

The Role of Perfectionism and Fear of Failure in Predicting the Impostor Phenomenon among Fresh Graduates

Peran Perfeksionisme dan Ketakutan akan Kegagalan dalam Memprediksi Impostor Phenomenon di Kalangan Fresh Graduates

Tria Anggraini¹, Nurul Isnaini², Citra Wahyuni³

^{1,2,3}Departement of Islamic Psychology, Raden Intan State Islamic University of Lampung, Indonesia
Email: ¹triaanggraini04@gmail.com, ²nurulisnaini@radenintan.ac.id, ³citra.wahyuni@radenintan.ac.id

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ABSTRACT

Fresh graduate students are in a transition period from the academic world to the working world, a developmental phase often accompanied by increased vulnerability to psychological stress. One form of this stress is the impostor phenomenon, which is the tendency of individuals to doubt their own competence despite having objective evidence of success. This study aims to analyze the influence of perfectionism and fear of failure on the impostor phenomenon in fresh graduate students in Indonesia. This study uses a quantitative approach with a correlational design. Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). The sampling technique used was non-probability sampling with a purposive sampling method, resulting in 805 participants who met the inclusion criteria and passed the screening process. Data collection was conducted through an online survey using the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS), the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS), and the Indonesian version of the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI). The analysis showed that perfectionism had a positive and significant effect on the impostor phenomenon ($\beta = 0.308$; $p < 0.01$). Fear of failure also proved to have a positive and significant effect ($\beta = 0.471$; $p < 0.01$). Simultaneously, these two variables were able to explain 57.1% of the variance in the impostor phenomenon. These findings indicate that high self-standards and fear of failure play a significant role in the emergence of the impostor phenomenon in fresh graduate students, so that the development of psychological interventions that focus on managing these two factors in the early phase of career transition is needed.

ABSTRAK

Fresh graduate berada pada masa transisi dari dunia akademik menuju dunia kerja, yaitu fase perkembangan yang sering kali disertai dengan meningkatnya kerentanan terhadap tekanan psikologis. Salah satu bentuk tekanan tersebut adalah impostor phenomenon, yaitu kecenderungan individu untuk meragukan kompetensi dirinya meskipun memiliki bukti objektif atas keberhasilannya. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis pengaruh perfectionism dan fear of failure terhadap impostor phenomenon pada fresh graduate di Indonesia. Penelitian ini menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan desain korelasional. Analisis data dilakukan menggunakan Structural Equation Modeling (SEM). Teknik sampling yang digunakan adalah non-probability sampling dengan metode purposive sampling, sehingga diperoleh 805 partisipan yang memenuhi kriteria inklusi dan lolos proses screening. Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui survei daring menggunakan Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS), Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS), dan Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI) versi Indonesia. Hasil analisis menunjukkan bahwa perfectionism berpengaruh positif dan signifikan terhadap impostor phenomenon ($\beta = 0,308$; $p < 0,01$). Fear of failure juga terbukti memiliki pengaruh positif dan signifikan ($\beta = 0,471$; $p < 0,01$). Secara simultan, kedua variabel tersebut mampu menjelaskan 57,1% varians impostor phenomenon. Temuan ini menunjukkan bahwa standar diri yang tinggi dan ketakutan terhadap kegagalan berperan penting dalam munculnya impostor phenomenon pada fresh graduate, sehingga diperlukan pengembangan intervensi psikologis yang berfokus pada pengelolaan kedua faktor tersebut pada fase awal transisi karier.

Kata Kunci:

Fear of Failure, Perfeksionis, Impostor Phenomenon, Fresh Graduate

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Correspondence:

Tria Anggraini

Departement of Islamic Psychology, Raden Intan State Islamic University of Lampung, Indonesia
Email: triaanggraini04@gmail.com



BACKGROUND

The development of higher education in Indonesia over the past decade has shown a significant upward trend in the number of college graduates, in line with the expansion of educational access and national policies to increase participation in higher education institutions governed by Indonesia, (Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, 2022; Central Statistics Agency, 2023). This has had a direct impact on the increasing number of young adults entering the transition phase from academic environments to the world of work, a period psychologically characterized by complex adaptation demands, role uncertainty, and intense social and professional pressures (Arnett, 2015; Lauder & Mayhew, 2020). Recent literature indicates that this transition phase is often vulnerable to the emergence of psychological stress due to a mismatch between personal expectations, work environment demands, and the reality of increasingly competitive labor markets (Ng & Feldman, 2022; Sulistyono et al., 2023).

