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Ethnic minority employees' experiences of the Imposter Phenomenon

Harkierat Kaur Ranautta

13171715

Birkbeck, University of London

December 2023

Supervised by

Professor Alexandra Beauregard, Dr Joanna Yarker and

Dr Rachel Lewis

Thesis submitted in partial fulfilment for the degree of
Professional Doctorate in Occupational Psychology
(DOccPsy)

Acknowledgements

Firstly, I would like to express my thanks to my supervisors, Professor Alexandra Beauregard, Dr Rachel Lewis and Dr Jo Yarker, for their invaluable insights throughout the entire research process. I feel exceptionally grateful and privileged to have been supervised by them.

I would like to thank the participants who volunteered to be interviewed. This thesis has demonstrated the depth of impostorism in the workplace, including the pivotal role of society and minority status. Thank you for letting me represent your voices. I hope we can take up space and strip the burden of what is not ours to carry.

Thirdly, thanks to my peer group for their valued expertise, with particular thanks to Munazzah, Rob, and Brigid, who provided encouragement, laughter, and friendship along the way.

A massive thank you to my parents and loved ones. Words cannot describe how blessed I am to have you around me. To my twin sister, Sim, the best half of me – how grateful I am that we have each other to remind us of our roots and values.

Lastly, but most importantly, I've worked hard to be here, but so have others before me from whom I build my name on. To my grandma, Dhadimaji, on all your prayers and love, my late granddad, Babaji – on your strength, we are here.

Abstract

Imposter phenomenon (IP) describes experiences of feeling like a fraud and one's failure to internalise achievements. IP is reported as a common experience including by ethnic minorities, indicating a potential adverse impact on their workplace experiences and career progression.

This thesis combines findings from two studies which deepen the evidence base of ethnic minorities' experiences of impostorism. A systematic literature review (n=15 studies) is the first to exclusively review and synthesise experiences and outcomes of IP within ethnic minority populations. Findings suggest a range of psychological and environmental factors contribute to one's IP experience: feelings of not belonging, racism, discrimination and microaggressions, and perceptions of stereotypes around one's minority group.

To address the limitations of this review, such as the lack of diversity in the populations sampled, a qualitative study was conducted to investigate experiences of impostorism exclusively among South Asian employees. Fifteen employees were interviewed, and through Reflexive Thematic Analysis, five themes were identified: descriptions of IP, the impact of IP, the influence of hard work, a lack of belonging and inauthenticity. Adverse impacts of IP were identified, including the negative attitudinal impact towards one's career, risk aversion and poor well-being. Findings suggest that IP likely prohibits the career progression of South Asian employees.

Taken together, the SLR and empirical study findings provide novel insights into ethnic minority employees' experiences of IP. These studies are, to the best of the author's knowledge, the first to examine impostorism in ethnic minority employees and South Asian employees, respectively. Findings demonstrate promising evidence of the contributory role organisations play in ethnic minorities' feelings of impostorism. This includes exclusionary organisational practices and behaviours, often subtle and implicit. Additionally, this thesis has identified internal identity-related factors, such as sociocultural norms, which influence IP experiences at work. Implications for theory, research and practice are discussed.

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Professional practice statement

As a Chartered Occupational Psychologist, I am exempt from the first module (Professional Practice Portfolio) of the Professional Doctorate. Therefore, this thesis satisfies the requirements for Part 2 of the doctorate and reflects research conducted during my two years of part-time study (Research Thesis). I provide a summary of my professional practice as context to this thesis below.

Since completing my MSc in Work Psychology and Business, I have completed a number of internships across various industries, the charity sector, NHS and a start-up company. I have also gained the BPS Occupational Test User Qualification (formerly known as Level A and Level B). Thereafter, I worked within the Civil Service as a Psychologist, completing a range of roles and projects centred on People-related matters, spanning the five critical areas of Occupational Psychology. My roles have spanned research, evaluation and strategy, developing in-depth knowledge of each stage of the consultancy cycle and ensuring work, which feeds into policy decisions, is based on high-quality evidence.

My research has involved qualitative and quantitative research, including synthesising and conducting research across different People-related policy areas such as Well-being or Diversity. I have led various research projects, including understanding the attitudes and experiences of Reservists, reviewing an internal Graduate Development scheme, exploring employee reluctance to share their diversity data, and reviewing employee well-being support for military personnel, including for women's health. I have worked with various stakeholders to utilise and implement evidence-based recommendations. More recently, my role within an Evaluation team has involved evaluating processes and efficiencies within internal strategic decision-making.

I have also completed several voluntary projects, including with a local Samaritans branch, to evaluate existing well-being support. I conducted primary research and developed an evidence-based toolkit to support volunteers' well-being during and after shifts for listening volunteers. I have developed an employee support network for an underrepresented group across the Civil Service, providing opportunities for cross-governmental collaboration and employee support. Through completing extra-curricular projects such as this, I aim to continue to develop my skills and exposure to a range of areas where Occupational Psychology can add value.

After completing Part 1 of the Professional Doctorate, I registered with the Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) as a Practitioner Psychologist. BPS ethics and HCPC

Standards of Practice underpin my approach to work in the Civil Service. My approach includes being evidence-led, reflecting and engaging in a range of Continuous Professional Development (CPD) to remain open and flexible to different perspectives. I regularly liaise with multi-disciplinary teams, learning from other professions, such as Government Social Researchers and Behavioural Scientists, enhancing my knowledge of broader skills. Additionally, I connect across the different government departments and have supported to organise the first Civil Service Occupational Psychology conference, demonstrating the value of Occupational Psychology across government.

As I complete this Professional Doctorate, I aim for my practice to move towards supporting minority employees in the workplace. I have developed essential skills and tools to apply to future Government and the broader Public Sector roles.

Chapter 1: Introduction

This chapter offers an introduction to diversity in the workplace, its importance and a review of the evidence regarding the organisational and personal barriers to inhibiting career progression. This chapter concludes with a summary of the aims of both studies: the systematic literature review and the empirical study.

