



Research on “Perceived Fraudulence” Phenomenon in Da Nang High School Students

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
Published Online: 03 November 2022	“Perceived Fraudulence” (or “Impostor Syndrome”) is a potentially alarming psychological phenomenon for students. The purpose of the research team on the “Perceived Fraudulence” phenomenon in high school students in Da Nang City is to determine the prevalence of this phenomenon; its relationship with factors of learning environment, age, gender, and academic achievement; its structure, thereby, improving students’ awareness of this phenomenon; and to propose some educational measures to minimize the manifestation of this phenomenon in students.
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KEYWORDS: Perceived Fraudulence, students, high school, Impostor Syndrome, Impostor Phenomenon.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE RESEARCH TOPIC

“Perceived Fraudulence” (or “Impostor Syndrome”) is a psychological phenomenon that is quite common in recent years, especially among successful individuals and students. Many large-scale surveys around the world show that, “Perceived Fraudulence” and mental health are significantly correlated (Hughes, 2014). In Viet Nam, there has been no official research on this matter. Deeply aware of the potential issues that this phenomenon brings, we chose the topic of Research about “Perceived Fraudulence” of Da Nang High School Students in order to understand its current status and extent, to clarify the relationship between the phenomenon and the factors of learning environment, age, gender, and academic

achievement, to determine its level and structure to help high school students understand the real situation of this problem, and based on that, we propose educational measures to minimize the manifestation of this phenomenon. We found that the level of “Perceived Fraudulence” in Da Nang High School students are average and that the factors of learning environment, age, gender, and academic achievement do not affect the phenomenon.

2. ORGANIZATION AND RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

- Our study was surveyed on 315 high school students in Da Nang City, specifically as follows:

Table 1: Statistics on the number of research subjects

Criteria	High School				Grade			Gender	
	Son Tra	Nguyen Thuong Hien	Phan Chau Trinh	Le Quy Don	10	11	12	Female	Male
Amount	70	83	92	70	99	111	105	194	121
%	22.2%	26.3%	26.3%	22.2%	31.4%	35.2%	33.3%	61.6%	38.4%
Total	315								

- The study uses a system of research methods including: document review, survey by questionnaires, and statistical analysis.

- The set of research tools includes Test and Questionnaire for students includes::

+ Test Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) (20 items) by Dr. Pauline Rose Clance, which is a 5-level Likert scale: *Not at all true (1 point), Rarely true (2 points), Sometimes true (3 points), Often true (4 points), Very true (5 points)*

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+ The Questionnaire on the Structure of “Perceived Fraudulence” includes:

- i) Cognitive Manifestations (8 items)
- ii) Affective Manifestations (8 items)
- iii) Behavioral Manifestations (8 items)

The Questionnaire used a 5-level Likert scale: *Not at all true (1 point), Rarely true (2 points), Sometimes true (3 points), Often true (4 points), Very true (5 points)*. The scales are tested for reliability with Cronbach’s Alpha from 0.85 to 0.96, respectively. It shows that the scales have good reliability, the total correlation coefficient of all observed variables is more than 0.3, so none are omitted. The validity of the scale is proven by Pearson correlation analysis between the independent variables: all Sig. coefficients are less than 0.05 to ensure statistical significance, the correlation coefficient between all observed variables are positive, which proves that the variables are linearly correlated with each other, R fluctuates from 0.41 to 0.63. We classify the level of students’ “Perceived Fraudulence” according to the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale by Dr. Pauline Rose Clance.

3. RESEARCH RESULTS

3.1. Concept and structure of “Perceived Fraudulence”

3.1.1. Concept

“Perceived Fraudulence” is a psychological term used to describe the experiences of a person who is besieged in the belief that he or she is not worthy of the status and achievements they have. People who suffer from this phenomenon are always troubled by the fear of being

“unmasked” and exposed of the fact that they are not as talented as everyone thinks.

3.1.2. Structure

“Perceived Fraudulence” manifests in the following aspects:

+ Cognitive component: People suffering from this phenomenon often tend to not believe in themselves, they think that others are better than them and their achievements are due to objective factors, not their own ability.

