



ADVANCE SOCIAL SCIENCE ARCHIVE JOURNAL

Available Online: <https://assajournal.com>

Vol. 05 No. 01. Jan-March 2026. Page#. 7230-7255

Print ISSN: [3006-2497](#) Online ISSN: [3006-2500](#)Platform & Workflow by: [Open Journal Systems](#)<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.22763412>**Behind the Badge: Imposter Syndrome, Personality Traits, and Mental Health among Police Officers****Habiba Ashraf**

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mk7787260@gmail.com**Abstract**

To study the relationship between Imposter Syndrome, Personality Traits, and Mental Health among Police Officers, the present study will be conducted. The research design will utilize a quantitative correlational research design. Purposive sampling will be used to approach participants. We will recruit a sample of 300 police officers (N=300) from various police departments. All participants will be aged between 25–35 years and include the following ranks: ASI, SI, SHO, and ASP. The data will be collected via standardised tools, including the Clance imposter phenomenon scale (Clance, 1985) for intellectual fraudulence and self-doubt; the Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10; Rammstedt & John, 2007) to measure five personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism and openness to experience); the Depression Anxiety Stress Scales–21 (DASS–21; Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995) for mental health. This study is designed to investigate the relationship between imposter syndrome and personality traits, mental health in police officers, and how this measure can predict Mental Health. Pearson correlation, multiple hierarchical regression analysis and t-test analysis shall be performed on the data.

Keywords: Imposter Syndrome; Personality Traits; Mental Health; Police Personnel; Depression; Anxiety; Stress

Introduction

For the purpose of this review, the primary experience we will describe is impostor syndrome (also referred to as the impostor phenomenon), which has received substantial investigation as a psychological experience involving feelings of self-doubt, intellectual fraud, and an inability to internalize successes despite evident abilities (Huecker et al., 2023; Qasem, 2025). People experiencing this phenomenon often explain their success as originating from outside factors – luck, timing, or help from others rather than their own capabilities (Brown & Morley, 2025; Al Lawati et al., 2025). Originally identified as a phenomenon that specifically affected high-performing women, recent studies have confirmed that impostor syndrome can manifest in both genders and across professions and cultures (Price et al., 2024; Chua et al., 2024), broadening the definition of this feeling from a central issue of gender to a universal psychological experience.

The phenomenon was first described in 1978 by Clance and Imes, who found that successful men and women felt like intellectual frauds. Since then, the phenomenon has received considerable attention within psychology, education, and organizational research, driven in part by its links to mental health outcomes and performance at work (Para et al., 2024). Contemporary Literature points out that impostor syndrome is not a clinical disorder in diagnostic manuals, but a cognitive-emotional construct determined amongst other factors by personality, environment, and social ideals (Huecker et al., 2023). Impostor syndrome is essentially an inconsistency between how others view us and how we truly belong. People who harbour impostor feelings, find it difficult to align their achievements with their self-image and often battle a constant sense of self-doubt even fear of being discovered as frauds (Ibrahim et al., 2023). Perfectionism, overgeneralization of failure, and discounting of positive feedback are some maladaptive cognitive processes that maintain this internal conflict (Al Lawati et al., 2025). Through this process the patterns develop into a perennial cycle of anxiety and harsh judgement that, at best, interfere with psychological well-being.

Impostor syndrome is rampant throughout academic and professional environments. Recent studies suggest that a large number of all individuals, especially students and those conducting work in highly pressurised contexts, experience moderate to severe levels of impostor feelings (El-Ashry et al., 2024; Qasem, 2025). As an example, a survey of university students indicated that almost half had moderate impostor experiences with even more frequently and severely impacted (Qasem, 2025). Likewise, impostor syndrome has been reported at high rates in health and professional education too due to the competitive and evaluative nature of these fields (Chua et al., 2024).

Impostor syndrome is also linked to cultural and environmental variables affecting its expression. Individuals in competitive/high-performance settings, such as academia, health care and law enforcement, are particularly susceptible because their performance is regularly assessed and the expectations placed on them are high (Al Lawati et al., 2025). Additionally, new itself when a work specialist or give them up on by graduating to post-education program creates an impostor experience (Para et al., 2024).

Impostor syndrome is very strongly correlated with perfectionism. In contrast, people impose excessive standards on themselves and feel distress when those standards are not achieved (Al Lawati et al. 2025). Discouragement efforts from self-efficacy and low- self-confidence are also drivers of the

impostor phenomenon; where acknowledgement of success does little to alleviate those feelings, as individuals cannot place their faith in their abilities (Brown & Morley, 2025).

Impostor syndrome can cause significant negative consequences in high-pressure careers. Chronic self-doubt can cloud judgment, sap confidence and damage your career development. Specifically, impostor feelings in healthcare may impair clinical decision-making and increase anxiety, and in academia they may decrease research productivity and opportunities for development (Chua et al., 2024).

Personality traits are stable, longterm ways of thinking, feeling and behaving that dictate how we see, understand and react to our world. They are relatively stable over time and across situations, thereby serving as the bedrock of individual differences in human behavior (Soto, 2018). Recent theories of personality, for instance that in contemporary personality psychology constructional concepts on traits continue to be understood as dispositions with a relatively broad and consistent influence on cognition, affect, and behavior over time; however show also gradual developmental changes across the lifespan (DeYoung, 2015). Personality is influenced by biological, psychological and environmental factors which interact to shape personality traits, and moderate heritability estimates generally along with the strong effects of the environment are consistent.

The Five-Factor Model (FFM) also referred to as the Big Five, is one of the most widely accepted models in understanding personality traits. This framework breaks down personality into five domains: Openness, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism (Roberts & Yoon 2022). The Big Five Framework (McCrae & John, 1992) has been embraced gradually as one of the most empirically robust, cross-culturally applicable and predictive personality model associated with numerous consequential life outcome such as academic achievement and occupational performance (Salguero et al., 2020), health behaviours (Bogg & Roberts, 2004) and psychological well-being (Kuo, 2025). These five traits are prepared on a continuum, so each of us could be more or less at peak of an assistant extraversions on the cement or disc agent.