Arnett and Fitri (2000, 2024) explain that early adulthood is a transitional phase marked by career exploration and professional role formation. In this phase, early career transition pressures stem not only from structural factors but also from internal psychological factors that influence individual self-evaluation (Maimunah, 2020; Lent & Brown, 2019; Rudolph et al., 2021). One prominent psychological phenomenon among highly educated individuals in this context is referred to as the impostor phenomenon which is the tendency to doubt one's own having doubts about one's own competence and interpreting success as the result of external influences, even though the achievement is supported by clear evidence (Clance & Imes, 1978). This phenomenon is associated with various negative consequences, including decreased psychological well-being, anxiety, emotional exhaustion, and obstacles to career decision-making in early adulthood (Sakulku & Alexander, 2011; Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016; Bravata et al., 2020; Salzabillah & Wicaksono, 2025).

Studies in personality and motivational psychology attempt to explain the emergence of self-doubt through various individual psychological characteristics. One characteristic theoretically related to patterns of rigorous self-evaluation is perfectionism, which refers to the tendency to set extremely high standards of achievement accompanied by a critical self-evaluation of errors or imperfections (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Recent research suggests that an orientation toward excessively high standards, particularly when accompanied by concerns about social judgment, has the potential to increase an individual's psychological vulnerability when facing academic and professional challenges (Smith, 2018; Limburg, 2017; Grubb, 2021).

Furthermore, the psychological dynamics of the transition phase are also influenced by an individual's orientation toward failure. In the achievement motivation literature, fear of failure is understood as an individual's

tendency to anticipate negative consequences from failure, whether in the form of social judgment, decreased self-esteem, or loss of social acceptance (Conroy, 2001). Empirical findings indicate that a negative orientation toward failure is associated with increased performance anxiety, avoidance of challenging tasks, and an inability to adaptively internalize success (Elliot & Thrash, 2004; Sagar, 2009; Nelson, 2024).

Although the relationship between personality traits, failure orientation, and self-doubt has been widely discussed in the international literature, there are still significant research gaps that warrant attention. First, most previous research has been conducted on active students or specific professional groups, while studies specifically focusing on fresh graduate students as an early career transition group are relatively limited, particularly in the Indonesian context (Sulistyono et al., 2023; Maryam & Istiana, 2024). Second, previous research tends to examine these psychological factors in a fragmented manner, resulting in a suboptimal understanding of the interrelationships between these factors within a single, integrated empirical framework (Fayard & Mayer, 2023). An integrative approach is necessary for a more comprehensive understanding of the psychological dynamics during the transition from education to work (Lent, 2021).

Based on this gap, examining the relationship between personality characteristics and failure orientation in explaining self-doubt in fresh graduate students is considered important for expanding the study of career transition psychology in Indonesia. Internal psychological factors are known to play a significant role in the individual adaptation process in the early career phase, which is characterized by uncertainty and high competitive demands (Lent, 2021; Rudolph, 2021; Spurr, 2022). Theoretically, this research is expected to deepen understanding of the psychological mechanisms underlying early career adaptation, while practically, the findings of this study can form the basis for the development of more contextual psychological mentoring and intervention programs for college graduates (Ng & Feldman, 2022; Nelson et al., 2024).

Empirical findings indicate that internal psychological factors play a significant role in shaping one's response to academic pressure and developmental changes (Apriani, 2020; Efendi et al., 2024). However, research examining the simultaneous contribution of these factors to the impostor phenomenon in recent graduates is still limited. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure with the impostor phenomenon among recent graduates, and to analyze the simultaneous and partial impact of these two independent variables. Based on this objective, the research hypothesis states that there is a significant relationship between perfectionism and fear of failure with the impostor phenomenon in recent graduates.

RESEARCH METHODS

This research was conducted using a quantitative methodology with a correlational design. The sample was obtained through non-probability purposive sampling to facilitate an empirical examination of the relationships among the variables of interest. A correlational approach was selected because the study did not manipulate or assign treatments to participants, but instead analyzed the associations between perfectionism, fear of failure, and the impostor phenomenon among fresh graduate students. The study employed a cross-sectional design, with data gathered at a single measurement occasion to reflect the relationships among variables within the respondents' current conditions (Levin, 2006; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Research Variables

This study examined three main variables: perfectionism and fear of failure as independent variables, and the impostor phenomenon as the dependent variable. Perfectionism is conceptualized as an individual's tendency to set extremely high standards for themselves and others (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). Fear of failure is defined as a psychological state characterized by concern about potential failure and its associated negative outcomes, including feelings of embarrassment and unfavorable evaluations by others (Conroy, 2001). The impostor phenomenon, on the other hand, refers to a condition in which individuals persistently doubt their abilities and achievements despite objective indicators of success (Clance & Imes, 1978).

