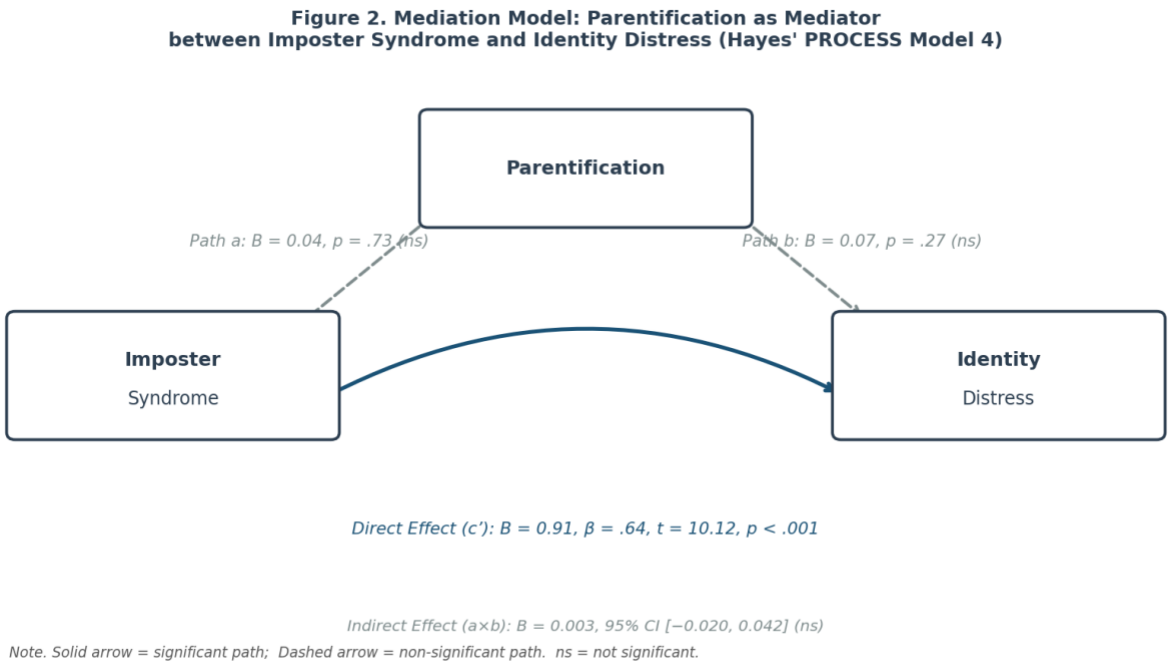


Figure 4.3 Mediating effect of parentification in the relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress.

Table 4.6

Mediation Analysis Results: Parentification as Mediator (Hayes' PROCESS Model 4, N = 150)

Path	*B*	*SE*	*T*	*p*	95% Boot CI LL	95% Boot CI UL
Path a: IS → Parentification	0.04	0.12	0.35	.73	−0.187	0.267
Path b: Parentification → ID	0.07	0.06	1.11	.27	−0.055	0.196
Total Effect: IS → ID	0.91	0.09	10.15	< .001	0.730	1.085
Direct Effect (c'): IS → ID	0.91	0.09	10.12	< .001	0.730	1.085
Indirect Effect (a×b)	0.003	0.015	—	—	−0.020	0.042

Note. IS = Imposter Syndrome; ID = Identity Distress. Boot CI = bias-corrected bootstrapped confidence interval based on 5,000 samples. — = not applicable.

Note. IS = Imposter Syndrome. R^2 = coefficient of determination; Adj. R^2 = adjusted R^2.

The mediation analysis was conducted using Hayes' PROCESS Model 4 to examine whether parentification mediated the relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress among participants (N = 150). The results indicated that the effect of imposter syndrome on parentification (Path a) was not statistically significant, $B = 0.04$, $SE = 0.12$, $t = 0.35$, $p = .73$, 95% CI [−0.187, 0.267]. Similarly, the effect of parentification on identity distress (Path b) was also non-significant, $B = 0.07$, $SE = 0.06$, $t = 1.11$, $p = .27$, 95% CI [−0.055, 0.196]. The total effect of imposter syndrome on identity distress was found to be statistically significant, $B = 0.91$, $SE = 0.09$, $t = 10.15$, ** p < .001, 95% CI [0.730, 1.085]. The direct effect (c′) remained significant, $B = 0.91$, $SE = 0.09$, $t = 10.12$, ** $p < .001$, 95% CI [0.730, 1.085], indicating that imposter syndrome significantly predicts identity distress even after accounting for parentification. Importantly, the indirect effect (a × b) was not statistically significant, $B = 0.003$, $SE = 0.015$, with a 95% bootstrapped confidence interval that included zero [−0.020, 0.042], suggesting that parentification did not mediate the relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress.

