

Title: A longitudinal study of the associations between the Impostor Phenomenon, depression, and anxiety on basis of the SOEP-IS data from 2012 to 2018

Presenter: Kay Brauer (Martin Luther University Halle-Wittenberg, Germany)

Abstract:

The Impostor Phenomenon (IP) describes individual differences in self-perceptions of intellectual fraudulence despite evidence of achievements and capability (e.g., feedback by supervisors, grades, and awards). There is increasing interest in the study of the IP, especially its predictors and consequences. The IP relates to reduced mental health and the “Impostor cycle” suggests that the IP is interdependent with depressiveness and anxiety in such a way that they maintain each other. The present study used the 2012, 2015, and 2018 data waves from the German Socioeconomic Panel-Innovation Sample to examine the notion of the IP cycle with longitudinal data. Overall, 700 participants completed measures of the IP, depression, and anxiety at all measurements. Structural equation models testing the temporal order between IP, depression, and anxiety support the notion of an Impostor cycle, with depression/anxiety predicting the IP over time (2012→2015) and the IP predicting depression/anxiety (2015→2018) when testing the relations in a serial model simultaneously. The models fitted the data very well (RMSEAs ≤ 0.07 and CFI ≥ 0.94) and effect sizes were robust (β s between .31 and .41). This is the first study providing longitudinal data from a large sample on the IP in relation to depression and anxiety using state-of-the-art analyses. The findings support the assumptions of an Impostor cycle and provide the means for future research on interventions targeting the IP.