Studies have shown that personality traits are strongly associated with mental health outcomes and well-being. Conscientiousness and extraversion are very much in line with positive psychological outcomes such as life satisfaction and emotion regulation. On the other hand, neuroticism is related to negative affect, emotional instability and vulnerability to psychological distress (Sepúlveda et al., 2025). In contrast, high neuroticism can lead to increased stress, anxiety and burnout. People with this trait tend to react more strongly and may be less equipped to manage through tough times, as a consequence, they may suffer in performance and/or well-being (Soto & John, 2017).

Mental health refers to emotional, psychological and social well-being. Mental health is not the absence of mental illness, and is defined by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a state where individuals: "realise their own abilities, can cope with the normal stresses of life, can work productively and fruitfully and are able to make a contribution to their community" (World Health Organisation [WHO], 2022). Mental health has been conceptualised on a continuum, from an optimum state of functioning to profound psychological distress. Police officers are at heightened risk for mental health problems due to occupational stressors. Being exposed to violent coverups and traumatic situations, working shifts, administering excessive pressure

at the administrative level and facing an avalanche of criticism from the public are all stressors in policing (Violanti et al., 2017). This framework acknowledges that a person can have low psychological well-being without having any diagnosable disorder, or maintain functional well-being in the presence of symptoms (Keyes, 2013). Such models highlight the interplay of genetic susceptibility and neurobiological processes with personality traits, cognitive styles, and environmental stressors (Insel & Cuthbert, 2015).

In contrast, adaptive personality traits like emotions stability, optimism and resilience appear to counteract the adverse effects of imposter feelings. For these officers, using sound coping skills can reframe self-doubt as indicative of growth rather than incompetence. Thus, viewing these constructs as a whole offers an overarching framework of psychological fit including emotional regulation, cognition, social interaction and general life satisfaction (Violanti et al., 2017).

Literature Review

Bravata et al. Systematic review of imposter phenomenon prevalence, predictors and outcomes across multiple populations. The main aim of the study was to meet empirical findings and key psychological and occupational correlates of imposter experiences. The researchers have hypothesized that imposter syndrome would significantly correlate with negative mental health outcomes like anxiety, depression, and burnout. The analysis focused on different quantitative studies using standardized measurements such as Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS). Demographic and psychological attributes (independent variables) were measured against the dependent variable, which was the level of imposter phenomenon. Impostor syndrome was strongly significantly associated with anxiety, depression and emotional exhaustion, the findings revealed. Results: Impostor phenomenon is an under-recognized and prevalent psychological problem that has a meaningful impact on mental health and functioning in professional settings.

Vergauwe et al. A quantitative correlational study was designed to investigate the relationship between imposter phenomenon and personality traits based on the Big Five model (Pittman et al. The main aim was delineate if imposter feelings could be predicted from personality dimensions. The researchers expected that neuroticism would positively predict imposter phenomenon and extraversion and conscientiousness negative predictors. Dominance: Participants took validated personality inventories and imposter scales. From this, the independent variables were analysed as five personality traits, while the dependent variable was found with imposter phenomenon levels. Results indicated a robust positive association between neuroticism and imposter feelings and negative associations with extraversion and conscientiousness. The conclusion of the study was that personality, in general, and emotional instability, particularly, is a significant predictor of imposter experiences.

Quantitative study by Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch (2016): Transferred Impostor phenomenon self-efficacy: workplace outcomes. The goal was to see if and how imposter feelings affect job-related attitudes and behavior. The researchers predicted that the imposter phenomenon would harm self-efficacy and job satisfaction. Standardized measures of imposter feelings and self-efficacy were completed by participants. Impostor phenomenon was an independent variable, while self-efficacy and job satisfaction were the dependent variables. The results showed that those who had high imposter feelings experienced lower self-efficacy and lower job satisfaction. Imposter phenomenon has an

indirect association with occupational functioning through reduced level of confidence according to the findings of their study.

Cokley et al. (2017) it has been performed a correlational study to investigate the relationship between impostor phenomenon and psychological distress of university students. The main aim was to assess if the presence of impostor feelings predicts mental health outcomes? The researchers hypothesized that higher impostor scores corresponded with higher anxiety and depression. Participants filled out the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale, as well as measures of psychological distress. Independent Variable and Dependent Variables. Impostor phenomenon was the independent variable, and anxiety and depression were to be the dependent variables. What they found among their sample was that impostor phenomenon was a considerable predictor of psychological distress. The wider study found impostor syndrome was a serious predictor of mental health issues especially in students.

Jansson et al. The cross-sectional study with university students done by (2025) is a good example of an investigation seeking that relationship between impostor phenomenon, perceived stress and anxiety. The main aim was to examine whether feelings of impostor predict psychological distress. The researchers believed there would be a positive correlation between impostor phenomenon and stress and anxiety. Affiliations Participants completed self-report measures including the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale, Perceived Stress Scale, and indicators of anxiety. The impostor phenomenon was the independent variable, followed by stress and anxiety as dependent variables. Results indicated that there was a positive correlation between impostor feelings and both stress and anxiety. Impostor syndrome was found to be one of the strongest predictors of psychological distress in a recent study.

Chrisman et al. Quantitative Study Impostor Phenomenon and Health Outcomes of Mental Health among Professionals in High-stress Occupations: A Cross-Sectional Survey Study (2016) Research Aim: To investigate Imposter feelings (IF) and psychological well-being in challenging work settings. The investigators predicted that higher impostor scores would correlate with elevated stress and burnout. Standardized Impostor Phenomenon and Mental Health Measures Participants completed. The impostor phenomenon was analyzed as an independent variable, while stress, anxiety and burnout were examined simultaneously in dependent variables. First, the results revealed that impostor feelings were positively correlated with stress and burnout. The study found evidence of impostor syndrome being detrimental to mental health in high-pressure careers.

Personality Traits

Garbarino et al. Taylor (2017) are into a quantitative correlational study to find link between personality traits and stress in police officers. The main aim of the study was to find out the role personality dimensions play on stress perception and coping in police personnel. They specified neuroticism would positively correlate with stress, while the other two traits (extraversion and conscientiousness) would have negative relationships. Participants took standardized Big Five personality inventories and scales of occupational stress. The independent variables used in this study were the five personality traits and the dependent variable was stress level. Findings showed that neuroticism was positively associated with life stress and psychological strain while extraversion and conscientiousness were positively associated with resilience and coping. The findings provided evidence that personality is a significant predictor of stress and psychological functioning in officers.