1.1 Diversity in the workplace

Diversity in the workplace is important for a range of reasons, including the following components: improving the economy (McGregor Review, 2017), demonstrating an organisation's recognition of the moral obligation to society (CIPD, 2018) and improving organisational performance (Dixon-Fyle, Dolan, Hunt & Prince, 2020). Whilst Diversity and Inclusion (D&I) policies and practices have increased in recent years, the lack of ethnic diversity within UK organisations remains concerning. Understanding how to create environments that improve ethnic diversity in organisations is becoming increasingly critical.

1.1.1 Why is workplace diversity critical?

In 2016, the UK government commissioned Baroness McGregor-Smith to lead an independent review of race in the workplace. This review considered the issues of ethnic minorities at work, including barriers to entry and their progression. The latest census (2021) identified 19.3% of the working age population in England and Wales are ethnic minorities (Asian, Black, Mixed and Other ethnic groups) (GOV.UK, 2023). This figure is expected to rise, given the continued trend that the UK is becoming increasingly diverse (Catney et al., 2023). In 2022, 77% of White people were employed compared to 69% of people from all other ethnic groups combined (GOV.UK, 2023). If ethnic minority talent is fully represented, the economy has the potential to be boosted by £24 billion per annum (McGregor Review, 2017), demonstrating the economic benefit to the UK for investing in diverse talent.

Secondly, from a moral perspective, organisations may feel obliged to ensure all employees have sufficient opportunities to fulfil their potential, regardless of an employee's background or ethnicity (CIPD, 2018). Potential implications of not providing such opportunities or environments could lead to reputational damage and reduced talent pools over time if organisations are less attractive to prospective ethnic minority employees. The attractiveness of employers is particularly critical given the importance of public image, where younger generations seek workplaces and inclusive environments where they can be themselves (Flores, 2021). This is likely due to their exposure and experiences in formative years of fights for equality and equal rights (Gabrielova & Buchko, 2021). Therefore, diversity

and inclusion will be an increasing issue for the future workforce with greater expectations and standards of organisational culture and working environments.

Thirdly, to achieve high performance, arguably, an organisation needs to reflect the society and community which it serves. As summarised by Ernst & Young (EY; 2022), greater workforce diversity offers the opportunity to enhance both the profitability and sustainability of businesses to introduce new talent into organisations and provide a competitive advantage to those with appropriate connections with the communities in which they operate. Research from Dixon-Fyle et al. (2020) has demonstrated how companies with greater ethnic diversity were more likely to outperform less diverse companies on profitability. The companies in the lowest quartile for gender and ethnic representation were statistically less likely to achieve above-average financial returns than average companies in the dataset. Empirical research has also found associations between diversity and business growth (Ely & Thomas, 2001) and benefits to employee productivity (Richard, 2000) and financial performance (Weigand, 2007). Diversity of perspective can be brought from individuals across a range of backgrounds, including their worldview, culture and beliefs. The importance of organisations having diversity of thought can be illustrated through historical examples such as the independent Iraq Inquiry, which explored the UK's involvement in Iraq from 2001 to 2009. This report demonstrated how the government had a 'propensity of groupthink' in decision-making processes. As a result, inviting diversity of thought into the workplace to challenge views was recommended as essential (Ministry of Defence, 2016). Based on the premise that psychological and identity safety exists, this example illustrates how diversity can add value and have significant positive implications.

1.1.2 The current picture

Despite the potential positive outcomes greater diversity brings, UK graduates from ethnic minorities are less likely to be employed than White British graduates. Minority groups which are most affected include Pakistani and Bangladeshi graduates (McGregor Review, 2017). In employment, minority groups are still disproportionately represented in more junior positions, including in the UK Civil Service (Business In the Community [BITC], 2017; GOV.UK, 2022). This disproportionate representation in junior grades is despite being overqualified for many of the jobs ethnic minority graduates hold and, in some cases, having greater qualifications to progress in the workplace compared to White graduates (TUC, 2016; BITC, 2017). Those in junior grades of occupational groups, such as production work and office support, are also suspected to be impacted by automation advances in future,

demonstrating the potential disproportionate impact on minority group employees if they remain in these more junior positions (McKinsey, 2021).

There has been significant progress over the last five years in ethnic minority representation on FTSE 100 boards, as demonstrated by the number of companies with minority ethnic directors having doubled (from 47 in 2016 to 89 in 2021). Despite this, looking more broadly within the FTSE 250 director positions, 10% of these positions are held by people from ethnic minority backgrounds, and concerningly only 4% of all positions are held by people who are British and an ethnic minority (EY, 2022). This is under-representation given at the time of the 2021 census, of the working age population, 19.3% identified their minority ethnic group as Asian (10.1%), Black (4.4%), Mixed (2.5%) or Other (2.3%) (GOV.UK,2023). Additionally, while some ethnic minority employees may actively choose not to progress, others may struggle to gain promotions and navigate their careers. Understanding the barriers ethnic minority individuals face in the workplace for progression is necessary to maintain the momentum of increasing diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

1.2 Organisational Barriers for ethnic minorities

There are likely a range of organisational barriers influencing the progression of different minority groups. Practitioner research from the CIPD found the top three work-related factors which employees from ethnic minority backgrounds believed prevented them from achieving their career expectations are: “skills and talent have been overlooked, negative office politics, and a lack of effective training and development programmes at work” (CIPD, 2017). This research also found that compared to White British employees, ethnic minority employees were more likely to state that career progression is important to them yet has failed to meet their expectations. Looking more closely at the academic research, there are a number of factors that may contribute to ethnic minority employees’ ability to realise their career potential.