Research Subjects

The population in this study consisted of 850 fresh graduates. The study involved 805 participants selected using a non-probability sampling technique through purposive sampling. This technique was employed because the researchers established specific criteria for participant selection, namely: (1) fresh graduates, (2) Indonesian citizens, (3) Diploma (D3) or Bachelor's degree (S1) graduates who had completed their studies within the last year, and (4) fresh graduates who experienced self-doubt regarding their abilities and fear of disappointing others. The determination of the sample size also referred to the Hair Jr. et al. (2021) and Marko Sarstedt et al. (2022) regarding sample adequacy in PLS-SEM analysis to obtain stable parameter estimates and improve the statistical power of the study.

Data Collection Techniques

An online questionnaire-based survey was used to gather data, with distribution conducted through various social media platforms such as WhatsApp, TikTok, and Telegram. A five-point Likert scale was utilized for all instruments, as it provides a standardized method for measuring psychological constructs and allows for efficient quantitative analysis (Azwar, 2015, 2022). Questionnaire items consisted of favorable and unfavorable items.

Favorable items were scored from 1 to 5, while unfavorable items were reverse scored to maintain consistency in measurement direction. In this measurement, higher scores are interpreted as reflecting stronger levels of the construct being assessed (Azwar, 2015; Creswell & Creswell, 2018).

Research Instrument

The impostor phenomenon was measured using the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) developed by Clance, which assesses perceived fraudulence, discounting of achievement, and attribution of success to luck (Clance, 1985). This instrument was adapted and modified based on the study conducted by Nurhikma (2019) and comprises 21 items. Perfectionism was assessed using the Multidimensional Perfectionism Scale (MPS) proposed by Hewitt and Flett, encompassing self-oriented, other-oriented, and socially prescribed perfectionism (Hewitt & Flett, 1991). The scale was adapted from the research of Shahnaz Safitri and Melly Preston (2019) and includes 32 of the original 35 items. Fear of failure was evaluated using the Indonesian version of the Performance Failure Appraisal Inventory (PFAI). This construct consists of five dimensions: fear of embarrassment, fear of diminished self-esteem, fear of losing social influence, fear of uncertainty about the future, and fear of disappointing others. The measurement is grounded in Conroy's (2001) conceptual framework and operationalized through an instrument adapted and validated for the Indonesian context by Martin and Yunanto (2023), comprising 24 of 25 items. All instruments have demonstrated satisfactory validity and reliability in prior studies.

Research Procedures

The research procedure began with the development and adaptation of research instruments, which were then adopted and adapted to the research context. This was followed by the distribution of an online questionnaire to respondents who met the inclusion criteria. Prior to completing the questionnaire, participants were informed about the purpose of the study and asked to provide informed and voluntary consent. The study was conducted in compliance with ethical standards in psychological research, including the protection of data confidentiality, assurance of participant anonymity, and the right to withdraw from the study at any stage without penalty (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Azwar, 2013).

Data Analysis Techniques

Data analysis was conducted using Structural Equation Modeling (SEM), which was chosen due to its ability to simultaneously assess associations among latent variables and accommodate measurement error in the indicators (Azwar, 2013). The application of SEM in this research is in line with previous studies Salendu et al. (2026), who applied SEM to simultaneously test relationships between latent constructs. This approach confirms the relevance of SEM in comprehensively analyzing structural relationships between

psychological variables. The analysis stages included checking data feasibility, The analytical procedure included testing the measurement model to ensure construct validity and instrument reliability, along with evaluating the structural model to test the research hypotheses. This framework was designed to comprehensively examine the role of perfectionism and fear of failure in the impostor phenomenon among fresh graduate students. This research analysis approach aligns with Isnaini's study on adapting psychological measurement tools using Confirmatory Factor Analysis (CFA), which emphasizes the importance of testing factor structure and construct validity. Therefore, the use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) is considered methodologically relevant because SEM is a development of CFA that allows simultaneous testing of measurement models and structural relationships between latent constructs (Isnaini & Septania, 2022).

