



The Role of Impostor Phenomenon on Career Development in Gen Z Employees

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Abstract. Today's workforce consists of multiple generations, including Generation Z, which is predicted to make a significant contribution to the global workforce. Generation Z, born between 1997 and 2012, has distinctive characteristics, especially in terms of technological prowess and work preferences, which differ from previous generations. One of the challenges that Generation Z often faces in their career development is the Impostor Phenomenon, which is the feeling that the success they achieve is not due to personal competence, but rather due to external factors such as luck. This study aims to examine the role of the impostor phenomenon in the career development of Generation Z employees in the Jabodetabek area. By using non-experimental quantitative methods, using purposive sampling technique. This study involved 247 Generation Z employees working in Jabodetabek. This study uses the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS), developed by Clance (1985) and the Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ) developed by Shashi Kant Singh (2023). Based on the results of the main data analysis using the simple Regression Test, it was found that the impostor phenomenon has a negative role on career development with a value of $\beta = -1.089$, $p = 0.001$, $p < 0.05$. So it can be concluded that an increase in impostor phenomenon can lead to a decrease in career development.

Keywords: Impostor Phenomenon, Career Development, Gen Z

1 Introduction

The world of work is a dynamic environment where a group of individuals carry out a work activity, both in companies and organizations. The individuals who gather have backgrounds from various generations, one of which is Gen Z or Gen Z or the post-millennial generation. In Indonesia, based on the results of a survey conducted by the National Labor Force Survey in 2022, it shows that around 68.63% of Indonesia's workforce is filled by the Millennial and Gen Z generations. Brangka [1] explains that Gen Z made up about 27% of the world's workforce in 2025 and it is predicted that by 2045, Gen Z will contribute a considerable amount to productive age workers. Gen Z is an individual born in 1997 to 2012, growing

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up amid the rapid development of technology and the digital world [2]. This generation has different characteristics and work views from previous generations and has its own priorities at work [3]. Gen Z is known as a generation of professionals who have high technical expertise, good command of languages, and become a highly competent workforce [4]. They are quick to adapt to new things, have high initiative, and have quick access to information, making them highly effective workers in the digital era.

Gen Z is very selective in choosing a workplace [5], so they tend to look for a pleasant work environment, offer flexible working hours, and high overtime compensation [6]. Hanifah & Wardono's research revealed that Gen Z tends to prefer workplaces that support their career growth and development [7]. Gen Z prioritizes companies that offer challenges in work and provide authority and responsibility to their employees. Gen Z is a generation that is very ambitious and focuses on career development [4]. Career development is an individual's effort to develop themselves to realize future career plans [8]. It is also a step taken by every employee or organization to motivate themselves to make optimal contributions and improve skills in carrying out the main tasks and functions in profit and non-profit organizations [9]. According to Siagian cited by Katidjan, the career development of each employee must be based on a clear understanding of the career path that can be achieved, provided that the performance displayed is satisfactory [10]. Career development involves three main dimensions: progress in achieving career goals, development of professional abilities, and acceleration in promotion. Progress in career goals reflects the extent to which the current job is relevant and provides opportunities for employees to realize their career goals.

Employees tend to strive for good job opportunities as a step towards achieving their desired career [11]. A survey by todayonline.com in Singapore showed that employees who are ambitious to achieve a better career often have very high standards for themselves. They fear that every little mistake will reflect on their incompetence, so they work very hard to cover up perceived incompetence at the expense of personal well-being. This leads to doubt and feelings of discomfort, known as the impostor phenomenon (IP). The impostor phenomenon is the feeling that success is due to external factors, rather than personal competence and qualifications, despite objective evidence to the contrary (Clance & Imes, 1978). Research conducted by Access Commercial Finance in 2018 revealed that around 62% of working adults in the UK have experienced impostor phenomenon. Recent studies show that this phenomenon is common in the workplace and affects most employees. Surveys indicate that around 70% of people experience the impostor phenomenon at some point in their career.