+ Affective component: People suffering from this phenomenon always feel pressured by tests, they are afraid of failure and not confident in themselves.

+ Behavioral component: People with the phenomenon often tend to put themselves down, avoid praise, set goals that are beyond their ability, and then create punishments for themselves if they fail. At the same time, they always compare themselves to others, trying to become the best.

3.2. The reality of “Perceived Fraudulence” among high school students in Da Nang City

3.2.1. The level of “Perceived Fraudulence” among high school students in Da Nang City

The level of “Perceived Fraudulence” among high school students in Da Nang City is determined through descriptive statistics. The results show the mean $M=65.86$, standard deviation $SD=14.78$, $min=26.0$, and $max=100.0$. The results are as follows:

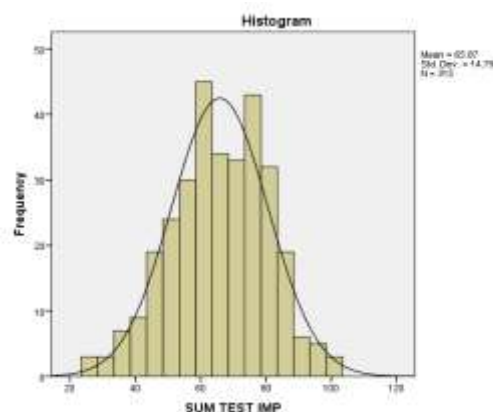
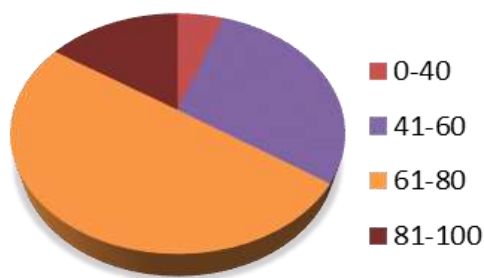


Figure 1 and 2: The level of “Perceived Fraudulence” among high school students

Figure 1 shows that 5% of students have very few characteristics of this phenomenon, 29% of students have some characteristics, 50% of students have a fairly high

level, and the remaining 16% have a very high level. The results show that students’ “Perceived Fraudulence” is at an average level.

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3.2.2. The relationship between “Perceived Fraudulence” and the factors of learning environment, age, gender, and academic achievement

Table 2: Average score of “Perceived Fraudulence” by school

School	N		Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)
Son Tra	70	22.2%	66.37	15.89
Nguyen Thuong Hien	83	26.3%	64.12	15.20
Phan Chau Trinh	92	29.2%	65.53	13.81
Le Quy Don	70	22.2%	67.87	14.43

(<50.09 -Low; $50.09 \leq x \leq 80.67$ -Average; $80.67 < x \leq 95.46$ -Quite high; >95.46 - High)

One-way ANOVA comparing the means of the level of “Perceived Fraudulence” in students from different schools gives the coefficient Sig. = 0.46 > 0.05, the results

show that there is no statistical evidence in “Perceived Fraudulence” of students from different schools.

Table 3: Average score of “Perceived Fraudulence” by grade

Grade	N		Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)
10	99	31.42%	65.59	14.70
11	111	35.23%	64.71	14.40
12	105	33.33%	67.34	15.29

(<50.09 -Low; $50.09 \leq x \leq 80.67$ -Average; $80.67 < x \leq 95.46$ -Quite high; >95.46 - High)

One-way ANOVA comparing the means of the level of “Perceived Fraudulence” in students from different grade levels gives the coefficient Sig. = 0.417 > 0.05, the

results show that there is no statistical evidence in “Perceived Fraudulence” of students from different grade levels.

Table 4: Average score of “Perceived Fraudulence” by gender

Gender	N		Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)
Male	121	30.3%	66.00	14.51
Female	194	69.7%	65.78	15.00

(<50.09 -Low; $50.09 \leq x \leq 80.67$ -Average; $80.67 < x \leq 95.46$ -Quite high; >95.46 - High)

Independent Samples Test compares the means of “Perceived Fraudulence” of male and female students gives the coefficient Sig. = 0.893 > 0.05, the results show that

there is no statistical evidence in “Perceived Fraudulence” of male and female students.