RESEARCH RESULTS

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Category	N	Percentage
Gender		
Male	387	48,1%
Female	418	51,9%
Type of Institution		
Public University (PTN)	478	59,4%
Private University (PTS)	270	33,5%
Islamic higher Education Institution (PTKIN)	57	7,1%
Year of Graduation		
2024	374	46,3%
2025	432	53,7%
University (Island)	Location	
Java	207	25,7%
Sumatera	543	67,5%
Bali dan Nusa Tenggara	36	4,5%
Sulawesi	6	0,7%
Kalimantan	3	0,4%
Papua	10	1,2%

This study involved 805 fresh graduate students from various universities in Indonesia. Participants were aged 21–26 years ($M = 23.15$; $SD = 0.93$), representing the early adulthood phase. Based on gender, participants consisted of 418 women (51.9%) and 387 men (48.1%). In terms of educational background, the majority were graduates of state universities (59.4%), followed by private universities (33.5%) and state Islamic religious universities (7.1%). The graduation year was dominated by graduates of 2025 (53.7%), while graduates of 2024 numbered 46.3%. These characteristics indicate that participants have diverse institutional backgrounds and geographical distribution, thus supporting the representativeness of the sample in the context of fresh graduate students in Indonesia.

Instrument Testing Results

The outer model evaluation in this study was conducted using the SmartPLS 4.1.1.6 application. In quantitative research based on Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS SEM), the outer model evaluation aims to assess the quality of the measurement instrument, specifically regarding the validity and reliability of the latent constructs used in the study (Hair., 2017). The outer model in this study used reflective indicators, so the evaluation process focused on testing the convergent validity, discriminant validity, and internal reliability of each construct.

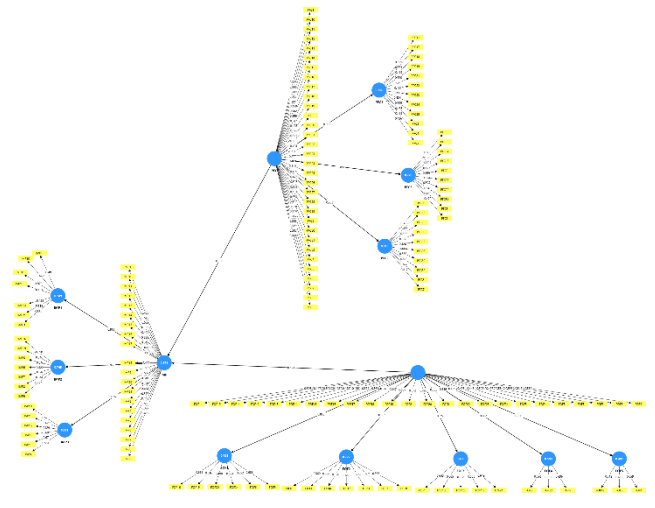


Image 1.
Outer model tes

The outer model graph shows that the indicators for each construct have an average adequate Outer Loading value of <0.40 , thus meeting the convergent validity criteria. This confirms that the measurement model adequately represents the latent constructs and is suitable for use in further structural analysis (Hair., 2021; Sarstedt., 2022; Hair et al., 2024).

Convergent Validity

Convergent validity is tested to assess the relationship between indicators and the latent constructs they measure (Ghozali & Latan, 2015; Hair et al., 2021). Evaluation is conducted using the PLS algorithm, taking into account the loading factor values. Indicators are considered valid if they have a loading factor value of ≥ 0.40 , particularly in instrument development research, where a range of 0.40–0.70 can be maintained as long as it is theoretically supported (Hair et al., 2016; Hulland, 1999 in Ghozali & Latan, 2014; Wonar et al., 2018).