1.2.1 Organisational transparency

The transparency of recruitment decisions and promotion processes have been identified as a barrier. Without transparent organisational policies and systems, opportunities arise for decision making which may marginalise minority groups (Jones, 2019). As the Attrition-Selection-Attrition (ASA) framework (Schneider, 1983) suggests, this can result in homogeneous top management teams. As Nielsen (2009) described, the ASA framework suggests that individuals are attracted to and retained by organisations that fit their preferences and characteristics. Existing employees will favour ‘similar others’, with the majority group being more likely to hire those who are similar to themselves. Over time,

employees who do not fit with these individuals leave, resulting in similar remaining individuals. Empirical research supports this framework. Nielsen (2009) reviewed top management teams within Swiss companies and found that newly appointed team members shared demographic characteristics (including nationality and educational background) similar to existing management team members.

1.2.2 Lack of role models

In addition to homogenous top management teams, this cycle of selective recruiting and promoting can result in a lack of minority employees and potential role models for the minorities within the organisation. The lack of role models can have differing impacts on different groups; in particular, Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi employees noted that a lack of role models presented a barrier to their progression (CIPD, 2017). If individuals do not see others like them in senior positions, they may fail to anticipate career growth within their organisation. This demonstrates the importance of diversifying senior leadership as ethnic minority employees are more likely than White British employees to say that seeing other people similar to them in the workplace would help 'boost their careers' (CIPD, 2017).

Dominant groups in the workplace are likely to use their networks (which minority groups may find challenging to be a part of) to gain access and knowledge about progression and wider opportunities, helping their advancements. Research has found that White women are significantly more likely than ethnic minority women to utilise their personal networks to hear about employment opportunities (BITC, 2020). However, this trend was not homogenous across all minority groups, with Indian and Black African women equally likely as White women to use their personal networks this way (BITC, 2020). Barriers affecting the progression of ethnic minority doctors included that many felt White peers were provided greater support and encouragement from their educators in medical school. These factors were reported to affect doctors' confidence negatively (Atewologun et al., 2022).

1.2.3 Workplace culture

Additionally, workplace culture and behaviour can also influence minority groups' progression. Research from CIPD (2017) found that ethnic minorities were more likely than those from a White British background to say that experiences of discrimination have contributed to them failing to achieve their career expectations. Workplace incivility is a term used to encompass a range of behaviours with varying intensity with an intent to harm, including discrimination, microaggressions, social exclusion, bullying, and harassment (Smith & Griffiths, 2022; Young & Gifford, 2022). Workplace incivility has a range of negative employee and organisational implications. At the employee level, workplace incivility is

associated with adverse well-being outcomes of anxiety, stress, depression and burnout. At the organisational level, workplace incivility is associated with reduced job satisfaction, engagement and performance and increased turnover and absenteeism (CIPD, 2022; Smith & Griffiths, 2022). These adverse impacts demonstrate the importance of organisational culture in retaining and promoting talented ethnic minority employees.

1.2.4 Tokenism and heightened visibility

Where diversity does exist, perceptions of tokenism may also, particularly in predominantly homogenous organisations. Perceptions of tokenism include where an organisation is thought to recruit minority individuals for various reasons, such as to fulfil quotas, prevent criticism or give the appearance that employees are treated fairly. As cited by Stichman et al. (2010), Kanter (1977) posited that greater representation of minority groups would result in fewer negative workplace experiences. As part of this theory, Kanter (1977) argued that individuals who are tokens experience a range of consequences as a result; this includes heightened visibility, assimilation and contrast. Individuals with high levels of visibility across the organisation may feel they have to work twice as hard (compared to their colleagues). As a result of greater visibility, they may actively choose not to progress their careers as they perceive senior roles would elicit more significant opportunities for criticism and may prefer to blend in. While efforts may be made to assimilate into one's role, minority groups may still lose out on promotional opportunities. Kanter (1977) explains this as the majority group may treat 'tokens' in stereotypical ways and treat them as limiting career positions aligned to their stereotypes and views. Tokens may also feel that differences between them and the dominant group are exaggerated, which can lead to feelings of isolation of minority group members. While Kanter's research was based on women in the workplace, more recent empirical research has found that race may be a stronger predictor of tokenism than gender (Stroshine & Brandl, 2011). Empirical research has also demonstrated that Kanter's theory may be reductionist as there are other influential factors to consider concerning tokenism beyond increasing numerical representation (Stichman et al., 2010).

1.2.5 Minority tax

Another organisational barrier which may explain low diversity representation is the 'minority tax.' Minority tax has been used to refer to the uncompensated work which ethnic minorities complete, i.e., completing tasks or activities which their white peers are not asked to do, often in addition to one's regular workload. This additional time spent, often in relation to progressing diversity initiatives, may act as a barrier to career growth as time to engage in other work is reduced (Williamson et al., 2021). In addition, Kamceva et al. (2022) found

within a student sample that minority tax is characterised by an underappreciation of time and efforts for these efforts, discrimination and microaggressions, increased feelings of social isolation and an adverse impact on well-being. Microaggressions can be defined as 'brief, low intensity' events that convey negative messages towards minority groups' (Ogunyemi et al., 2020, p. 97). Minorities may feel indebted to their organisation for opportunities they perceive (gratitude tax). This can manifest in different ways to pay back any perceived debt, e.g., remaining in the same organisation or working harder (Campbell & Rodríguez, 2019).

As Pearn Kandola (2020) highlight, minority groups are often socialised to believe they must work twice as hard as others. This could be explained by various reasons, including the lack of organisational trust in the workplace (McKinsey, 2021). Analysis undertaken by McKinsey (2021) in the US found that Black employees were 41% less likely to view promotions as fair, highlighting a trust deficit within organisations. This narrative of working twice as hard can be perpetuated among minority groups whereby individuals perceive injustice amongst their peers in education and the workplace. For example, one may have their own personal beliefs that they were appointed to their position because of their minority status, or this may be the opinion of others which are made explicit. Subsequently, this belief can elicit pressure to perform exceptionally; otherwise, this would be a 'failure of the people you inherently represent' (Kamceva et al., 2022; Raymundo, 2021).