Table 5: Average score of “Perceived Fraudulence” by academic achievement

Highest academic achievement (over the last 3 years)	N		Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)
No award	211	66.98%	64.80	14.97
School-level award	46	14.60%	67.56	14.14
City/province level award and above	58	18.41%	68.38	14.44

(<50.09 -Low; $50.09 \leq x \leq 80.67$ -Average; $80.67 < x \leq 95.46$ -Quite high; >95.46 - High)

One-way ANOVA comparing the means of the level of “Perceived Fraudulence” in students with different academic achievements gives the coefficient Sig. = 0.186 > 0.05, the results show that there is no statistical evidence in

“Perceived Fraudulence” of students with different academic achievements.

Thus, the research results show that factors such as school, grade, gender, and academic achievement do not

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affect “Perceived Fraudulence”. This result is different from the hypothesis of Clance and Imes (1981) that women

experience imposter phenomenon more than men, and with more intensity.

3.2.3. The components of “Perceived Fraudulence” among high school students in Da Nang

Table 6: Average score of all aspects of “Perceived Fraudulence” in students

STT	Components	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	Level	Rank
1	<i>Cognitive</i>	3.20/5	0.88	Average	1
2	<i>Affective</i>	3.17/5	1.01	Average	3
3	<i>Behavioral</i>	3.19/5	0.91	Average	2
“Perceived Fraudulence”		3.30	0.80	Average	

(1- Not at all true, 2- Rarely true, 3- Sometimes true, 4- Often true, 5- Very true)

The results in Table 6 show that all aspects of “Perceived Fraudulence” are average. The manifestations show relative uniformity, there is little difference (Difference=0.03), the highest average score is the cognitive manifestations (M=3.20), the lowest average score is the

affective manifestations (M =3.17). Hence, “Perceived Fraudulence” is most evident in terms of cognitive manifestations and the least obvious in affective manifestations.

3.2.3.1 Cognitive manifestations

Table 7: Students’ cognitive manifestations (N=315)

Ord.	Students’ cognitive manifestations	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	Rank
1	<i>Do you see yourself as an untalented and incompetent person?</i>	2.94	1.21	6
2	<i>Do you sometimes have the thought that you got where you are now because of a mistake?</i>	2.58	1.26	8
3	<i>Do you always feel that you are “not good enough” and need to be better?</i>	4.00	1.07	1
4	<i>When faced with an obstacle or a new job that you have never encountered before, do you immediately assume that you cannot do it or will not do it well?</i>	3.19	1.21	4
5	<i>Do you often think that your achievements are not important?</i>	2.85	1.31	7
6	<i>Do you think that people don’t know your “true self” and don’t really understand you?</i>	3.46	1.28	3
7	<i>Do you think your success is due to luck?</i>	3.09	1.26	5
8	<i>Are you always worried about how others perceive and judge you?</i>	3.57	1.32	2

(1- Not at all true, 2- Rarely true, 3- Sometimes true, 4- Often true, 5- Very true)

In terms of cognition, the most obvious manifestation in students is they “Always feel that they are “not good enough” and need to be better” (M=4.00) and the tendency to “Always worry about how others perceive and judge them” (M=3.57); in the meantime, the manifestation of “Sometimes having the thought that you

got where you are now because of a mistake” rarely happens in students (M=2.58). Therefore, many students always feel unsatisfied with their achievements and need to improve themselves. In addition, they are concerned with their behavior and appearance and often worry about how others perceive them.

3.2.3.2. Affective manifestations

Table 8: Students’ affective manifestations (N=315)

Ord.	Students’ affective manifestations	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	Rank
1	<i>Are you afraid that one day, you will be “unmasked” and the people around you will realize that you are actually not as good as they think?</i>	2.85	1.38	7
2	<i>Do you feel ashamed when you make small, insignificant mistakes?</i>	3.32	1.32	4
3	<i>Do you often worry excessively before a test and fear that you will not do well even though you have reviewed very carefully?</i>	3.47	1.27	3