Table 2. Convergent Validity

Variable	Indicator	Factor Nilai Value	Information
Perfectionism	PFC 1	0,375	Invalid
	PFC 2	0,517	Valid
	PFC 3	0,485	Valid
	PFC 4	0,374	Invalid
	PFC 5	0,426	Valid
	PFC 6	0,561	Valid
	PFC 7	0,399	Invalid
	PFC 8	0,439	Valid
	PFC 9	0,470	Valid
	PFC 10	0,608	Valid
	PFC 11	0,300	Invalid
	PFC 12	0,327	Invalid
	PFC 13	0,401	Valid
	PFC 14	0,397	Invalid
	PFC 15	0,502	Valid
	PFC 16	0,477	Valid
	PFC 17	0,581	Valid
	PFC 18	0,419	Valid
	PFC 19	0,520	Valid
	PFC 20	0,636	Valid
	PFC 21	0,404	Valid
	PFC 22	-0,160	Invalid
	PFC 23	0,331	Invalid
	PFC 24	0,409	Valid
	PFC 25	0,426	Valid
	PFC 26	0,443	Valid
	PFC 27	0,554	Valid
	PFC 28	0,589	Valid
	PFC 29	0,523	Valid
	PFC 30	0,573	Valid
	PFC 31	0,548	Valid
	PFC 32	0,570	Valid
Fear of failure	FOF 1	0,526	Valid
	FOF 2	0,572	Valid
	FOF 3	0,445	Valid
	FOF 4	0,508	Valid
	FOF 5	0,477	Valid
	FOF 6	0,652	Valid
	FOF 7	0,571	Valid
	FOF 8	0,517	Valid
	FOF 9	0,686	Valid
	FOF 10	0,447	Valid
	FOF 11	0,668	Valid
	FOF 12	0,442	Valid
	FOF 13	0,432	Valid
	FOF 14	0,450	Valid
	FOF 15	0,528	Valid
	FOF 16	0,561	Valid
	FOF 17	0,653	Valid
	FOF 18	0,583	Valid
	FOF 19	0,616	Valid
	FOF 20	0,498	Valid
	FOF 21	0,619	Valid

Impostor Phenomenon	FOF 22	0,711	Valid
	FOF 23	0,439	Valid
	FOF 24	0,621	Valid
	IMP 1	0,435	Valid
	IMP 2	0,601	Valid
	IMP 3	0,564	Valid
	IMP 4	0,551	Valid
	IMP 5	0,577	Valid
	IMP 6	0,442	Valid
	IMP 7	0,646	Valid
	IMP 8	0,327	Invalid
	IMP 9	0,426	Valid
	IMP 10	0,640	Valid
	IMP 11	0,570	Valid
	IMP 12	0,607	Valid
	IMP 13	0,404	Valid
	IMP 14	0,355	Invalid
	IMP 15	0,629	Valid
	IMP 16	-0,041	Invalid
	IMP 17	0,337	Invalid
	IMP 18	0,000	Invalid
	IMP 19	0,546	Valid
	IMP 20	0,587	Valid
	IMP 21	0,048	Invalid

The results of the convergent validity test for the three variables of Impostor Phenomenon, Perfectionism, and Fear Of Failure. as many as 77 items. Each variable has indicators tested, with a Factor Loading value >0.4 indicating the validity of each indicator. For Impostor Phenomenon, out of 21 items, 15 items were declared valid and 6 items were declared invalid. The lowest items were IMP 8 and IMP 16, while the highest were IMP 7 and IMP 10. In the Perfectionism Variable, out of 32 items, 24 items were declared valid and 8 items were invalid, with the lowest item being PFC 22 and the highest item being PFC 20. The Fear of Failure variable showed better results which had the highest loading value, out of 24 items 24 were declared valid which means all items were good. This shows that the majority of items from each aspect of each variable are valid, thus this research can be continued.

Discriminant Validity

Discriminant validity testing was conducted to ensure clear distinctions between indicators within each construct. Discriminant validity evaluation in this study was conducted using two approaches: cross-loading analysis and the Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT). The cross-loading approach assesses discriminant validity by comparing the indicator loading values on the construct being measured with the loading values on other constructs. An indicator is considered valid if it has the highest value on its original construct (Hair et al., 2021). Furthermore, the HTMT test is used as a recommended alternative measure due to its higher sensitivity in detecting discriminant validity issues (Hair et al., 2019).