CHAPTER V

FINDINGS, CONCLUSION, DISCUSSION, EDUCATIONAL IMPLICATIONS AND SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

5.1 INTRODUCTION

The present study was aimed at investigating the effect of parentification on imposter syndrome and identity distress among college students, and to examine the mediating role of parentification in the relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress. This research holds important implications for mental health practitioners, counsellors, and developmental psychologists addressing the psychological consequences of parentification during the formative college years. The sample comprised 150 college students, recruited across urban academic settings, representing diverse familial and socio-economic backgrounds. Participants completed psychometrically validated measures. Correlation analysis revealed a strong significant positive relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress, $r = .64$, $p < .01$, while parentification was not significantly associated with either imposter syndrome ($r = .03$, $p > .05$) or identity distress ($r = .09$, $p > .05$).

Regression analysis confirmed that imposter syndrome significantly predicted identity distress, $\beta = .64$, $t(150) = 10.15$, $p < .001$, explaining 40.7% of the variance ($R^2 = .407$). In contrast, parentification was not a significant predictor of identity distress ($R^2 = .008$, $F = 1.16$, $p = .283$). The PROCESS Model 4 mediation analysis (Hayes, 2018) further revealed a non-significant indirect effect of imposter syndrome on identity distress through parentification ($ab = .0028$, 95% Boot CI [−.0203, .0418]), indicating that parentification does not mediate this relationship. The direct effect of imposter syndrome on identity distress remained highly significant ($B = 0.91$, $p < .001$), indicating a robust direct pathway independent of parentification.

5.2 MAJOR FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The present investigation sought to explore the nature of relationships among parentification, imposter syndrome and identity distress among college students. The findings are discussed in light of existing theoretical frameworks and empirical literature.

5.2.1 Imposter Syndrome and Identity Distress. The most significant finding of the present study was the strong positive relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress ($r = .64$, $p < .01$), with imposter syndrome accounting for approximately 41% of

the variance in identity distress. This finding is consistent with the foundational conceptualization of imposter phenomenon by Clance and Imes (1978), who described it as a persistent internal experience of intellectual fraudulence intimately linked to an unstable and fragmented self-concept. When college students chronically doubt their competence and attribute their achievements to luck rather than ability, their sense of personal identity becomes inherently uncertain and distressing.

5.2.2 Parentification and Identity distress: Contrary to the study's initial hypotheses, parentification did not significantly correlate with imposter syndrome ($r = .03$, $p > .05$) or identity distress ($r = .09$, $p > .05$), nor did it significantly predict identity distress in the regression model. Several theoretical and contextual explanations may account for this unexpected pattern.

Hooper et al. (2011) noted, when caregiving is woven into one's cultural and family identity, students are far less likely to experience it as something harmful, which would naturally reduce its association with feelings of distress or self-doubt. Third, it is also important to note that the students in this sample reported only moderate levels of parentification on average (M = 70.20), meaning none of them were experiencing extreme role reversal. It is possible that stronger and more harmful effects of parentification might only appear in students with much higher levels of caregiving burden.

5.2.3 Exploring Parentification as a Mediating Variable: The PROCESS MACRO mediation analysis revealed that the indirect effect of imposter syndrome on identity distress through parentification was non-significant (= .0028, Boot 95% CI [−.0203, .0418]). The bootstrap confidence interval crossed zero, and the zero-order correlation between imposter syndrome and parentification was negligible ($r = .03$), violating the foundational precondition for mediation as outlined by Baron and Kenny (1986). These results indicate that parentification does not serve as a psychological mechanism through which imposter syndrome translates into identity distress in the present sample.

5.3 CONCLUSION

From the findings of the present research, it can be concluded that:

1. There is a significant positive relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress among college students, Accepted.

2. Imposter syndrome is a significant and positive predictor of identity distress among college students, accepted.

3. Parentification does not have a significant relationship with imposter syndrome among college students, Rejected.

4. Parentification does not have a significant relationship with identity distress among college students, Rejected.

5. Parentification does not significantly mediate the relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress among college students, Rejected.