1.3 Personal individual career barriers for minorities

In addition to potential organisational progression barriers, individual barriers may exist, minimising the progression of minority groups within organisations.

1.3.1 *Caring responsibilities*

Within households, financial decisions may be made around who takes on additional responsibilities such as childcare, limiting career progression. Women complete around 60% of the unpaid work in UK households (ONS, 2016), meaning they may have less time to invest in their careers. Additionally, one's life circumstances, including managing caring responsibilities, can influence career decisions.

Research from Business in the Community (BITC) (2022) found that 44% of working adults have some caring responsibility. A greater proportion of these working adults who consider themselves to have caring responsibilities are from ethnic minorities (41%) compared to people from White backgrounds (34%). Childcare and other caring responsibilities are more likely to prevent ethnic minority carers (50%) than White carers (40%) applying for a job or

promotion. This may be due to the challenge of combining paid work and care as ethnically diverse groups reported higher levels of challenge with working patterns such as long hours, lack of flexibility or working culture. Additional responsibilities may reduce time and space to complete additional work and may reduce an individual's desire to take unpredictable work or travel if this jeopardises these caring responsibilities. This additional caring responsibility some employees have is another potential barrier to progression if minority individuals are disproportionately affected.

1.3.2 Psychological barriers

Psychological personal barriers to progression include a lack of self-confidence. Broughton and Miller (2009) suggested that women suffer a greater lack of self-confidence than men. This is evidenced in empirical longitudinal research, which has found that men are more overconfident than women, and this overconfidence explains 5-11% of the gender gap in top job employment (Adamecz-Völgyi & Shure, 2022). This research suggests negative implications for progression within male dominated industries; women are less likely to make job applications for posts they do not feel qualified to perform. Often, these psychological barriers are activated by the organisational context. For example, minority and marginalised groups, including ethnic minorities, have greater exposure to stereotypes and discrimination (Ashe et al., 2019), which in turn can influence one's self-confidence and self-esteem. Contending with discrimination can threaten the extent to which one feels safe in one's environment. Identity safety can be described as individuals being "their authentic self without worrying about others' perceptions of their identities" (Bullock et al., 2024, p. 331). If individuals remain concerned with how others perceive them, they will be less likely to focus on fulfilling their potential (Davies et al., 2005). An environment which lacks both identity and psychological safety is unlikely to provide an environment whereby individuals can thrive and produce optimal outcomes such as high performance and creativity (Edmondson, 1999; Newman et al., 2017).

As Kanter (1977) suggests, a high numerical representation of minorities may serve as cues of non-discrimination to minority groups. However, internal factors, including how individuals feel their identity will be valued, are also critical in employee experiences (Davies et al., 2005). Regardless of the numerical representation of minorities, individual barriers such as Imposter Phenomenon and associated feelings of inadequacy may halt one's progression. In addition, Kanter's work on tokenism has been criticised for failing to adequately consider the influence of organisational culture and social context in minority experiences (Aldossari et al., 2021; Holgersson & Romani, 2020; Watkins et al., 2019). As summarised by Strohine &

Brandl (2011), Kanter (1977) attributes the negative outcomes of being a token such as isolation and heightened visibility, to the low number of women in the workplace. However, one's minority status, e.g. being a woman and associated experiences such as sexism, are not sufficiently considered (Stroshine & Brandl, 2011; Yoder 1991). . As discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, IP experiences in the workplace highlight how the social context and organisational culture can drive feelings of impostorism. Specifically, minority employees experiencing impostorism describe feeling they have to challenge negative stereotypes others have of them or contend with racism, discrimination or microaggressions, reflecting minority status and how this interacts with social context and the organisation (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021; McGee et al., 2021; West et al., 2021). The influence of these organisational and internal beliefs in experiences of impostorism demonstrate the complexity of inclusion at work and the influence the organisational culture and societal factors have, challenging the simplicity of Kanter's (1977) argument that high numerical representation signals non-discrimination to minorities.

1.3.3 Lack of belonging and exclusion

Individuals may suffer exclusion in the workplace, which may be due to organisational factors such as culture or individual feelings of isolation due to being a minority group. As research indicates, people interact more comfortably with those they are similar with which suggests minority groups may have fewer meaningful contacts (Williams & Yarker, 2017). Subsequently, low levels of social support have the potential to impact well-being (Bakker & Demerouti, 2007). In accordance with the Social Identity Theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), the absence of a collective identity can also negatively impact one's self-concept and the degree to which individuals feel they fit within an organisation.

As posited by Ryan and Deci (2007), to remain motivated, humans require a need for relatedness or belonging, to feel competent and to have autonomy. Sharing a social identity with others in the workplace can provide motivation (Haslam et al., 2009), and positive social connections can buffer against mental health problems (Haslam et al., 2018a). If individuals feel isolated and excluded from those they work with, they are less likely to be in a position of motivation to thrive. Research has demonstrated that social exclusion makes one less likely to engage in prosocial behaviour (Twenge et al., 2007). However, if individuals feel they belong, this can increase their performance (Hausmann et al., 2007; Pittman & Richmond, 2007) and support their well-being (Cockshaw & Shochet, 2007).

1.3.4 Stereotype threat

Individuals may not be fulfilling their full potential due to hindered performance. For minority groups, research on stereotype threat has also been found to affect performance and be a potential barrier to success. Stereotype threat has been identified as a situational phenomenon whereby anxiety or concern over confirming stereotypes relating to one's group, such as low intelligence, can negatively impact the performance of those of that stereotyped group (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Steele and Aronson (1985) explored performance in Black and White university students. Specifically, they investigated a negative stereotype of Black students being less intelligent than White students. Before taking a test, when Black students' race was emphasised, Black students underperformed in the tests. However, when the tests did not highlight race, Black and White students received equal performance. This demonstrates how minority groups may also contend with greater additional cognitive load, which can impact performance, presenting another psychological barrier to progression. While stereotype threat focuses on others' perceptions, an associated phenomenon centred around one's perceptions of competence is the Imposter Phenomenon (IP), another barrier to high performance and career progression.