Table 3. Discriminant Validity 1

Indicator	Perfectionism	Fear of failure	Impostor phenomenon
PFC 1	0,338	0,264	0,278
PFC 2	0,517	0,370	0,261
PFC 3	0,431	0,331	0,312
PFC 4	0,374	0,246	0,179
PFC 5	0,357	0,270	0,173
PFC 6	0,508	0,491	0,395
PFC 7	0,399	0,418	0,471
PFC 8	0,387	0,377	0,400
PFC 9	0,464	0,416	0,248
PFC 10	0,566	0,479	0,381
PFC 11	0,300	0,254	0,308
PFC 12	0,327	0,276	0,414
PFC 13	0,401	0,336	0,388
PFC 14	0,359	0,256	0,248
PFC 15	0,502	0,400	0,315
PFC 16	0,386	0,349	0,266
PFC 17	0,547	0,506	0,365
PFC 18	0,428	0,400	0,342
PFC 19	0,473	0,424	0,240
PFC 20	0,559	0,509	0,361
PFC 21	0,404	0,300	0,227
PFC 22	-0,108	-0,062	-0,057
PFC 23	0,277	0,222	0,191
PFC 24	0,409	0,340	0,409
PFC 25	0,414	0,299	0,231
PFC 26	0,409	0,393	0,316
PFC 27	0,473	0,477	0,411
PFC 28	0,528	0,507	0,355
PFC 29	0,523	0,476	0,443
PFC 30	0,573	0,497	0,351
PFC 31	0,477	0,450	0,272
PFC 32	0,570	0,554	0,391
FOF 1	0,456	0,526	0,429
FOF 2	0,510	0,572	0,525
FOF 3	0,384	0,445	0,317
FOF 4	0,427	0,508	0,429
FOF 5	0,424	0,477	0,224
FOF 6	0,477	0,534	0,359
FOF 7	0,453	0,535	0,388
FOF 8	0,461	0,517	0,306
FOF 9	0,542	0,589	0,411
FOF 10	0,414	0,447	0,255
FOF 11	0,560	0,601	0,430
FOF 12	0,323	0,442	0,404
FOF 13	0,347	0,432	0,419
FOF 14	0,410	0,450	0,225
FOF 15	0,310	0,394	0,373
FOF 16	0,511	0,561	0,369
FOF 17	0,497	0,546	0,377
FOF 18	0,262	0,347	0,358
FOF 19	0,474	0,537	0,340
FOF 20	0,407	0,498	0,479
FOF 21	0,322	0,385	0,369
FOF 22	0,501	0,546	0,374

FOF 23	0,392	0,439	0,205
FOF 24	0,458	0,498	0,333
IMP 1	0,239	0,280	0,435
IMP 2	0,363	0,384	0,515
IMP 3	0,339	0,321	0,528
IMP 4	0,433	0,472	0,484
IMP 5	0,289	0,290	0,577
IMP 6	0,496	0,502	0,442
IMP 7	0,491	0,463	0,555
IMP 8	0,419	0,424	0,327
IMP 9	0,086	0,130	0,426
IMP 10	0,396	0,401	0,546
IMP 11	0,333	0,347	0,529
IMP 12	0,401	0,451	0,529
IMP 13	0,383	0,392	0,404
IMP 14	0,337	0,342	0,355
IMP 15	0,300	0,310	0,545
IMP 16	0,139	0,086	-0,041
IMP 17	0,076	0,081	0,337
IMP 18	0,000	0,000	0,000
IMP 19	0,295	0,264	0,420
IMP 20	0,450	0,455	0,587
IMP 21	-0,078	-0,086	0,048

Referring to Table 4, the cross-loading analysis indicates that most indicators exhibit their highest loading values on their respective constructs rather than on other constructs. Indicators measuring Perfectionism load most strongly on the Perfectionism construct, indicators of Fear of Failure show the highest loadings on the Fear of Failure construct, and indicators of the Impostor Phenomenon demonstrate the strongest loadings on the Impostor Phenomenon construct. These results suggest that each indicator more accurately reflects its intended construct, thereby confirming that discriminant validity based on cross-loading criteria has been achieved (Hair., 2017; Henseler., 2015).

Table 4. Discriminant Validity 2

Variable	Fear of failure	Perfectionism	Impostor Phenomenon
Fear of Failure	0,497		
Perfectionism	0,875	0,720	0,442
Impostor Phenomenon	0,741	0,457	

Note : fornell larcker method

Discriminant validity was assessed using the Fornell Larcker criterion, with the results presented in the corresponding table. This approach aims to confirm that each construct within the measurement model is empirically distinct and represents a unique conceptual domain. The diagonal values reflect the square root of the Average Variance Extracted (VAVE), whereas the off diagonal values indicate the inter construct correlations. The findings demonstrate that the Perfectionism construct satisfies the discriminant validity requirement, as its VAVE value (0.720) exceeds its correlations with other constructs. In contrast,

the Fear of Failure construct (VAVE = 0.497) and Impostor Phenomenon (VAVE = 0.457) have not fully met the Fornell Larcker criteria, because the VAVE values of each are lower than their correlations with other constructs, especially with Perfectionism and between the two constructs. This finding indicates the potential for conceptual overlap between constructs, so further evaluation is needed, such as the Heterotrait Monotrait Ratio (HTMT) test as below:

Table 5. Discriminant Validity 2

Variable	Fear of failure	Perfectionism	Impostor phenomenon
Fear of failure			
perfectionism	0,875		
Impostor Phenomenon	0,882	0,720	

Note: HTMT Method

Discriminant validity was also examined through the Heterotrait–Monotrait (HTMT) approach, using a cutoff value of <0.90. The findings showed that all inter-construct HTMT ratios were lower than the recommended threshold, indicating that the discriminant validity requirement had been satisfied.