6. The direct effect of imposter syndrome on identity distress remains significant when parentification is included in the model, indicating the absence of mediation, accepted.

Thus, the study concludes that imposter syndrome significantly and directly predicts identity distress among college students, explaining approximately 41% of the variance in identity distress. Parentification, however, does not play a significant direct or mediating role in this relationship within the present sample. This underscores the need for campus-based mental health interventions that directly target imposter syndrome cognitions — such as persistent self-doubt, attribution of

success to luck, and fear of being exposed as incompetent — as a primary pathway to reducing identity distress and promoting psychological wellbeing among college students. The findings also call for future research employing longitudinal designs, culturally sensitive measures of parentification, and multi-mediator models to provide a more comprehensive understanding of 5. these complex developmental and psychological relationships.

5.4 IMPLICATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

Implications for future research stemming from the direct role of imposter syndrome in predicting identity distress, and the non-significant mediating role of parentification, can be addressed by developing targeted interventions that disrupt the imposter syndrome–identity distress pathway and promote authentic self-concept development among college students. The current empirical findings (significant direct effect $\beta = .64$, $p < .001$) suggest new strategies should prioritize imposter syndrome-focused therapeutic approaches alongside broader identity development programs in college counselling settings.

Support systems should help college students experiencing imposter syndrome through assertive self-advocacy workshops and peer mentoring programs in campus counselling centres. Family and community support networks can reinforce authentic self-expression and identity consolidation skills learned in therapy sessions, reducing the self-doubt and fraudulence beliefs that sustain imposter feelings and amplify identity distress. Policy reforms can mandate campus wellness training with identity distress reduction as a key student mental health outcome metric, ensuring early identification and timely intervention for vulnerable students.

Technological interventions should develop mobile applications using AI to detect imposter syndrome patterns via daily self-efficacy journals linked to academic performance logs. Online platforms can deliver CBT modules specifically targeting imposter cognitions — such as self-attribution errors, fear of exposure, and discounting success — with progress analytics visible to students and their campus counsellors.

Holistic approaches should combine clinical therapy, academic mentoring, and cultural sensitization workshops addressing the full parentification–imposter syndrome–identity distress cycle. Community-based programs integrating mindfulness, self-compassion practices, and narrative identity journaling can interrupt maladaptive self-evaluative cycles before identity distress becomes chronic and entrenched in emerging adulthood.

Campus counselling applications include psychologist-led anti-imposter syndrome group therapy programs with pre-post assessments tracking identity distress reduction across semesters. Student assistance programs should prioritize parentification-informed interventions for first-generation college students and students from caregiving family backgrounds, helping them disentangle role-based identity from academic self-worth.

Future research infrastructure should focus on developing culturally adapted and psychometrically validated measures of parentification and imposter syndrome specific to the Indian college student population. Establishing longitudinal data repositories and multi-institutional research networks across Indian universities would enable robust replication of current findings and facilitate the development of evidence-based campus mental health programs.

5.5 SUGGESTION FOR FUTURE RESEARCH:

Future research can build upon the current findings regarding the direct role of imposter syndrome in predicting identity distress and the non-significant mediating role of parentification among college students. To begin with, future studies should employ longitudinal designs spanning 12–24 months in order to establish whether parentification truly precedes imposter syndrome, and whether imposter syndrome in turn leads to escalating identity distress over the college years something the cross-sectional nature of the present study could not confirm. Additionally, research should explore variations across different types of Indian colleges and universities, such as rural versus urban, government versus private, and professional versus liberal arts institutions, to determine whether the academic environment and institutional culture influence the strength of the imposter syndrome–identity distress relationship observed in this study.

Furthermore, future research should examine adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17 to identify critical developmental windows where parentification may first trigger imposter syndrome patterns, as early identification during secondary school could allow for preventive interventions before these patterns become deeply entrenched by the time of college transition. Finally, replicating the current model in clinical samples of college students diagnosed with anxiety disorders, depressive disorders, or adjustment difficulties would be valuable, as imposter syndrome may show amplified effects on identity distress in such populations, thereby strengthening the overall validation of the model. It would also be valuable for future studies to test multiple mediators simultaneously such as shame-proneness, self-critical perfectionism, and attachment insecurity using structural equation modelling, in order to understand whether parentification's effects operate through cognitive, emotional, or relational mechanisms, or through a combination of these pathways. Gender identity and cultural norms around filial piety should also be examined, as collectivistic values across South Asian, East Asian, and Western student populations may significantly shape the relationship between parentification and imposter syndrome, and cross-cultural replication would strengthen the generalizability of the present findings.