IP can cause individuals to doubt their abilities at work and question their value as professionals [13]. Individuals who experience IP tend to experience greater emotional impact when performing tasks and experiencing errors. Research by Cozzarelli and Major showed that individuals with IP have lower performance expectations and feel that their self-perception of their abilities is lower

compared to their real abilities [15]. They are also often unable to receive praise or recognition for good performance and worry about being rejected if their true abilities are revealed [12]. Research by Vergauwe in Gutierrez further explains that the impostor phenomenon negatively impacts attitudes towards career, job satisfaction, and organizational behavior [15].

The impostor phenomenon (IP) often occurs in high-achieving individuals, causing them to underestimate or ignore their success. The main characteristic of IP is the inability to internalize success [16]. Those who experience IP usually believe that their success is due more to luck. Individuals with IP often perform very well in school and set high expectations for themselves. However, they tend to attribute their success to external factors such as luck, discretion from examiners, teachers, or managers, or other circumstances. Individuals with IP often spend more time and effort trying to cover up their worries, engage in maladaptive behaviors, and use coping strategies to avoid feelings of failure [17]. Individuals with Impostor Phenomenon (IP) often spend more time and effort to mask their insecurities, engage in maladaptive behaviors, and adopt coping strategies to avoid feelings of failure [19]. Research by Cozzarelli and Major demonstrated that individuals with Impostor Phenomenon (IP) exhibit lower performance expectations and perceive their abilities to be inferior compared to their actual capabilities [20].

Although the impostor phenomenon has attracted a lot of attention since Clance and Imes first coined the term [12], and several studies show that it has a high level of relevance in the workplace, there is still not much research on the role of the impostor phenomenon on career development, especially examining Gen Z employees who are currently occupying the most positions in the workforce. Previous research on the impostor phenomenon and career development, as described by Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch, shows that IP can affect various aspects of career development [18]. Their results indicate that impostor feelings not only have preconditions but also bring negative consequences in the context of career development, especially in career planning. Individuals with stronger impostor feelings tend to have less clear career plans and limited strategies for their career development. The research conducted by Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch only focused on Gen Y employees [18]. So this study wants to examine the role of the impostor phenomenon on career development for Gen Z employees so that it can see the role of the impostor phenomenon on Career Development in Gen Z in Jabodetabek. Based on the background outlined above, the problem formulation to be further discussed is: Is there a role of the Impostor Phenomenon in career development among Gen Z employees in Jabodetabek?. The aim of this study is to examine the role of the Impostor Phenomenon in career development among Gen Z employees in Jabodetabek.

2 Methods

2.1 Sample

The characteristics of participants in this study consisted of Gen Z employees who work in Jabodetabek with an age of 20 - 27 years, have a minimum work experience of 1 year, and a minimum of high school / vocational school education. This study uses purposive sampling technique, which is a sampling technique used by researchers where researchers have certain considerations in sampling or determining samples for specific purposes and criteria.

In this study, 247 participants were obtained based on the characteristics of participants who had been determined before distributing the questionnaire. Participants with male gender were 105 people (42.5%) and female as many as 142 people (57.5%), participants with the highest age were 27 years old as many as 57 people (34.8%) and the least age was 20 years old as many as 10 people (4%), participants with the latest education with the highest number of participants bachelor degree as many as 144 people (58.3%), SMA / SMK as many as 97 people (39.3%) and master degree as many as 6 people (2.4%), based on work location from Jakarta, Bogor, Depok, Tangerang, and Bekasi, participants with the highest number from Jakarta were 120 people (48.6%), based on work experience, participants with work experience of 1 - 3 years were 160 people (64.8%), 4 - 6 years 84 people (34%) and 7 - 9 years 3 people (1.2%), based on position level, participants with positions as staff were 213 people (86.6%), supervisors 25 people (10.1) and managers 9 people (3.6%) and based on marital status, married as many as 56 people (22.7%) and not married 191 people (77.3%).