Reliability

Reliability testing is conducted to evaluate the internal consistency of an instrument in measuring a latent construct. Within the PLS-SEM framework, reliability is assessed using Cronbach’s Alpha and Composite Reliability (CR) values through the SmartPLS 4.1.1.6 software. A construct is considered reliable when both Cronbach’s Alpha and CR values exceed >0.60, reflecting acceptable internal consistency among the indicators (Hair, 2017; Heale & Twycross, 2015).

Table 6. Reliability Test Results

Variable	Cronbach alpha	Composite reliability (rho-a)	Ave	Information
Perfectionism	0.856	0.871	0.196	Reliabel
Fear of Failure	0.865	0.869	0.247	Reliabel
Impostor Phenomenon	0.774	0.809	0.209	Reliabel

The reliability test results for the third variable using the Cronbach coefficient, Composite Reliability, and Average Variance Extracted (AVE) showed that the third variable had a Cronbach alpha value above 0.7, indicating good internal consistency. Impostor Phenomenon had a Cronbach value of 0.774, Perfectionism 0.856, and Fear of Failure 0.865, indicating that all measurement variables had acceptable reliability.

RESULTS

Hypothesis testing was conducted to examine the relationships among latent constructs in the structural model using the Partial Least Squares Structural Equation Modeling (PLS-SEM) approach. Prior to hypothesis testing,

assumption testing was carried out through validity and reliability assessments to ensure the quality of the research instruments. The reliability test results showed that all variables had composite reliability values above 0.70, indicating that all constructs were reliable. Furthermore, convergent validity was evaluated using the Average Variance Extracted (AVE) to ensure that the constructs were able to explain the variance of the research indicators. After the measurement model was considered adequate, descriptive and hypothesis analyses were conducted through the bootstrapping procedure by examining the original sample, sample mean, standard deviation, T-statistic, and P-value. The results showed that fear of failure had a greater influence on impostor phenomenon than perfectionism, as indicated by the original sample value of 0.471 for fear of failure and 0.308 for perfectionism. The sample mean values of both variables were also relatively consistent with the original sample values, indicating stable estimation results. In addition, both variables had T-statistic values above 2.58 and P-values below 0.01, indicating that all research hypotheses were accepted and statistically significant(Hair., 2017; Ghozali & Latan, 2015).

Table 7. Research Hypothesis Test Results

Variable	Sample Results	Sample Average	Standard Deviation	T Statistic	P Values
Perfectionism > Impostor phenomenon	0,308	0,306	0,061	5,075	0,000
Fear of failure > Impostor phenomenon	0,471	0,472	0,051	9,299	0,000

The findings indicate that Perfectionism exerts a positive and statistically significant influence on the Impostor Phenomenon, as reflected by a T-statistic greater than 2.58 and a P-value below 0.01. Based on these results, the first hypothesis is supported, implying that higher levels of perfectionism are associated with an increased likelihood of experiencing impostor feelings among fresh graduates. In a similar manner, Fear of Failure demonstrates a positive and highly significant effect on the Impostor Phenomenon, supported by a T-statistic of 9.209 and a P-value below 0.01, both exceeding the established significance thresholds. Accordingly, the second hypothesis (H2) is accepted, indicating that fresh graduates with higher fear of failure tend to exhibit stronger impostor tendencies. Furthermore, the proportion of variance in the dependent variable explained by the independent variables can be assessed through the R-square value, as presented below.

Table 8. Table of R-square test results

Variable	R-Square	R-square adjusted
Impostor Phenomenon	0.571	0.570

The coefficient of determination (R-square) is employed to assess the ability of the structural model to explain the variance in endogenous constructs. Within the PLS-SEM framework, the R-square value reflects the extent to which exogenous constructs contribute to explaining

variations in the endogenous construct. According to the classification proposed by Hair et al. (2017), R-square values of 0.75, 0.50, and 0.25 indicate strong, moderate, and weak explanatory power, respectively. In this study, the obtained R-square value exceeds 0.50, while the adjusted R-square value of 0.570 falls within the moderate category, suggesting that the proposed model demonstrates an adequate overall level of explanatory capability.