1.4 The Imposter Phenomenon as a barrier in the workplace

1.4.1 What is IP?

IP describes a phenomenon whereby individuals feel like frauds and attribute success to external factors, such as luck, rather than their intelligence or competence (Clance & Imes, 1978). However, how IP develops is less understood, and there is a lack of clarity around the role workplaces play in the phenomenon's manifestation.

1.4.2 The impact of IP

Research demonstrates the negative impacts of IP in relation to work, including low levels of job satisfaction, failure to apply for job opportunities, less motivation to lead and poor well-being (Bravata et al., 2020; Cokley et al., 2013; Mak et al., 2019; Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016; Vergauwe et al., 2015). This initial evidence indicates how minorities' careers may be affected by IP and associated self-doubt. Tulshyan and Burey (2021) acknowledge the significant role of the organisational context in IP development. They highlight how, despite the organisational factors which exacerbate self-doubt, such as the lack of minority role models, feeling out of place, or being subject to racism, IP still places the blame on the individual.

1.4.3 Identity and IP in ethnic minorities

IP originated from research in the 1970s based on high-achieving White women (Clance & Imes, 1978). Since then, research has evidenced other groups such as ethnic minorities and men also experience IP (Bravata et al., 2020). Compared to non-minority groups, ethnic minorities may have differing IP experiences influenced by their identity. Parenting styles, upbringing, values, and family networks within collectivist cultures have all been found to be influential in IP experiences (Ahmed et al., 2020; Roberson, 2021; Want & Kleitman, 2006; Xu, 2020). For example, among Latino students, IP was influenced by concerns about disappointing others, such as family (Lira, 2019). Similarly, the importance placed on education by one's family had a more significant influence on the development of IP than students' confidence and self-image (Abbas, 2003; Kang et al., 2021; Sawyer, 2008).

Relatedly, one's belief systems are also influential in IP development. Research shows that individuals who believe life events are externally caused (external locus of control) have greater feelings of IP regarding their achievements (Andrews, 2021; Tovey et al., 2022). Religious practices such as prayer or engaging in one's faith have been acknowledged as a coping mechanism to deal with IP (Bernard et al., 2020). While correlations exist between levels of religiosity/spirituality and better mental health (Rew & Wong, 2006), faith and prayer have not explicitly been explored in relation to IP and how it specifically supports one's experience.

Much of the research into minorities' experiences of IP samples students or non-minority working populations (Bravata et al., 2020), limiting understanding of how IP affects ethnic minorities' careers. Without high-quality empirical evidence specific to this population, it is challenging to determine how IP affects minorities' careers. This thesis aims to address that gap.

1.5 Research aims

This thesis aimed to understand the IP experiences of ethnic minority employees. Gathering in-depth evidence will inform evidence-based, tailored support to career progression and support the well-being of ethnic minorities to progress in the workplace.

The first study, a systematic literature review (Chapter 3), aimed to answer the following question and two sub-questions.

What is known about Imposter Phenomenon (IP) in ethnic minority working populations?

- What is the experience of IP in minority groups?

- What outcomes are experienced from IP within ethnic minority groups?

The second study (Chapter 4) addressed an evidence gap identified in the systematic literature review of no empirical research representation sampling South Asian employees. This qualitative research aimed to answer the following question and four sub-questions.

What are South Asian employees' experiences of Imposter Phenomenon?

- Does one's identity as a South Asian employee shape experiences of IP (e.g., faith, culture or traditions)?
- How do South Asian employees with IP explain their career successes?
- What, if any, stereotypes do South Asian employees contend with in the workplace?
- What are the perceptions of how IP affects career progression within South Asian employees?

Chapter 2: Methodology

This thesis aimed to investigate experiences of the Imposter Phenomenon among ethnic minority employees and, specifically, South Asian employees. Initially, a systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted to understand this area's existing literature and research gaps. These research gaps were used to inform the design of the second, empirical, study. Despite the SLR providing insights into ethnic minorities and their experiences with IP, there was limited research sampling working populations who were also ethnic minorities. Specifically, South Asians were not a represented group in this research. A qualitative approach was therefore chosen to understand South Asian employees' experiences of IP at work, including perceptions of IP's impact on their careers.

This chapter introduces the overall methodology adopted in this thesis. It provides an introduction to the epistemological approach, an outline for the research approach, and further rationale for the approach taken in each of the studies: a systematic literature review and a qualitative empirical study.

2.1 Epistemological approach

As defined by Crotty (1998), ontology is the study of being, whereas epistemology is concerned with how reality can be known (Scotland, 2012). Methodology underpins the choice of particular approaches (Scotland, 2012) and probes how the desired knowledge can be accessed (Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Positivist epistemology is a stance of objectivity which argues that regardless of one's awareness of reality, it exists and can be discovered by research (Crotty, 1998). Critics highlight the limitations of reductionist generalisations which positivist epistemology can bring (Scotland, 2012). A contrasting approach is that of interpretive epistemology, which holds an ontological position of relativism. This view argues that each individual has their own version of subjective truth and reality will differ from one individual to another (Guba & Lincoln (1994). Interpretive methodology aims to interpret reality from an individual's perspective and investigate the interaction between one's context and social contexts such as culture (Creswell, 2007).

This thesis adopts a critical realism paradigm, an approach which offers an alternative to positivism and interpretivism (Sayer, 2000). This approach holds the ontological position that various perspectives, including culture, history and politics, have shaped reality. Knowledge itself is posited to be constructed through different interpretations of the world, influenced by contexts such as one's beliefs and culture (Finlay & Ballinger, 2006). As Zhang (2022)

summarised, critical realism distinguishes itself from positivism and interpretivism by positing ontological realism, asserting that reality operates independently of our awareness and cannot be deciphered through empirical research or hermeneutics alone.