Violanti et al. For example, in a cross-sectional study conducted by Lau et al. The main aim was to examine the moderating role of personality traits between occupational stress and psychological well-being. The researchers theorized that neuroticism would bolster risk for mental health disorders, while other traits would function as buffers against these conditions. Participants filled out measures of personality, stress and indices of mental health. The independent variable was personality traits, and the dependent variable was mental health outcomes. The results show that high neuroticism is significantly linked to anxiety, depression and burnout; extraversion and conscientiousness are linked to better psychological health. Overall, the research reinforces that personality is a dominant determinant of whether police officers get disordered or not.

In a large-scale quantitative study, Soto and John (2017) aimed to investigate the structural properties, reliability, and criterion-related validity of the Big Five personality traits in different populations. Its main focus was to support the Five-Factor Model and examine its validity across age cohorts and cultures. The researchers thought that the Big Five would be stable, and also show longitudinal predictability across contexts. We measured participants using the Big Five Inventory-2 (BFI-2). The five personality traits were independent variables and the behavioral and psychological outcomes were dependent variables. The results found that personality traits are stable across the life span and have a significant predictive relation to behavior, emotional reactions, and outcomes in life (Mroczek & Spiro, 2007). In conclusion, this study hypothesized that the Big Five model provides a strong framework for understanding personality broadly across populations.

Drawing on theoretical and empirical research, DeYoung (2015) explored the biological and psychological foundations of personality traits in the context of the Big Five. The main goal was to describe how personality traits are related to the neural systems behind them. The researchers hypothesized that personality traits — such as extraversion and neuroticism — are connected to reward- and threat-processing systems in the brain. The research drew on neuroscientific findings and personality assessments. Independent variables were personality traits; dependent variables, behavioural and emotional responses. Their results showed that personality traits are connected to neurobiological activity and affect emotional regulation and behaviour. In conclusion, personality traits are partly genetic and partly the consequence of processes in our physical and social environment that shape these individual differences.

Bleidorn et al (2015). The main goal was to find out how personality traits change in the course of a lifetime. The researchers guessed that personality traits, such as conscientiousness and agreeableness, would go up with age, while neuroticism went down. The authors collected personality assessments from participants at several time points. Age and life experience were the independent variable and personality traits were dependent variables. Across the Straits. Again, their findings revealed that personality traits were relatively stable but that they did change over time. According to the study, personality development is driven by biological maturation and contextual influences.

Vergauwe et al. A quantitative correlational study on the impostor phenomenon and the Big Five personality traits was conducted by CA (2015). The main aim was to see if certain personality traits were predictors of impostor feelings. They anticipated that neuroticism would positively correlate with impostor phenomenon (H1), while extraversion and conscientiousness would negatively correlate with

impostor phenomenon (H2). Participants completed standardized Big Five inventories and Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale. Independent variables were personality traits and dependent variable was impostor phenomenon. Results indicated that neuroticism was positively and strongly correlated with impostor feelings, while extraversion and conscientiousness were negatively associated. The research found that personality features, especially emotional instability, are strong predictors of vulnerability to impostor experiences.

Theoretical and Empirical Theories on the Relationship between Personality Traits and Mental Health OutcomesWidiger and Oltmanns (2017) The main goal was to identify how personality traits contribute to susceptibility to mental disorders. Researchers hypothesized that neuroticism would be highly correlated with mental health problems, because the other traits could play a protective role. The study included personality testing and clinical assessments. I refer to the independent variables as personality traits and the dependent variables as mental health outcomes (anxiety, depression). The results showed that neuroticism was found to be a good predictor of psychological distress while traits such as conscientiousness and extraversion were associated with resilience and improved well-being. The study found personality traits are a key factor in mental health outcomes.

Mental Health

Sarfraz et al. A quantitative correlational study was conducted (2023) to assess the association between workplace stress and mental health among police officers of Pakistan. Objective: To examine the relationship between occupational stress and psychological well-being, and whether this is moderated by work or personal protective factors. The authors hypothesised that higher levels of workplace stress would be related to worse mental health outcomes. Among those taking part were 820 police officers who underwent standardised questionnaires on workplace stress and mental health indicators. The independent variable was workplace stress and the dependent variable was mental health. The results demonstrated that high occupational stress was negatively related to mental health of police personnel at a statistically significant level. Workplace stress is one of the most important factors of psychological distress among police officers, the study found.

Beckley et al. A comparative study of mental health and well-being among police officers in New Zealand, Australia, and England was undertaken by Alexander et al. (2025). The main aim was to assess the prevalence of mental health issues (primarily post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD)) and to determine any occupational drivers. The investigators believed that trauma and high job demands would be strongly predictive of mental health outcomes after 3 years. The analysis of the work was comparative based upon existing datasets and surveys of police officers. The independent variables were job demands and exposure to trauma, and the dependent variable was mental health outcomes. PTSD, anxiety and stress-related disorders were all found to be at high prevalence rates among police officers of all areas, based on the findings. Occupational stressors, along with exposure to trauma, account for a large part of mental ill-health in policing - the study concluded.

Teles et al. (2024) performed a cross-sectional study to determine the psychological health of police officers and its related risk factors. Its main purpose was to assess stress, burnout and psychological distress in law enforcement members. It was hypothesized that police officers would demonstrate greater levels of stress and burnout than general populations. Instruments: All participants completed

standardized mental health assessments to measure stress and burnout. Independent variables were occupational stress and work-related characteristics, mental health, as the dependent variable. The results pointed to higher rates of stress, burnout and emotional exhaustion in police officers. The analysis found that policing is a high risk occupation for mental health disorders, given the relentless exposure to stress and critical incidents.

van der Velden et al. Orr et al.(2013) a longitudinal study of police officers who reported traumatic events were at risk of mental health problems. The key question they sought to answer was whether police officers are more likely to suffer from psychological disorders The researchers expected that repeated exposure to critical incidents would result in more mental health disturbances. Study:Police Officers Exposed to Traumatic Events Longer Followed over Time. Exposure to trauma was the independent variable, and mental health outcomes the dependent variable. The results revealed that police officers are much more susceptible to PTSD and other forms of poor mental health than the general population. The study found that a primary risk factor for mental disorders in policing is occupational trauma.