DISCUSSION

This study demonstrates that both perfectionism and fear of failure significantly predict the impostor phenomenon in fresh graduates. Consistent with existing theories, these findings highlight the importance of personality and affective factors in the emergence of self-doubt during early career transitions. Notably, fear of failure appears to play a more dominant role than perfectionism, indicating that anxiety related to evaluation and failure consequences outweighs the influence of elevated self-expectations alone.

In comparison with previous research, the present findings are consistent with Apriani (2020), who identified perfectionism as a significant factor influencing individual psychological dynamics in academic settings. This alignment is further supported by earlier studies reporting a positive association between perfectionism and the impostor phenomenon among high-achieving individuals and young adults (Dudău, 2014; Grubb & Grubb, 2021; Koshy., 2022). However, the current study extends Fried-Buchalter's (1992) work by empirically demonstrating that, within the context of fresh graduate students, fear of failure plays a more central role as a source of affective stress. These findings are particularly relevant within the Indonesian socio-cultural context, where strong family expectations and early career achievement pressures are prevalent. Moreover, this study corroborates the findings of Isnaini. (2025), emphasizing internal psychological factors specifically perfectionism and fear of failure as contributors to psychological vulnerability and the emergence of the impostor phenomenon.

A key contribution of this study lies in its use of Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to simultaneously examine the structural relationships among variables during the transition from education to employment. Through this approach, the impostor phenomenon is conceptualized not merely as an internal self-evaluative process, but also as a psychological response to social expectations and structural uncertainty inherent in early career development.

The coefficient of determination (R-square) of 0.571 indicates that the proposed model demonstrates moderate explanatory power (Hair., 2017). This finding suggests that the impostor phenomenon is a multidimensional construct that cannot be fully accounted for by perfectionism and fear of failure alone. Other psychological and contextual variables, such as self-efficacy, self-esteem, social support, and early work environment conditions, may interact with these predictors in shaping impostor experiences.

Based on these findings, future research is encouraged to adopt longitudinal designs to capture changes in the impostor phenomenon throughout the transition from education to employment. Additionally, incorporating protective psychological factors and organizational contextual variables, such as institutional support, may provide a more comprehensive understanding of early career adaptation. From a practical perspective, higher education institutions are advised to enhance career guidance services and mental health support for final-year students and recent graduates.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that perfectionism and fear of failure exert a positive and statistically significant influence on the impostor phenomenon among fresh graduate students. Individuals who demonstrate higher levels of perfectionistic tendencies and fear of failure are more likely to experience impostor feelings. Notably, fear of failure emerged as the more dominant predictor compared to perfectionism in explaining the development of the impostor phenomenon. When examined simultaneously, both independent variables accounted for more than half of the variance in the impostor phenomenon, highlighting the substantial role of personality traits and affective factors in shaping the psychological experiences of fresh graduates.

These findings emphasize the importance of implementing preventive strategies and psychological interventions aimed at fostering adaptive self-standards and alleviating excessive fear of failure. Such efforts are essential to promote psychological well-being, strengthen self-confidence, and enhance career readiness among individuals transitioning from higher education to the world of work.

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ETHICAL APPROVAL

This study involved 805 human respondents who were fresh graduates. Before completing the questionnaire, all respondents received information regarding the purpose

of the study, data confidentiality, and the right to discontinue participation at any time. Respondent participation was voluntary and based on informed consent provided through the research questionnaire. All data collected will be kept confidential and will only be used for academic and research purposes. If your university has an ethics letter or research permit number, please include it in this section.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

Declaration The authors declare that they have no conflicts of interest, either financial or non-financial, that could influence the results, interpretation, or publication of this research.

DATA TRANSPARENCY

(Data Availability Statement) The data supporting the findings of this study are stored by the author and are available in Google Drive. Data can be obtained from the corresponding author upon reasonable request, while maintaining the confidentiality and anonymity of the study respondents.

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AUTHOR'S CONTRIBUTION

In writing this article Authors' contributions in this article The first author Tria Anggraini is responsible for the conceptualization of the research, instrument development, data collection and analysis, interpretation of the results, writing the initial draft, revising the manuscript, and preparing the final version of the article. The second author Nurul Isnaini, M.Psi, acted as research supervisor by providing methodological direction, conducting periodic evaluations of the research implementation, validating the analysis results, and reviewing and editing the manuscript. Meanwhile, the third author Citra Wahyuni, M.Si conducted a critical review of the manuscript, provided academic input, evaluated the substance of the article, and refined the manuscript before publication. All authors have reviewed and approved the final version of the manuscript for publication.

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