Critical realism highlights how entities can be visible or invisible, and while invisible entities are not observable at the empirical research level, the effects of their outcomes might be (Haigh et al., 2019). Arguably, this could be extended to the diversity and inclusion literature whereby, for example, racism may be invisible to some; however, outcomes of it, such as microaggressions, are visible. Additionally, in relation to experiences of impostorism, the frequency of behaviours or beliefs exhibited by individuals can be measured through scales such as the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS); however, the underpinning beliefs and how these are created by society and one's views are subjective and vary from one individual to another. Therefore, a critical realism view notes socio-cultural influences within and towards minority groups and acknowledges how reality may not always be observable (Hoddy, 2019). This approach also notes that minority groups' experiences in the workplace exist independently outside of the individual's realities. However, there are likely to be multiple accounts for the same phenomena, which result from differing perspectives (Willig, 2013). This position is therefore suited to exploring IP in the workplace in minority groups as it acknowledges that there are influencing social contexts in the workplace which may influence one's experience.

Whilst this thesis centres on critical realism, Critical Race Theory (CRT) is also acknowledged, particularly through the empirical study. CRT is defined as an academic and legal framework which recognises that racism is embedded within society and perpetuates racial inequality (Crenshaw 2011; Delgado & Stefancic, 2001). CRT draws upon insights from two previous movements: critical legal studies and radical feminism (Stefancic & Delgado, 2010). A fundamental tenet of Critical Race Theory is that racism holds a normal place in society (Lynn & Dixson, 2013) and is a real phenomenon (Burt et al., 2017). A critical race epistemology enables researchers to explore how race, ethnicity and gender interact with cultural practices, noting the fluidity of race and how individuals do not always fit neatly into categories (Bernal, 2002; Dillard, 2000; Lynn & Dixson, 2013). Researching with this framework in mind enables an understanding of minority experiences, subjectivity of reality and the interaction of this with culture and society.

Criticisms of CRT, however, have been acknowledged and considered by the researcher, including through reflexive practice. Firstly, methodologically, critics highlight how CRT emphasises personal experiences and storytelling narratives rather than an objectively

evidence-based approach (Cabrera, 2018; Martinez & Kynard, 2020; Mocombe, 2014). Secondly, CRT, by its nature, has been blamed for causing societal divides. This has been demonstrated by recent events, such as when President Trump banned diversity training, including the teaching of CRT in schools, arguably because it exposed systemic racism and may trigger a reflection on social structures and threaten the existing status quo and those who benefit (Richmond et al., 2024). Thirdly, as Rufo (2021) describes, CRT may be reductionist and can reduce inequality to a single variable of racism, which can exclude the influence of other social variables.

2.2 Systematic Literature Review

To understand what is known about IP in ethnic minority working populations, a Systematic Literature Review (SLR) was conducted. An SLR involves three key major stages: planning the review (e.g., specifying research questions, developing a review protocol), conducting the review (identifying and selecting studies and analysing and synthesising data) and reporting the review (writing the report to disseminate findings and report on the “best evidence”) (Briner et al., 2009; Xiao & Watson, 2019).

Following a systematic process of an SLR enabled topic-relevant evidence to be sought, synthesised and appraised for quality to answer the research question (Snape et al., 2017). Compared to other literature reviews, SLRs follow a replicable and transparent process to understand the evidence and acknowledge its robustness and quality while minimising researcher bias (Daniels, 2019; Mallet et al., 2012; Rojon et al., 2021; Siddaway et al., 2019). Acknowledging the quality of research is particularly critical for a novel topic such as IP, which, despite being commonly referred to in lay literature, lacks empirical evidence. Therefore, an SLR was deemed an appropriate methodology to enable the review of evidence while noting quality to identify high-quality research and evidence gaps.

Other approaches, such as meta-analyses, were considered as an approach to implement. However, this would only be viable with quantitative studies, omitting qualitative research in this field. Due to the small number of studies in this area, the varied research design, research questions and methodology, a systematic literature review was deemed more appropriate (Siddaway et al., 2019). The researcher was aware of the limitations, highlighting these below and noting how they were addressed.

A key limitation of the SLR is that it provides an overview of what is known about the research question at the time, not conclusive answers (Briner et al., 2009). This was caveated in the findings, noting limitations of generalisability given the quality of evidence available. Secondly, while the approach of an SLR aims to follow a protocol, results

themselves are not automatically high quality, and the SLR is reliant on there being evidence to synthesise in the first instance. While this review explored a range of databases, the SLR in this thesis, for example, only included research published in the United States, which is a limitation of the process. The lack of non-Western research highlights a potential publication bias. This limitation of viewing D&I through a Western lens has been acknowledged within the thesis. By quality assuring the available evidence, evidence statements (Table 4, Section 3.7) have been produced to note quality ratings, reasoning and which studies support these statements.

The process of the SLR is also considerably time-consuming, with multiple stages of developing a protocol, searching for research and sifting against the inclusion and exclusion criteria. While sifting titles and abstracts, a key risk is that studies may be omitted because their titles or abstracts do not contain sufficient explanatory information. Additionally, if multiple individuals are sifting, inclusion criteria may be interpreted subjectively (Mallet et al., 2012). To mitigate against these risks during the sifting process, a second reviewer reviewed a randomised sample of both the title and abstract sift, with a third researcher involved as necessary to resolve any disagreements. This invited greater inter-rater reliability into the process, encouraging challenge where necessary. Despite this, subjectivity is likely to be influential in any process. As Mallet et al. (2012) highlight, quality appraisal techniques for assessing the quality of research lack consensus. While the process is replicable, the way quality is assessed has more room for subjectivity. To minimise subjectivity, checklists from Snape (2017) were used to assess evidence quality. This framework provides two checklists, one for qualitative and one for quantitative research and was peer-reviewed.