Violanti et al. Introduction Occupational stress and mental health among police officers: a quantitative study (2017) The main goal was to study the influence of job stressors on psychological well-being. Our researchers hypothesized that more work-related pressure would be linked to more mental health symptoms. Measurement of stress indicators and mental health was attained from participants. Occupational Stress as the Independent Variable and Mental Health Outcomes as the dependent variable. High stresses were significantly connected to anxiety, depression, and burnout in the results. According to the study, occupational stress was found to be a key risk factor in structuring mental health among police officers.

Indigenous Work

Qureshi et al. The only quantitative cross-sectional nationwide study to assess the burden and psychological impact of impostor syndrome among students studying medicine, was performed by Murtaza et al. (2017) in Pakistan. The study aimed to investigate prevalence rates of impostor phenomenon, and the relationship between personality traits and mental health. The researchers were working on the assumption that impostor syndrome would be common in students and impair their psychological functioning. A total of 143 final-year MBBS students who filled out the Young ImpostorScale were participants. Impostor syndrome was the independent variable and psychological well-being and personality outcomes served as dependent variables in this study. The results showed that 47.5% of students had impostor syndrome, with the incidence being very high in females. Conclusions: The study showed that impostor phenomenon is prevalent among Pakistani students and it has pernicious consequences on mental health and personality development.

Amir et al. Introduction: A cross-sectional study³⁹ examined the prevalence and severity of impostor syndrome among postgraduate medical residents in Pakistan and its relationship with mental health variables (2024). The primary aim was to explore potential risk factors impacting on impostor experience in high-pressured clinical environments. The researchers hypothesized that impostor syndrome would be correlated with psychological stress and distress. The study included 146 postgraduate trainees who responded to the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale. Independent variables were demographic and occupational, dependent variable impostor syndrome. ResultsImpostor feelings were more prevalent

among women and those with high workloads. We found that among residents of Pakistan, impostor syndrome is highly prevalent and associated with mental health issues including stress and anxiety; therefore the final analysis was: Impostor Syndrome is common amongst residents in Pakistan which correlates with mental health problems like stress, anxiety.

Zafar et al. (2024) performed a quantitative correlational study to and determine the correlation between impostor phenomenon, personality type and self-esteem of medical and allied health students of Pakistan. The main aim was to assess if different traits are predictive of impostor feelings. The researchers expected that facets of personality (e.g., extraversion and conscientiousness) would be negatively associated with impostor syndrome, while low self-esteem would increase susceptibility. Individuals completed the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale, Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale and a personality inventory. Independent variables were personality traits and self-esteem, while dependent variable was impostor phenomenon. The results indicated that there was a strong negative correlation between impostor syndrome and extraversion, conscientiousness, and self-esteem. It was concluded that personality traits are an important factor of impostor experience among Pakistani students.

Fatemah et al. conducted a cross-sectional study on the nexus between impostor phenomenon and social anxiety in medical students of Pakistan. The main goal was to look into the relationship between impostor beliefs and mental health outcomes. The researchers theorized that more impostor scores would correspond with a greater level of social anxiety. They were administered the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale and Social Interaction Anxiety Scale. Impostor phenomenon served as independent variable, whereas the dependent variable was social anxiety. Results showed that 56.8 per cent of the participants felt as imposters and a strong positive relationship was found between the impostor syndrome and social anxiety. Impostor phenomenon was found to have a significant effect on mental health in Pakistani students the study conclusion.

Meghji et al. Introduction Students' mental health and behavioral problems have garnered considerable attention (2025), but little is known about impostor phenomenon, burnout, and mental health among undergraduates in Pakistan.) An overall aim of the study was to specifically test if impostor feelings predicted burnout and psychological distress. The researchers wanted to know if higher rates of impostor syndrome were linked with more burnout or mental health problems. The Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale and Maslach Burnout Inventory were administered to all participants. Impostor phenomenon represented the independent variable and burnout and mental health indicators were treated as dependent variables. The results demonstrated positive associations of impostor syndrome and burnout dimensions (including depersonalization, emotional exhaustion) The findings of the study concluded that impostor phenomenon is a significant predictor of mental health problems among Pakistani students.

Rationale of Study

The abysmal levels of psychological distress within police and subsequent failure behaviours inherent in these professionals underscore the vital requirement of identifying how personality traits shape imposter experiences subsequently impacting mental health outcomes. In summation, this allows in understanding which traits convey additional risk or protection from experiencing an imposter phenomenon via distinct mechanisms that can be used as discussion points in collaborative-designed

people management practices over time. Knowing these associations might lessen stigma and increase the usage of services by individuals struggling internally. Given that the statistical output reveals that imposter syndrome along with maladaptive personality traits are significant predictors of mental health difficulties it stands to reason that police departments would be able to provide targeted interventions (e.g., counseling, resilience training and stress management programming). Imposter syndrome is an unrecognized psychological figure that might impact the mental health of officers as it has been shown to be linked with anxiety, depression and burnout (Bravata et al., 2020). Individual reactions to occupational stress and self-doubt are shaped by personality characteristics as well. Neuroticism, which is a stable correlate of psychological distress (Costa & McCrae, 1992), and conscientiousness and extraversion are shown to be often psychological factors that did not yield favourable emotional regulation and coping. Officers with high levels of neuroticism may report higher anxiety under stress, while officers high in conscientiousness may be better able to manage their tasks and bounce back from the difficulties involved. Previous work indicates that personality traits are significant predictors of occupational stress and well-being (Malouff et al., 2005), but very little research has been conducted to explore the interaction between personality and imposter syndrome as it relates to mental health outcomes in police personnel. Associates of depression, anxiety, and stress Police work is inherently stressful involving traumatic exposure to potentially distressing information; organizational demands; long working hours; and abusive or negative public perceptions (Violanti et al., 2017). Additionally, resources limitations, a politically charged environment and limited institutional psychological support in developing countries such as Pakistan may exacerbate mental health risks for officers. Yet, despite these difficulties, the empirical examination of police psychological health at local levels is limited. Hence, it is timely and needed to examine the interrelationship of imposter syndrome, personality traits, as well as mental health outcomes. The current study aims to build on the theoretical contribution and practical implications of resilience-focused training initiatives targeting aspects that promote psychological functioning as well as occupational well-being amongst police personnel by incorporating these constructs (Rajput & Mahesar, 2025; Violanti et al., 2017).