Furthermore, future research should distinguish between instrumental parentification, which involves practical caregiving, and emotional parentification, which involves caretaking of parents' emotional needs, as Jurkovic's (1997) framework suggests

these two subtypes may have very different developmental consequences that a single aggregate measure cannot capture. Finally, conducting randomised controlled trials to evaluate therapeutic interventions such as schema therapy, narrative therapy, and acceptance and commitment therapy specifically targeting parentification-derived imposter cognitions and identity confusion in college counselling centres would help establish empirically supported treatment protocols for this population.

Second, the sample was restricted to a specific group of participants, and thus the findings are limited to individuals with similar demographic and contextual characteristics.

Third, the study employed a quantitative research approach using standardized self-report measures. Qualitative aspects of participants' experiences were not explored.

Fourth, the research was conducted within a limited time frame, which constrained the ability to examine changes in variables over time.

Finally, the study was confined to a particular cultural and educational context, which defined the boundaries within which the results can be interpreted.

SUMMARY

TOPIC: TO STUDY THE EFFECTS OF PARENTIFICATION ON IMPOSTER SYNDROME AND IDENTITY DISTRESS AMONG COLLEGE STUDENTS

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INTRODUCTION

The transition to college life marks a significant developmental milestone, bringing both newfound independence and increased responsibility. For students with a history of parentification — a family dynamic in which children assume adult-like emotional or instrumental caregiving roles — this period can be particularly challenging. Parentification deprives children of the psychological space necessary for healthy self-development. When such individuals enter college, the consequences of early role reversal become increasingly visible. Having spent their formative years prioritizing others over themselves, parentified students often struggle to recognize their own worth and competence, rendering them vulnerable to Imposter Syndrome and Identity Distress.

Imposter Syndrome refers to a persistent psychological pattern in which individuals chronically doubt their achievements, attribute success to luck rather than ability, and fear being exposed as incompetent despite consistent evidence of capability. Identity Distress, on the other hand, refers to significant psychological discomfort arising from confusion and uncertainty surrounding core aspects of one's personal identity, including values, beliefs, life goals, and sense of self. Both constructs are particularly relevant during emerging adulthood, a developmental phase marked by identity exploration, academic competition, and heightened performance expectations.

Although each of these constructs has received independent scholarly attention, empirical research examining parentification as a contributing factor to both Imposter

Syndrome and Identity Distress specifically among college-going students remains limited. The present study therefore seeks to address this gap by examining the effects of parentification on Imposter Syndrome and Identity Distress, and by exploring the mediating role of parentification in the relationship between Imposter Syndrome and Identity Distress among college students

PARENTIFICATION

Parentification refers to a family dynamic involving role reversal, wherein a child assumes adult-like responsibilities — emotionally or instrumentally — to meet the needs of parents or siblings (Hooper, 2007). Two primary subtypes are recognized: instrumental parentification, which involves the assumption of functional household tasks, and emotional parentification, which involves meeting a parent's psychological and emotional needs. Emotional parentification is considered more psychologically harmful, as it places the child in a demanding position without adequate emotional resources or developmental support. Parentification is more commonly observed in families experiencing stressors such as marital conflict, mental illness, substance abuse, or financial instability. Cultural factors may further normalize child caregiving, making its psychological impact underrecognized, particularly in collectivist societies such as India.

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

Imposter Syndrome, originally termed the "impostor phenomenon" by Clance and Imes (1978), describes an internal experience of intellectual phoniness in which individuals are unable to internalize their achievement and live in persistent fear of being exposed as fraudulent. It is particularly prevalent among college students, who face heightened academic competition, peer comparison, and performance pressures. Research indicates that Imposter Syndrome is associated with increased anxiety, depression, academic burnout, and reduced self-confidence. Family environments characterized by conditional validation and role confusion — such as parentification — may contribute significantly to the development of impostor feelings. In the present study, Imposter Syndrome was measured using the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS; Clance, 1985).