2.3 Empirical Study

Qualitative approaches enable the exploration of an individual's perceptions, attitudes and experiences rather than seeking quantification (Langdridge, 2004). Instead of the central focus of qualitative approaches being to achieve generalisations, qualitative research aims to develop an understanding of various phenomena (Willig, 2013). A range of methodologies were considered for analysis aligned to the epistemological approach. This included thematic analysis, Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), narrative analysis and discourse analysis.

As this thesis aimed to understand themes of experiences of how IP is experienced by minority groups, rather than how individuals construct their worlds through language, narrative and discourse analysis were excluded. Rather than developing theoretical foundations, this empirical study aimed to understand personal experiences and therefore

Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) or Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) were judged to be the most appropriate.

IPA and RTA have similar aims; however, IPA differs from RTA in several ways. Differences include the recommended sample sizes necessary to uncover detailed insights. For IPA, a small and homogeneous sample of 1- 10 participants is recommended for a doctoral study (Creswell, 2009; Noon, 2018; Smith, 2004). Comparatively, RTA guidance recommends that qualitative studies have a minimum sample size of 12 participants to reach data saturation (Braun & Clarke, 2013; Fugard & Potts, 2014).

Secondly, IPA's central focus for analysis is each participant, followed by analysis across participants. In contrast, the researcher, using RTA, generates codes and themes across the dataset, identifying patterns and relationships between themes to develop an explanation of the phenomenon (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Figgou & Pavlopoulos, 2015).

Given the infancy of this research area and the exploratory nature of the thesis exploring South Asian experiences with IP, RTA was used to understand a range of participant views. Specifically, to capture diversity, noting the varied cultural practices within South Asian identity and ethnicities, rather than a homogeneous sample which is recommended for IPA, RTA was judged to be more appropriate (Fassinger, 2005). Secondly, as per guidance from (Braun & Clarke 2021), the analytical interest was centred around how personal experiences of South Asian employees fit into broader socio-cultural contexts rather than their 'just personal experience and sense-making' in which situation IPA may be deemed more appropriate (Braun & Clarke, 2021). Additionally, RTA was adopted as it offers greater flexibility to provide and derive implications for practice RTA also conceptualises the researcher's subjectivity as a resource and notes its importance to reflexively engage with theory, data and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2020). This is particularly important given the researcher's identity, as discussed in Chapter 2 (2.5).

The researcher aimed to recruit at least 12 - 15 participants, noting that more participants do not indicate quality (Braun & Clarke, 2016; Guest et al., 2006; Tindall et al., 2009). The specific number of participants was also guided by the point at which saturation was reached, and themes were repetitive.

2.4 Ethics

As a Health and Care Professions Council (HCPC) registered Practitioner Psychologist progressing towards British Psychological Society (BPS) chartership, the researcher abided by both the ethical guidelines and standards of practice. These ethical principles involved

prioritising respect, competence, responsibility and integrity of participants involved in the research. The researcher provided detailed information about the study before individuals volunteered to take part to enable them to make an informed decision. This included highlighting the ethical approval received, the voluntary nature of research, the right to withdraw, data privacy, and outlining anonymity and confidentiality protocols. Participants were informed they would not be identifiable in the research, with no names being utilised in reporting. Once the consent forms were signed electronically and sent back to the researcher, an interview time was scheduled. Given the advertising of the study on social media channels, where there was a high chance of the participant being in the researcher's network, the researcher emphasised that the interview was in a professional capacity and re-iterated the anonymity and confidentiality of the research. These principles were re-iterated prior to commencing the interviews. A debrief form was sent to each interviewee, highlighting research questions, contact details should the interviewee have further questions, and signposting for further support if needed, such as Employee Assistance Programmes and the Samaritans.

The researcher ensured they maintained their fitness to practice by engaging in reflection and journaling. Remaining reflexive was particularly important given the researcher's identification as a British Asian Indian. As part of the interviews, the researcher maintained a non-judgemental and psychologically safe environment even if others' worldview differed. They did this by asking open questions and probing clarifications, ensuring they did not provide their perspectives and instead reflected on this privately afterwards.

2.5 Researcher reflexivity

Reflective Thematic Analysis (RTA) acknowledges the centrality of the researcher's interpretation of the data and the importance of continually reflecting on the researcher's interpretation of their experience and the phenomena in question (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The reflexivity statement below is written in the first person to avoid creating an artificial distance between myself as the researcher, from the reflexivity.

Understanding my worldview, motivations, and beliefs was essential for this research, given my identity as an ethnic minority employee and a British South Asian. I was driven to understand experiences of impostorism in the workplace for two key reasons. Firstly, IP was an increasingly common term in the media and lay literature; however, there was limited empirical research into ethnic minorities experience of IP in the workplace. Secondly, the existing evidence lacked the acknowledgement of non-Western cultures and the influence of collectivism within this phenomenon. From a personal perspective and my upbringing within

a multi-generational household, it felt clear to me how one's success was down to many factors rather than competence.

My views were dynamic and fluid throughout this research, evolving through regular reflections, continual questioning of my assumptions and learning from the existing evidence and my participants. Predominantly, my reflections have related to my identity, a central construct of this thesis. While I reflected on my visible label as a British-born Indian, I felt confined to skin colour, conscious that this is all others see, and stripped of much more. I am also, a daughter of parents and grandparents born in East Africa who were ordered to leave Uganda. My parents' generation came over to the UK as young children, while my grandparents shaped the foundation of our success. This inevitably moulded my perspective of society, minority status and the workplace.

I have multiple identities influenced by family, culture and religion, and the extent to which I identify with these constructs is often context-dependent. Identity is a continuum; my worldview constantly evolves to find a place within this spectrum. I have reflected on previous experiences of hiding from my identity and my culture, aiming to assimilate into the dominant group and my community, yet grown tired when I am too 'Western' or 'not Indian enough.' My work life has presented microaggressions, as many others experience, labels of 'quiet' directed with ignorance and lack of acknowledgement of the working environment which leaves me and others like me unable to contribute, yet expected to thrive. I have been influenced by implicit narratives related to my identity to 'not be too confident' but not 'too underconfident', 'be brave but be careful', and 'live quietly but not too quietly'.... whilst grappling with where I fall in between. Beneath all this, is the norm that as a minority, it is safer to blend in; it does not pay to stand out.