2.2 Measurements

The measuring instrument used for the Impostor Phenomenon variable is the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) developed by Clance (1985) with 20 question items that have been adapted to the Indonesian language by Zamralita (2024). This measuring instrument is unidimensional. All items on this scale use a 5-point Likert scale points from 1 = Very Untrue, 2 = Rarely, 3 = Sometimes, 4 = Often, and 5 = Very True. In this study, before testing the reliability again, an item discrimination test was carried out which aims to see the effect between the item score and the total research score. The discrimination power test on the Impostor Phenomenon variable was carried out using the corrected item-total correlation. Items on the psychological scale reaching ≥ 0.30 have good aitem discrimination power. However, if the number of items does not reach the desired number, it can be reduced to ≥ 0.20 . Based on 20 items on the Impostor Phenomenon scale, there are 17 items that have good discrimination power and 3 items that are declared canceled because they have poor discrimination power. The Impostor Phenomenon measuring instrument has an Alpha Cronbach reliability of $0.916 > 0.60$ this is reliable or can be used.

The measuring instrument used for the Career Development variable is the Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ) developed by Shashi Kant Singh (2023) and then

translated by the author (2024) into Indonesian. This measuring instrument consists of 34 questions. This measuring instrument has 3 dimensions, namely Self Concept which consists of 14 questions, Self Fulfillment with 10 questions and Ability to Cope with Development Constraints with 10 questions. In this study, initial testing was carried out using item discrimination power testing which aims to see the effect between item scores and the total research score. The discrimination power test on career development variables uses corrected item-total correlation. Based on 34 items on the career development variable, there are 28 good items and there are 10 items that are canceled because they do not meet the discrimination test power. The Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ) has an Alpha Cronbach reliability of 0.970 with the Self Concept dimension having an Alpha Cronbach of 0.965, the Self Fulfillment dimension has an Alpha Cronbach of 0.957 and the last dimension, namely Ability to Cope with Development Constraints has an Alpha Cronbach of 0.842. Ghozali explains that a research instrument is said to be reliable if the Cronbach's Alpha value is > 0.60 so that the Career Development Questionnaire (CDQ) measuring instrument with three dimensions, namely Self Concept, Self Fulfillment, and Ability to Cope with Development Constraints is reliable or consistent as a tool in data collection in a study.

2.3 Data Collection and Analysis

Data collection was conducted by distributing a Google Form consisting of informed consent, personal identity, and CIPS and CDQ items. Participation was voluntary and could be terminated at any time without giving a reason. The Google Form was distributed online through social media, such as WhatsApp, Instagram, and LinkedIn. After data collection was completed, the researcher conducted data testing using IBM SPSS Statistic 30. Validity and reliability tests were conducted to ensure that each item was valid and reliable. The normality test using the Kolmogorov-Smirnov method showed that the data was normally distributed, so the hypotheses were tested using parametric test methods.

3 Results and Discussion

3.1 Results

The normality test was conducted using the one-sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov method, with $p = 0.200$, which is greater than $p > 0.05$, indicating that the data is normally distributed. Therefore, the normality assumption for conducting the simple linear regression test is met. The next step was to test for linearity, and the linearity test results showed $p = 0.001$, which is less than $p < 0.05$, that there is a significant linear relationship between the impostor phenomenon variable and the career development variable. Furthermore, the heteroscedasticity test using the Scatterplot method shows that it does not contain heteroscedasticity and the regression model is feasible to use.

Hypothesis testing using simple linear regression test, to find out how the role of the impostor phenomenon on career development on Gen Z employees in Jabodetabek.