IDENTITY DISTRESS

Identity Distress refers to the confusion or difficulty an individual faces in developing a coherent and stable sense of self, including uncertainty about values, goals, beliefs, and personal direction (Berman et al., 2004). According to Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, late adolescence and early adulthood represent critical stages for identity formation. College students are particularly vulnerable to identity distress due to increased autonomy demands, separation from family, and academic and social pressures. For parentified students, who have spent their formative years meeting others' needs rather than exploring their own identity, this developmental task may be especially difficult. In the present study, Identity Distress was assessed using the Identity Distress Survey (IDS; Berman et al., 2004).

NEED AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The present study is significant because it addresses an important yet underexplored psychological concern among college students — the relationship between parentification, Imposter Syndrome, and Identity Distress. In educational contexts where students are expected to perform academically while simultaneously forming a stable identity, early family role dynamics such as parentification may exert a profound but largely unacknowledged influence. Although misogyny and self-silencing have been widely studied in relation to women's psychological distress, comparatively fewer studies have examined how parentification may function as a developmental risk factor specifically linked to Imposter Syndrome and Identity Distress among college students.

By focusing on this mediating and predictive process, the present research provides a more nuanced understanding of how early caregiving roles translate into self-doubt and identity-related psychological suffering. The significance of the study is further strengthened by its relevance to the Indian cultural context, where family responsibilities are often normalized and parentification may go unrecognized. Investigating these variables in this setting contributes to culturally grounded knowledge and may inform the development of appropriate clinical, educational, and counselling-based interventions. Thus, the study holds significance for psychologists, counsellors, educators, and researchers concerned with college student mental health and family dynamics.

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

The present study is entitled as "A Study on the Effects of Parentification on Imposter Syndrome and Identity Distress among College Students."

OPERATIONAL DEFINITIONS

Parentification: In the present study, parentification refers to a family dynamic in which a child assumes developmentally inappropriate caregiving roles — either emotional, such as providing psychological support to parents, or instrumental, such as managing household responsibilities. It was operationally defined as the degree of role reversal experienced during childhood and adolescence, as measured through the Parentification Questionnaire (PQ; Mika et al., 1987). Higher scores indicated greater levels of parentification.

Imposter Syndrome: In the present study, Imposter Syndrome refers to a persistent psychological pattern in which an individual chronically doubts their achievements, attributes success to luck or external factors rather than personal ability, and fears being exposed as incompetent despite consistent evidence of capability. It was operationally defined as the frequency and intensity of impostor feelings in an academic setting, as assessed through the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS; Clance, 1985). Higher scores indicated greater impostor feelings.

Identity Distress: In the present study, Identity Distress refers to significant and sustained psychological discomfort arising from confusion, uncertainty, or conflict surrounding core aspects of one's personal identity, including values, beliefs, life goals, and sense of self. It was operationally defined as the level of identity-related confusion and emotional discomfort reported by participants on the Identity Distress Survey (IDS; Berman et al., 2004). Higher scores indicated greater identity distress.

OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The following objectives were formulated for the present study:

- To study the effect of parentification on identity distress among college students.
- To study the effect of imposter syndrome on identity distress among college students.
- To examine the relationship between parentification, imposter syndrome, and identity distress among college students.

- To investigate whether parentification mediates the relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress among college students.

HYPOTHESES OF THE STUDY

There will be a significant effect of parentification on identity distress in college students.

There will be a significant effect of imposter syndrome on identity distress in college students.

There will be a significant positive relationship between parentification, imposter syndrome, and identity distress in college students.

Parentification will significantly mediate the relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress.

POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The population of the present study consisted of college-going students between the age group of 18–25 years enrolled in urban academic institutions. The study focused on college students because the variables under investigation parentification, imposter syndrome, and identity distress are closely related to the developmental challenges and psychological experiences of emerging adulthood within the academic context

SAMPLE FOR THE STUDY

Purposive sampling technique was employed for selecting the sample. The sample consisted of 150 college students, comprising 52% female and 48% male participants, aged 18–25 years, recruited from urban academic institutions. Only students capable of understanding and responding to English-language instruments were included. Participation was voluntary and informed consent was obtained from all participants.

TOOLS USED

Parentification Questionnaire (PQ): Developed by Mika et al. (1987), the PQ is a self-report measure assessing the degree to which individuals assumed emotional or instrumental caregiving roles during childhood and adolescence. Higher scores indicate greater parentification experiences.

Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS): Developed by Clance (1985), the CIPS is a 20-item self-report scale designed to measure the frequency and intensity of impostor feelings in achievement-related contexts. Items are rated on a 5-point Likert scale, with

higher scores indicating greater impostor experiences. The scale demonstrates strong internal consistency (alpha above .85).

Identity Distress Survey (IDS): Developed by Berman et al. (2004), the IDS assesses the extent of psychological discomfort related to identity confusion across domains including long-term goals, career choice, values, friendships, and sense of self. Higher scores reflect greater identity-related distress. The scale has demonstrated good reliability and validity across college student populations.

RESULTS OF THE STUDY

Regression analysis revealed that imposter syndrome significantly predicted identity distress among college students ($\beta = .64$, $t = 10.15$, $p < .001$), accounting for approximately 41% of the variance ($R^2 = .41$). These findings indicate a strong and robust direct relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress.

Imposter syndrome was found to be a significant positive predictor of identity distress, with higher levels of impostor feelings associated with greater identity-related confusion and psychological discomfort. Students experiencing stronger impostor feelings reported significantly higher levels of identity distress, suggesting that chronic self-doubt and fear of failure interfere with the formation of a coherent and stable identity.

Parentification did not significantly predict identity distress ($\beta = .09$, $p > .05$) and showed no significant correlation with either imposter syndrome ($r = .03$, $p > .05$) or identity distress ($r = .09$, $p > .05$), indicating that the direct pathway from parentification to identity distress was not supported in the present sample.

The mediation analysis using PROCESS Macro Model 4 demonstrated that parentification did not mediate the relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress. The indirect effect was non-significant (ab = .003, 95% Boot CI [−.020, .042]), indicating that parentification does not function as a psychological mechanism through which imposter syndrome translates into identity distress among college students.

DELIMITATION OF THE STUDY

The present study was delimited to college-going students between 18–25 years of age and does not include school students, working professionals, or older adults.

The study examined only three variables parentification, imposter syndrome, and identity distress with parentification tested as both an independent variable and a mediating variable.

The study was confined to a specific geographical and academic context; participants from rural areas or non-academic settings were not included.

The study relied solely on three standardized self-report measures and did not examine other related factors such as attachment style, family conflict, personality traits, or socioeconomic background.

A cross-sectional research design was adopted with data collected at a single point in time; therefore, causal relationships and changes over time were not examined.

SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

- The present study has highlighted how imposter syndrome significantly predicts identity distress among college students. These results suggest further research to be carried out as follows.
- The present study cannot be considered final and comprehensive. Future research should employ longitudinal designs to establish temporal precedence in the parentification–imposter syndrome–identity distress pathway, clarifying causal relationships over time.
- The present study was confined to college students in an urban Indian setting. Similar studies can be conducted across diverse regions, cultural backgrounds, and educational levels to examine regional and socio-cultural variations.
- A sample of 150 participants was used in the present study. Similar studies can be conducted on larger and more representative samples to strengthen the generalizability of findings.
- The present study focused on college-going young adults only. Future research should extend to adolescents in order to identify critical developmental windows where parentification initiates imposter feelings and identity disruption.

- Future studies can incorporate qualitative methods such as in-depth interviews to capture the lived experiences of parentified students and provide richer contextual understanding.
- A comparative study can be undertaken to investigate parentification, imposter syndrome, and identity distress among students from different family structures, including single-parent households, joint families, and nuclear families.
- Future research can also investigate whether self-compassion, emotional regulation, or social support moderates the relationship between imposter syndrome and identity distress, helping identify protective factors for at-risk college students.

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APPENDICES

s APPNDIX A: Parentification Scale

- Spousal role vis-à-vis parents items
- My parent(s) asked for my advice when making a decision about my sibling's missbehaviour
- My parent(s) shared intimate secrets (e.g., concerning relationships and/or sexual issues) with me.
- My parent(s) discussed their financial issues and problems with me.
- My mother shared personal problems or concerns with me as if I were another adult.
- My father shared personal problems or concerns with me as if I were another adult.
- One parent would come to me to discuss the other parent.
- My parents would argue, and I would end up on the side of one of them.
- One (or both) of my parents asked for my input when making an important decision.
- Parental role vis-à-vis parents items
- My parent(s) let me have a lot of influence when making important adult decisions.
- I was the mediator or "go-between" when a conflict arose between my parents.
- I consoled one or both of my parents when they were distressed.
- My parent(s) at times became physically ill, and I was responsible for taking care of them.
- My parent(s) sought my advice on adult matters.
- I restored peace if conflicts developed between my parents.
- Parental role vis-à-vis siblings items
- I babysat for my younger sibling(s).
- My parents were away for more than 24 hours, and I was the main person responsible for my sibling(s).
- When one of my siblings(s) had a personal concern, they came to me for advice.
- I was responsible for bathing my sibling(s).