Objectives of Study

- To investigate the relationship between imposter syndrome, personality traits and mental health for police.
- Predictors of mental health among police
- To study the variables of the examined study in terms of gender
- Hypotheses:
- It is expected that there will be a strong correlation between mental health and imposter syndrome as well as personality traits among police
- Imposter syndrome and personality traits may predict police officers mental health
- The study variables will have a gender difference

Methodology

Participants: The sample was collected from 300 police officers (N = 300) between the ages of 25 and 35 who work for various police agencies by using purposive sampling technique. Quantitative and

correlational research design was employed to investigate the relationship between imposter syndrome, inherent personality traits, and mental health in 25–35-year-old police officers.

Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

The data was collected from those police officials who have at least one year of service in police department. The data was collected from those officials who were only working in crime investigation branch or safe city finder. Those officers were excluded from the study who were suspended or retired, history with mental and physical disability.

Instruments

Demographic information sheet: The questions include information about age, gender, marital status, rank in police department and shift type as well as previous mental health diagnosis or substance use history and service time (over 14 years).

Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS; Clance, 1985): it's a 22 items a 5-point Likert scale (e.g., 1 = "Not at all true" to 5 = "Very True") with total scores ranging from 20 to 100, where higher scores reflect more intense imposter experience. While scale is used as a one-dimensional measure of general imposter phenomenon in research, the items are tapping into several different themes (fear of evaluation, discounting praise, perfectionistic tendencies and anxiety about success). Several studies have reported high internal consistency reliability for the CIPS, with Cronbach's alpha values generally between .85 and .69, corroborating high internal consistency of the 20 items.

Big Five Inventory-10 (BFI-10; Rammstedt & John, 2007): It is an ultra-brief personality is 10 items scale with two representing each dimension rated on a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree; 5 = strongly agree), using one item per trait reverse-scored to control for acquiescence bias as identified in validated scoring guides: The BFI-10 has acceptable psychometric properties for use in research contexts, even though it is relatively brief: test–retest reliability was around $r = .65$. Strong convergent validity with full BFI-44 scales.

Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS-21) (Lovibond & Lovibond, 1995): The Depression Anxiety Stress Scales (DASS)21 It was designed to evaluate the mood states of depression anxiety and stress. This scale has 3 subscales. This modality employs a 4 points Likert type multiple choice scale ranging from 0–3, of which zero means did not apply to me at all and three indicates Applied to me very much or most of the time. The Cronbach's alpha of this scale ranged between 0.88 to 0.94; indicating that it has acceptable reliability.

Procedure

Firstly, study scales will be obtained permission from the authors. This will be followed by a request to gain ethical approval from the Department of Clinical Psychology. The participants will be recruited using university forums and community networks. Participants will need to read and sign an informed consent form before taking part. This will be explicit that participation is voluntary and all information will remain confidential.

Self-report questionnaires will be administered in a supervised setting and it is expected that the complete process takes between 20–30 minutes. As participants will remain anonymous and their privacy is of utmost importance, each participant will be assigned a unique code; all responses from the data sets will only be evaluated through these codes and not identifiable information.

The data collected will be screened by missing values, outliers and normality assumption to continue with statistical analysis. Means and standard deviations will be computed for basic descriptive statistics. Regression will then be performed based on the hypotheses.

Results

Descriptive statistics of the Demographic information of the police officers (N=200)

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>f</i>	%	Min	Max	<i>Kurtosis</i>	<i>Skewness</i>
Age	1.84	.70			1	3	-.93	.23
25-28			67	33.5				
29-32			88	49.0				
33-35			32	17.5				
Gender	1.24	.43			1	2	.34	.17
Male			152	76.0				
Female			48	24.0				
Marital Status	1.46	.62			1	4	.34	1.26
Married			119	59.5				
Unmarried			73	36				
Single			7	3.5				
Engaged			2	1.0				
Years of Service	1.69	.65			1	3	-.70	-1.10
1-3 year			83	41.5				
4-6 years			97	48.5				
7 and above			20	10.0				
Shift Type	1.86	.84			1	3	-1.51	.28
Day			86	43.0				
Night			57	28.5				
Rotational			57	28.5				
Mental health History					1	3	-.68	.45
Yes			95	47.5				
No			95	47.5				
Others			10	5.0				

The results of Table 1 indicate the demographic characteristics of the participants ($N = 200$). Nearly half of the participants (49.0%, $n = 98$) were aged 29–32 years, followed by those aged 25–28 years (33.5%, $n = 67$) and 33–35 years (17.5%, $n = 35$). The mean age category score was $M = 1.84$ ($SD = 0.70$). Regarding gender, most participants were male (76.0%, $n = 152$), whereas females comprised 24.0% ($n = 48$) of the sample. The mean gender score was $M = 1.24$ ($SD = 0.43$). With respect to marital status, the majority of participants were married (59.5%, $n = 119$), followed by unmarried participants (36.0%, $n = 72$), single participants (3.5%, $n = 7$), and engaged participants (1.0%, $n = 2$). The mean marital status score was M

= 1.46 ($SD = 0.62$). In terms of work experience, 48.5% ($n = 97$) had 4–6 years of service, 41.5% ($n = 83$) had 1–3 years of service, and 10.0% ($n = 20$) had seven or more years of service. The mean years of service score was $M = 1.69$ ($SD = 0.65$). Regarding shift type, 43.0% ($n = 86$) worked day shifts, while equal proportions worked night shifts (28.5%, $n = 57$) and rotational shifts (28.5%, $n = 57$). The mean shift type score was $M = 1.86$ ($SD = 0.84$). Finally, 47.5% ($n = 95$) of the participants reported a history of mental health concerns, an equal proportion (47.5%, $n = 95$) reported no history of mental health concerns, and 5.0% ($n = 10$) selected other responses.

Table 02

Peron Product Moment Correlation, Mean, Standard Deviation among the Study Variables(N=200).