Table 1. Regression Test on Impostor Phenomenon on career development

Variables	N	Beta Value (β)	R Square	t	F	Sig (p value)	Interpretation
Impostor Phenomenon & Career Development	247	-1.089	0.322	-10.788	116.375	0.001	Negative

Table 1 shows the results of the regression test on the Impostor Phenomenon's effect on career development. The results show a significant value of $p = 0.001$, which is less than $p < 0.05$, indicating that the value is significant. Therefore, **H1 is accepted**, meaning that the Impostor Phenomenon plays a role in career development among Gen Z employees in Jabodetabek. The R Square test aims to see how strong and in which direction the role between the two variables (independent and dependent). Based on the R Square column, it shows a role of 0.322, which means that there is a role between career development can be explained by the impostor phenomenon by 32.2% while the remaining 67.8% is explained by other factors outside the research variables and shows that there is a good relationship between impostors and career development, although the relationship is not entirely strong. Furthermore, the ANOVA test results show that the high F value of 116.375 which means that the model used is good for explaining data variations and the significance value of 0.001 which shows that the impostor phenomenon significantly affects career development in Gen Z employees, and this relationship is not just a coincidence. The calculated t value shows that the value is greater than the t table (1.970) which indicates a significant influence of the impostor phenomenon on career development. The unstandardized coefficient (beta value) is -1.089 which indicates that the impostor phenomenon plays a negative role on career development, where an increase in the impostor phenomenon results in a decrease in career development, and vice versa.

3.2 Discussion

Based on the results of the main data analysis, it was found that the impostor phenomenon has a negative role on career development. This is in line with the results of Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch's research [18] which explains that the impostor phenomenon has a significant relationship with aspects of career development aspects such as career planning and motivation to lead. The higher the impostor phenomenon that occurs in participants, the lower the career planning and motivation to lead. Impostor phenomenon arises from low self-esteem and fear of failure or success, individuals experiencing this phenomenon will find it difficult to see the next step in their career. This is evident from their unclear career strategy. In the study, it was also explained that the impostor phenomenon is a major barrier to successful career development and planning. Many high potential employees may get lost during the career development process because they do not recognize their own potential and are mostly convinced that they are only pretending to be competent.

In addition, research conducted also by Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch with the title "Inspecting the dangers of feeling like a fake: An empirical investigation of the impostor phenomenon in the world of work" shows that this impostor feeling also weakens career adaptability in employees which has an impact on employee promotions [21]. In general, supervisors will offer promotions to impostor employees who they consider to have the ability, not the employees themselves who take the initiative. However, low adaptability makes impostor employees tend to block themselves and not accept the promotion offer for fear of being discovered as impostors. IP has been identified as an internal barrier in the context of career development as more impostor feelings prevent employees from striving for higher career levels within their organization [21].

This is supported by research conducted by Muradoglu et al. that the impostor phenomenon causes a feeling of unworthiness of one's own achievements and abilities which tends to result in low self-confidence which results in a significant decrease in the sense of belonging to their field of work [22]. In addition, Gorski's research revealed that individuals who experience IP often have low motivation, which results in a lack of career planning and professional ambition [23]. The inability to internalize their success can cause them to doubt their ability to take on new challenges, resulting in individuals reducing their desire to pursue better career opportunities [24].

4 Conclusion

This study aims to determine the role of impostor phenomenon on career development on Gen Z employees in Jabodetabek. The results of the main data analysis through hypothesis testing using simple regression tests show that the hypothesis can be accepted, namely that there is a negative role of impostor phenomenon on career development in Gen Z employees in Jabodetabek. This means that the higher the impostor phenomenon experienced by Gen Z employees, the lower the career development.

With this research, researchers hope that this research can be used as a reference source for research with similar topics in the future. The results of the study have contributed in answering the role of impostor phenomenon on career development in Gen Z employees in Jabodetabek. Therefore, the researcher hopes that future research can explore more deeply the role of the impostor phenomenon on career development by involving participants from various generations, such as Gen Y or Gen X. Future research is also expected to be more focused on certain fields, such as education, social, or industry. In addition, future research can examine the relationship between impostor phenomenon and other psychological factors such as job stress, self-efficacy, self-esteem, etc. that can affect the success of career development.

Researchers can provide some practical suggestions that can be used in companies and Gen Z employees in reducing impostor levels and increasing career development. Suggestions for Companies, can conduct intensive development, mentoring and mentorship for Gen Z employees. Development, mentoring and mentorship provided can help employees overcome feelings of lack of confidence and fear of failure and help them achieve their desired careers.

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