- When my sibling(s) had problems, I took a lot of responsibility for solving them.
- I was responsible for dressing my sibling(s) or ensuring that they got dressed
- I was the mediator when conflicts arose between my siblings.
- I made rules for my siblings.
- I would decide what time my sibling(s) went to bed for the evening.
- I provided emotional support and/or comfort for my sibling(s).
- My sibling(s) came to me when they were having difficulties with our parent(s).
- Nonspecific adult role-taking items
- I did the laundry for members of my family.
- I made dinner for members of my family.
- I cleaned house for my family.
- I did the dishes for members of my family.

APPNDIX B: Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS)

- **Response Scale:**
- 1 = Not at all true 2 = Rarely 3 = Sometimes 4 = Often 5 = Very true
- I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I undertook the task.
- I can give the impression that I'm more competent than I really am.
- I avoid evaluations if possible and have a dread of others evaluating me.
- When people praise me for something I've accomplished, I'm afraid I won't be able to live up to their expectations in the future.
- I sometimes think I obtained my present position or success because I happened to be in the right place at the right time or knew the right people.
- I'm afraid people important to me may find out that I'm not as capable as they think I am.
- I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those times I have done my best.
- I rarely do a project or task as well as I'd like to do it.

- Sometimes I feel or believe that my success has been the result of some kind of error.
- It's hard for me to accept compliments or praise about my intelligence or accomplishments.
- At times, I feel my success has been due to luck.
- I'm disappointed at times in my present accomplishments and think I should have accomplished much more.
- Sometimes I'm afraid others will discover how much knowledge or ability I really lack.
- I'm often afraid that I may fail at a new assignment even though I generally do well.
- When I've succeeded at something, I have doubts that I can keep repeating that success.
- If I receive praise for something I've accomplished, I tend to discount its importance.
- I often compare my ability to others and think they may be more intelligent than I am.
- I often worry about not succeeding even though others have confidence in me.
- If I'm going to receive recognition, I hesitate to tell others until it is definite.
- I feel bad if I'm not the best or at least "very special" in achievement situations.
- **APPNDIX C: Identity Crisis and HPD Scale**
- Response Format:
- 1 = Strongly Disagree | 2 = Disagree | 3 = Neutral | 4 = Agree | 5 = Strongly Agree
- Identity Instability
- I feel unsure about who I am or my purpose in life.
- I often feel like I am pretending to be someone I am not.
- I frequently feel confused about my role or purpose in life.
- I struggle to define my own values and goals independently of others' expectations.

- I frequently adopt new interests, hobbies, or styles based on people I want to impress.
- I feel that seeking attention or approval from others helps define my identity
- I often seek reassurance or approval from others.
- I have been told that my emotions seem exaggerated or out of proportion.
- I tend to use dramatic gestures or facial expressions to emphasize my points.
- I use emotional expressions (e.g., crying or laughing) to gain sympathy or attention.
- I talk loudly or interrupt others to get noticed.
- I use phrases like "It was amazing" or "It was terrible" without providing specific examples.
- Appearance concerns
- I believe my physical appearance is crucial in how others perceive me.
- I feel anxious if I believe my appearance is not up to my standards.
- I am preoccupied with achieving a particular standard of physical attractiveness.
- I believe my appearance is a key factor in my success or happiness.
- Impulsivity
- I find it difficult to resist immediate temptations or urges.
- I make quick decisions without considering the consequences when I feel overjoyed.
- I emphasize my feelings and opinions more than facts when discussing topics.
- I behave impulsively when I am emotionally overwhelmed.
- Relational intimacy
- I feel that I have a close, intimate connection with someone after only a brief interaction.
- I often think that casual acquaintances or colleagues are my close friends.
- I frequently tell others that I feel very close to them.
- I find it challenging to maintain deep or meaningful connections with others.
- When I am not the center of attention, I feel a sense of emptiness.
- I boast about my accomplishments to gain admiration.
- I dress or behave in ways that draw attention to myself.

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