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	9	10	11	12	13
1-Fake	...	.56***	.48***	.93***	-.63***	.12	-.02	.01	-.11	.39***	.55***	.59***
2-Luck		...	.47***	.73***	-.60***	-.02	.02	.09	-.16*	.21**	.40***	.44***
3-Disc			...	.67***	-.51***	-.07	.09	.12	-.05	.39***	.34***	.47***
4-IPS				...	-.73***	.09	-.01	.05	-.16*	.44***	.57***	.66***
5-Ext					...	-.09	.05	-.06	.43***	-.31***	-.57***	-.58***
6-Agr						...	-.07	-.12	-.001	-.09	-.00	-.06
7-Cont							...	-.02	.09	-.00	-.14*	-.03
8-Neuro								...	-.04	.02	.06	.07
9-Open									...	.07	-.10	.04
10-Dep										...	.43***	.81***
11-Anx											...	.81***
12-Str												.76***
13-MH												...
<i>M</i>	33.02	8.62	8.71	58.61	7.05	5.62	6.31	6.17	5.89	16.77	16.76	50.03
<i>SD</i>	6.16	2.05	1.95	10.18	1.83	1.22	1.21	2.47	1.46	5.39	3.58	10.12

P<.001; *p*<.01; *p*<.05

Note: IPS= Imposter Syndrome; Disco= Discount; Ext= Extroversion, Agr= Agreeableness; Cont= Conscientiousness; Neuro= Neuroticism; Open= Openness to Experience; Dep= Depression; Anx= Anxiety; Str= Stress; MH= Mental Health

The Results of Table 2 indicates the descriptive statistics and Pearson product–moment correlations among the study variables. The dimensions of impostor syndrome were strongly and positively associated with the overall impostor syndrome score. Specifically, Fake exhibited a very strong positive correlation with overall impostor syndrome ($r = .93$, $p < .001$), followed by Luck ($r = .73$, $p < .001$) and Discount ($r = .67$, $p < .001$). The impostor syndrome dimensions were also significantly intercorrelated, with correlations ranging from $r = .47$ to $.56$ ($ps < .001$). Among the Big Five personality traits, Extraversion demonstrated a strong negative association with impostor syndrome ($r = -.73$, $p < .001$). Extraversion was also negatively associated with depression ($r = -.31$, $p < .001$), anxiety ($r = -.57$, $p < .001$), stress ($r = -.57$, $p < .001$), and overall mental health problems ($r = -.58$, $p < .001$), suggesting that individuals with higher levels of extraversion reported fewer psychological symptoms.

In contrast, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness showed generally weak and nonsignificant associations with impostor syndrome and psychological distress. A small negative

relationship was observed between conscientiousness and anxiety ($r = -.14$, $p < .05$), whereas openness showed a weak negative association with luck ($r = -.16$, $p < .05$).

Regarding mental health outcomes, overall impostor syndrome was positively associated with depression ($r = .44$, $p < .001$), anxiety ($r = .57$, $p < .001$), stress ($r = .60$, $p < .001$), and overall mental health problems ($r = .66$, $p < .001$). Similarly, the impostor syndrome dimensions (Fake, Luck, and Discount) exhibited significant positive correlations with depression, anxiety, stress, and mental health problems, indicating that higher impostor experiences were associated with greater psychological distress.

Finally, depression, anxiety, and stress were strongly interrelated, with correlations ranging from $r = .35$ to $.60$ ($ps < .001$). Each was also strongly associated with the composite mental health score (depression: $r = .81$; anxiety: $r = .81$; stress: $r = .76$; all $ps < .001$), supporting the convergent validity of the psychological distress measures. Overall, these findings suggest that greater impostor syndrome is linked to poorer mental health, whereas extraversion appears to function as a protective personality characteristic.

Table 03

Reliability Coefficient of the Instruments ($N=200$)

<i>Scales</i>	<i>α</i>
Impostor Syndrome Scale	.77
Extraversion	.45
Agreeableness	.54
Conscientiousness	.78
Neuroticism	.31
Openness to Experience	.67
Depression	.43
Anxiety	.60
Stress	.64
Mental Health	.74

The results of table 03 indicating the internal consistency reliability of all study measures was assessed using Cronbach's alpha. The Impostor Syndrome Scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency ($\alpha = .77$), indicating satisfactory reliability for use in the present study. Among the Big Five personality dimensions, Conscientiousness exhibited acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .78$), whereas Openness to Experience demonstrated questionable reliability ($\alpha = .67$). In contrast, Extraversion ($\alpha = .45$), Agreeableness ($\alpha = .54$), and Neuroticism ($\alpha = .31$) showed low levels of internal consistency, suggesting that these subscales should be interpreted with caution. For the mental health measures, the overall Mental Health scale demonstrated acceptable reliability ($\alpha = .74$). However, the Depression ($\alpha = .43$), Anxiety ($\alpha = .60$), and Stress ($\alpha = .64$) subscales exhibited poor to questionable internal consistency. Although the Anxiety and Stress subscales approached the minimum acceptable level for exploratory research, the reliability coefficient for the Depression subscale was considerably below the recommended threshold. Overall, the findings indicate that the Impostor Syndrome Scale, Conscientiousness, and the overall Mental Health scale possessed satisfactory internal consistency in the

present sample, whereas the remaining subscales demonstrated relatively lower reliability and should be interpreted cautiously in subsequent analyses.

Table 04

The linear Regression Analysis indicating the Imposter Syndrome as predictor of Mental Health ($N=200$)

Predictors	<i>B</i>	<i>SEB</i>	β	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
$R^2 = .43, \Delta R^2 = .43$					
Constant	11.80	3.17		3.73	.001
IPS	.65	.05	.66	12.25	.001

$p < .001$

Note: IPS= Imposter Syndrome

Result of table 03 indicates that overall regression model was statistically significant, explaining 43% of the variance in mental health scores ($R^2 = .43, \Delta R^2 = .43$). Impostor syndrome emerged as a significant positive predictor of mental health scores, $B = 0.65$, $SE = 0.05$, $\beta = .66$, $t(198) = 12.25$, $p < .001$. Specifically, a one-unit increase in impostor syndrome was associated with a 0.65-unit increase in mental health problem scores. The standardized regression coefficient ($\beta = .66$) indicates a strong positive relationship, suggesting that higher levels of impostor syndrome are associated with greater mental health difficulties among police officers. Therefore, the hypothesis that impostor syndrome significantly predicts mental health was supported.