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4	<i>Do you feel extremely depressed and disappointed in yourself when you can't do something the way you want?</i>	3.59	1.22	2
5	<i>Do you feel guilty about your success?</i>	2.66	1.33	8
6	<i>Are you hesitant to tell someone about something you've just accomplished?</i>	3.11	1.31	5
7	<i>Are you rarely satisfied with your results?</i>	2.94	1.33	6
8	<i>After completing a test, do you feel relieved for a moment, but then you immediately worry about whether you did well?</i>	3.61	1.28	1

(1- Not at all true, 2- Rarely true, 3- Sometimes true, 4- Often true, 5- Very true)

In affective manifestations of “Perceived Fraudulence”, the clearest manifestation in students is “After completing a test, they feel relieved for a moment, but then they immediately worry about whether they did well” (M=3.61) and “They feel extremely depressed and disappointed in themselves when they can't do something

the way they want” (M=3.59); the manifestation of “Feeling guilty about their success” rarely happens in students (M=2.81). Thus, the majority of students with “Perceived Fraudulence” often worry about their grades and academic achievements at school.

3.2.3.3. Behavioral manifestations

Table 9: Students’ behavioral manifestations (N=315)

Ord.	Students’ behavioral manifestations	Mean (M)	Std. Dev. (SD)	Rank
1	<i>Do you often compare yourself to others and think that you are not as good as them?</i>	3.43	1.36	3
2	<i>When given a job, do you tend to pass it on to someone else you think can do a better job?</i>	2.81	1.30	8
3	<i>Do you often explain that your success in your work is thanks to other people’s help?</i>	2.82	1.25	7
4	<i>Do you spend a lot of time preparing for a test in advance to make sure you don't make any mistake?</i>	3.25	1.16	4
5	<i>Are you a perfectionist and extremely strict with yourself?</i>	2.87	1.24	6
6	<i>Do you often downplay the importance of your accomplishments?</i>	3.01	1.24	5
7	<i>Do you always pay attention to the small details of yourself such as actions, manners, or appearance?</i>	3.72	1.20	1
8	<i>Do you always try to hide all your flaws?</i>	3.47	1.29	2

(1- Not at all true, 2- Rarely true, 3- Sometimes true, 4- Often true, 5- Very true)

Regarding behavior, the most obvious manifestation in students is they “Always pay attention to the small details of themselves such as actions, manners, or appearance” (M=3.72) and they “Always try to hide all their flaws” (M=3.47); the manifestation of “When given a job, they tend to pass it on to someone else they think can do a better job” is less likely to happen (M=2.81). Hence, students often tend to adjust their own appearance to match others’ perception.

The results show that students suffering “Perceived Fraudulence” have common characteristics: highly value others’ perception and evaluation about them, worry about building self-image, and pressure to pursue perfection so as not to harm others’ views about them. In this aspect, “Perceived Fraudulence” has manifestations close to “perfectionism”.

4. CONCLUSION AND PROPOSALS

The study results show that:

5% of students have very few characteristics of this phenomenon, 29% of students have some characteristics, 50% of students have a fairly high level, and the remaining 16% have a very high level. The results show that students’ “Perceived Fraudulence” is at an average level.

The manifestations of “Perceived Fraudulence” show relative uniformity. The most obvious manifestations are cognitive aspect, then behavioral, and affective manifestations are the least obvious.

Among those aspects, students often have specific manifestations such as always feeling they are “not good enough”; feeling depressed and disappointed in themselves when they can't do something the way they want to; and always paying attention to the small details of themselves, from appearance, actions, to behavior. Objective factors such

as school, grade, gender, or academic achievement do not affect the level of these manifestations in students.

In order to minimize these manifestations, it is necessary to raise students’ awareness of “Perceived Fraudulence” to help them understand the concept, expression, and urgency of the problem, thereby, finding the most suitable method for them to improve the situation. The way that the research team chose was to create a fanpage “Vi Ban xung dang” on Facebook, build a manual, and organize club activities with the theme “Understand your worth”. Thereby, students have the opportunity to interact with others who have similar experiences, share their manifestations and how they overcome these manifestations. At the same time, the project provides reliable channels for students to study this phenomenon more closely, such as inpsychout.com or impostorsyndrome.com.

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