Discussion

The present study examined the relationship between impostor syndrome, personality traits, and mental health among police officers. Our first objective of the study was to investigate the relationship strength among the study variables such as Impostor Syndrome, Personality traits and mental health among the police officers. So, it was hypothesized that there would be significant relationship among the study variables. The findings of the study revealed that impostor syndrome is significantly and positively associated with depression, anxiety, stress, and overall mental health problems. Police officers who reported stronger impostor feelings also experienced greater psychological distress. These study findings are consistent with previous research indicating that individuals experiencing impostor syndrome frequently report elevated levels of anxiety, depressive symptoms, emotional exhaustion, burnout, and reduced psychological well-being (Bravata et al., 2020). The systematic review conducted by Bravata et al. (2020) concluded that impostor syndrome is prevalent across professional populations and is consistently associated with depression, anxiety, impaired occupational functioning, and burnout. One possible explanation for these findings is that individuals experiencing impostor syndrome consistently underestimate their own competence despite objective evidence of success. Instead of attributing achievements to their abilities, they often attribute success to luck, timing, or external assistance while simultaneously fearing that others will eventually discover their perceived inadequacies. Such maladaptive cognitive patterns increase self-doubt, perfectionistic concerns, emotional exhaustion, and psychological distress. Over time, these persistent negative self-beliefs may contribute to symptoms of depression, anxiety, and stress, ultimately reducing overall mental health (Bravata et al., 2020). Previous

research has similarly reported that organizational stressors within police departments are associated with poorer mental health, psychological morbidity, and reduced occupational functioning (Demou et al., 2019).

Result also indicated that the dimensions of impostor syndrome, Fake, Luck, and Discount were all positively associated with psychological distress. In particular, the Fake dimension demonstrated strong positive relationships with depression, anxiety, stress, and overall mental health problems. Likewise, Luck and Discount showed significant positive correlations with indicators of psychological distress. These findings suggest that individuals who believe their achievements are undeserved or primarily attributable to external circumstances experience greater emotional difficulties. Similar findings have been reported in previous research showing that failure to internalize success and attributing achievements to external factors contribute to increased psychological distress and poorer well-being (Bravata et al., 2020; Feenstra et al., 2020).

An important finding of the present study was the strong negative association between Extraversion and impostor syndrome. Police officers reporting higher levels of extraversion experienced significantly lower impostor feelings. Furthermore, extraversion demonstrated significant negative associations with depression, anxiety, stress, and overall mental health problems. These findings indicate that extraversion may serve as a protective personality characteristic that promotes emotional resilience, adaptive coping, and psychological well-being among police personnel. Previous research has similarly suggested that positive personality characteristics and adaptive self-perceptions are associated with lower impostor feelings and better psychological adjustment (Bravata et al., 2020; Feenstra et al., 2020).

Individuals high in extraversion generally demonstrate greater social confidence, optimism, positive affect, and effective interpersonal functioning. These characteristics may reduce vulnerability to persistent self-doubt and facilitate healthier responses to occupational stressors. Extraverted individuals are also more likely to seek social support and employ adaptive coping strategies, thereby promoting resilience and psychological well-being in demanding work environments (Soto, 2019; Feenstra et al., 2020). The findings concerning Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism, and Openness to Experience were less pronounced. These personality traits demonstrated generally weak or nonsignificant relationships with impostor syndrome and psychological distress, with the exception of a small negative association between Conscientiousness and anxiety. These findings may reflect the unique occupational characteristics of police work, where environmental demands, organizational culture, and operational stressors may exert stronger influences on psychological well-being than some personality dimensions alone (Feenstra et al., 2020). Additionally, the relatively low reliability coefficients observed for several personality subscales in the present study may have attenuated the magnitude of the observed relationships, warranting cautious interpretation of these findings.

The study also demonstrated strong positive intercorrelations among depression, anxiety, stress, and the composite mental health measure. These findings are consistent with contemporary conceptualizations of psychological distress, suggesting that these emotional symptoms frequently co-occur and represent overlapping manifestations of compromised mental health (Thomas & Bigatti, 2020). Recent evidence has likewise demonstrated substantial overlap between depression, anxiety,

stress, and impostor phenomenon, highlighting the importance of addressing these psychological concerns through comprehensive mental health interventions (Bravata et al., 2020).

The second objective of the study was to investigate the predictors of mental health. So, it was hypothesized that the impostor syndrome is significant predictor of mental health among the police officers. The finding of the study sported our hypothesis and indicated that impostor syndrome is significant positive predictor of mental health problems among police officers, explaining 43% of the variance in mental health ($R^2 = .43$, $\beta = .66$, $p < .001$). This finding suggests that police officers with higher levels of impostor syndrome are more likely to experience poorer mental health. The strong predictive effect indicates that impostor syndrome is an important psychological factor associated with mental health outcomes in this population. The findings are consistent with previous research demonstrating that impostor syndrome is associated with increased depression, anxiety, stress, burnout, and reduced psychological well-being across occupational settings (Bravata et al., 2020; Feenstra et al., 2020). Individuals with stronger impostor feelings tend to doubt their abilities, attribute their success to external factors, and fear being exposed as incompetent, which contributes to psychological distress (Bravata et al., 2020). Given the demanding nature of police work, these findings highlight the importance of implementing psychological screening, counseling services, and resilience-building interventions to reduce impostor feelings and promote mental well-being among police officers. Overall, the findings support the proposition that impostor syndrome represents an important psychological risk factor for poorer mental health among police officers, whereas extraversion appears to function as an important protective personality characteristic. These findings emphasize the need for psychological screening, resilience-building programs, and counseling interventions aimed at reducing impostor feelings and strengthening adaptive coping resources within law enforcement organizations (Bravata et al., 2020; Feenstra et al., 2020).

Implications of the Study

The findings of the present study have several theoretical, practical, and organizational implications. From a theoretical perspective, the study contributes to the growing literature on impostor syndrome by demonstrating its significant association with mental health outcomes among police officers. The findings extend previous research by highlighting the importance of personality traits, particularly extraversion, in understanding individual differences in psychological adjustment within law enforcement settings. The study also provides empirical support for the role of personality characteristics in explaining variations in psychological distress among professionals working in high-risk occupations.

The results of the study also emphasize the need for regular psychological assessment and mental health screening within police organizations. Identifying officers experiencing high levels of impostor syndrome may facilitate early intervention before symptoms develop into more severe psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, and chronic stress. Routine psychological evaluations, confidential counseling services, and employee assistance programs may help officers recognize maladaptive self-beliefs and develop healthier coping strategies.

The findings further suggest that resilience-building interventions, cognitive-behavioral approaches, stress management training, and psychoeducation programs may help reduce impostor feelings and

improve psychological well-being. Programs that strengthen self-efficacy, confidence, emotional regulation, and adaptive coping may be particularly beneficial for officers working under demanding operational conditions. Leadership training that promotes supportive supervision, constructive feedback, and recognition of employees' achievements may also reduce feelings of self-doubt and perceived inadequacy among police personnel. At the organizational level, police departments may benefit from implementing comprehensive mental health policies that promote psychological well-being alongside physical fitness. Creating an organizational culture that encourages help-seeking behavior, reduces stigma surrounding mental health, and provides accessible psychological support may improve officers' overall well-being, job satisfaction, occupational performance, and organizational commitment. Such initiatives may also reduce absenteeism, burnout, emotional exhaustion, and turnover intentions while enhancing the quality of public service.

The study also has implications for counseling psychologists, clinical psychologists, organizational psychologists, and mental health professionals working with police personnel. The findings suggest that interventions targeting impostor syndrome should be incorporated into psychological counseling, stress management programs, and leadership development initiatives. Addressing maladaptive perfectionism, self-doubt, and negative self-evaluation may contribute to improved mental health and professional functioning among police officers.

Finally, the present findings provide a foundation for future research examining the mechanisms through which personality traits influence the relationship between impostor syndrome and mental health. Researchers may further investigate additional psychological variables, including resilience, emotional intelligence, psychological capital, self-compassion, mindfulness, and organizational support, to develop a more comprehensive understanding of psychological well-being among police personnel.

Conclusion

The present study examined the relationship between impostor syndrome, personality traits, and mental health among police officers. The findings demonstrated that higher levels of impostor syndrome were associated with greater depression, anxiety, stress, and overall mental health problems. Among the personality dimensions, extraversion emerged as the strongest protective factor, showing significant negative relationships with both impostor syndrome and indicators of psychological distress. In contrast, the remaining personality traits demonstrated relatively weak or nonsignificant associations with mental health outcomes in the present sample. The study also indicated that impostor syndrome is significant positive predictor of mental health among the police officer.

These findings underscore the importance of recognizing impostor syndrome as a meaningful psychological risk factor within policing, where occupational demands, operational stress, and continuous performance expectations may increase vulnerability to psychological distress. The study highlights the value of incorporating psychological assessment, preventive mental health services, and evidence-based interventions into police organizations to support officers' emotional well-being and professional effectiveness.

Despite certain limitations, including the cross-sectional research design, reliance on self-report measures, and relatively low internal consistency of some personality subscales, the study contributes to the existing literature by providing empirical evidence regarding the interplay between impostor

syndrome, personality, and mental health in a police population. Overall, the findings emphasize that promoting psychological well-being requires not only reducing symptoms of distress but also addressing maladaptive self-perceptions and fostering adaptive personality strengths. Such efforts have the potential to enhance both individual functioning and organizational effectiveness within law enforcement agencies.

Limitations of the Study

The present study has several limitations that should be considered

- The study employed a cross-sectional research design, which limits the ability to establish causal relationships among impostor syndrome, personality traits, and mental health.
- Data were collected using self-report questionnaires, making the findings susceptible to response biases such as social desirability, recall bias, and self-perception bias.
- The sample consisted of police officers from a specific geographical region and organizational setting, limiting the generalizability of the findings to other police departments and occupational groups.
- Some study measures demonstrated relatively low internal consistency reliability, particularly the Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism, and Depression subscales. These reliability issues may have influenced the strength of the observed relationships.
- The study focused primarily on personality traits and impostor syndrome, while other potentially important psychological and organizational variables, such as resilience, emotional intelligence, coping strategies, burnout, job satisfaction, and perceived organizational support, were not examined.
- The study did not investigate the effects of rank, department, educational level, type of duty, or exposure to critical incidents, which may influence psychological well-being among police officers.
- The reliance on a quantitative research approach limited the opportunity to gain an in-depth understanding of participants' personal experiences related to impostor syndrome and mental health.

Recommendations for the Study

Based on the findings and limitations of the present study, the following recommendations are proposed:

- Future researchers should employ longitudinal research designs to better examine causal relationships among impostor syndrome, personality traits, and mental health.
- Studies should include larger and more diverse samples from different provinces, police departments, and law enforcement agencies to enhance the generalizability of the findings.
- Future research should utilize measurement instruments with stronger psychometric properties and establish their reliability and validity within the target population before hypothesis testing.
- Researchers are encouraged to examine additional psychological variables, including resilience, emotional intelligence, self-compassion, psychological capital, mindfulness, coping strategies, burnout, and perceived organizational support, as possible mediators or moderators.

- Future studies may compare different occupational groups, such as police officers, military personnel, healthcare professionals, firefighters, and emergency responders, to identify occupation-specific psychological risk and protective factors.
- Researchers should consider employing qualitative or mixed-methods approaches to obtain a more comprehensive understanding of police officers' experiences with impostor syndrome and psychological distress.
- Experimental and intervention-based studies should evaluate the effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral therapy, resilience training, mindfulness-based interventions, stress management programs, and psychoeducational workshops in reducing impostor syndrome and improving mental health.
- Future research should examine the influence of organizational factors, including leadership style, workplace climate, supervisory support, workload, and organizational culture, on impostor syndrome and mental health among police officers.
- Researchers should investigate demographic and occupational differences, such as gender, age, rank, years of service, and shift type, to better understand vulnerable groups and develop targeted psychological interventions.

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