RTA and the adopted paradigm of critical realism acknowledged the vital role of my lens in constructing the data, which was essential given my membership of the 'ingroup'.

Throughout this research, I have remained cognisant of my identity and views on the topic area and was driven by an authentic space of learning from and understanding experiences of IP. I noted personal reflections following each interview to provide clarity around my interpretations.

My in-group status led to two fundamental benefits. Firstly, I understood the variation between ethnic subgroups such as religions and subcultures within the label of 'South Asian'. Secondly, I experienced ease in building rapport by having an intangible and implicit understanding of what the participants described. However, at times, this led to assumed knowledge of socio-cultural norms. In these instances, I explored responses through probing

lightly, taking an inquisitive approach. This probing, where appropriate, enabled a layer of objectivity, focussing the data gathering around the participant, capturing their experiences rather than relying on unspoken understanding. Additionally, due to increased rapport, sometimes it felt unnatural not to say 'me too' or share similar experiences or views. I resisted the urge to do this and not to fill the silence, acknowledging the in-depth reflections necessary to answer IP-related questions. When the subject matter became challenging, such as through hearing about participants' descriptions of racism and discrimination against employees themselves or their families, I sought support from trusted individuals within my network.

Listening to the experiences of similar others in the workplace provided comfort, reinforcing the benefits of a collective identity and an intangible sense of belonging in the workplace and the UK. From this research, I have recognised my identity to be beyond the labels others give me, and instead I value the privilege and perspectives diversity brings.

Chapter 3: Systematic Literature Review - The Imposter Phenomenon in Ethnic Minority Working Populations

3.1 Abstract

Purpose: Despite an increasing focus on diversity and inclusion in the workplace, only 10% of FTSE 250 senior leaders are ethnic minorities. Several barriers to ethnic minorities achieving leadership positions have been noted, including experiencing the 'imposter phenomenon'. IP has been found to impact well-being negatively in the workplace, including less motivation to lead and less career planning. IP has been examined in non-minority or student populations, yet less is known about experiences within working populations and experiences of ethnic minorities. This study presents the first synthesis of research on experiences of IP within ethnic minority working populations.

Method: A systematic literature review was conducted across six databases, yielding 1,529 papers. These were sifted with a final 15 studies included in the review. These were assessed against a quality framework with findings thematically analysed.

Results: A range of factors were found to be influential in ethnic minorities' experiences of IP: feelings of not belonging, racism/discrimination and microaggressions, and perceptions of stereotypes of one's minority group. IP influences ethnic minorities to attribute success to being a minority rather than to their talent.

Conclusion: There is a lack of empirical research on ethnic minority working populations, and studies are limited to the US, with a potential bias towards Western ideology. Further high-quality evidence is needed in this area specifically to understand the experiences of minority employees and how this impacts their careers and advancement.

3.2 Introduction

Diversity in the workplace is essential for many reasons: to improve the economy (McGregor Review, 2017), to enable organisations to fulfil their moral obligation to society (CIPD, 2018) and to improve organisational performance (EY, 2022). Despite this compelling argument, diversity in senior levels of organisations is still lacking (McGregor Smith Review, 2017). There are various reasons for this, including organisational and systemic barriers which may hinder career growth. This includes a breadth of issues such as recruitment and promotion bias, experiencing discrimination or the lack of effective training (CIPD, 2017). In addition to these organisational barriers, which may hinder progression, exploring individual barriers and supporting individuals to overcome these is one route that warrants exploration. There

are a range of personal barriers which exist, as discussed in Chapter 1. This includes circumstantial barriers such as caring responsibilities, which affect a greater proportion of ethnic minority employees compared to people from White backgrounds (BITC, 2022). More specific psychological barriers to progression include low self-confidence, exclusion in the workplace or experiences of impostorism. These barriers to progression may discourage individuals from reaching their full potential and result in self-selection out of career opportunities.

3.2.1 What is the Imposter Phenomenon?

The Imposter phenomenon (IP), also known as 'Imposter Syndrome' initially posited by Clance and Imes (1978), describes a phenomenon whereby individuals attribute success to external factors such as luck rather than competence. Individuals experiencing IP fail to feel deserving of any praise, which can have wide-ranging implications at an individual and organisational level. Despite the term colloquially being referred to as a 'syndrome', it is not a clinical disorder and has led to debate around which term is most appropriate (Palmer, 2021).

Clance and Imes' research (1978) focused on high-achieving women who failed to internalise their competence and intelligence; instead, they felt they tricked others into believing they were so. Explanations for this included gender societal norms, including the multiple roles women play in society, which leads to additional societal pressures and beliefs of female inferiority (Clance & Imes 1978; Cusack et al., 2013). However, research has demonstrated that these feelings are not gender-specific (Parkman, 2016), and other minority groups are also affected by IP. Feelings of IP may reflect societal norms today (Bravata et al., 2020).

3.2.2 Imposter Phenomenon in the workplace

IP has been speculated to be triggered by achievement-related tasks (Ferrari & Thompson, 2006) or new situations, such as a new job or new challenges (Weir, 2013), which can spark feelings of inadequacy (Ferrari & Thompson, 2006). Empirical research has found IP to be associated with poor psychological well-being (Cokley et al., 2013), inauthenticity (Edwards, 2019) and in the workplace inhibited career progression, demonstrating the impacts at both an individual and organisational level.

Employees with IP report lower levels of job satisfaction and organisational citizenship behaviour (OCB) (Vergauwe et al., 2015). Additionally, career progression is impacted; employees with IP fail to apply for job opportunities due to fear of failure (Rivera et al., 2020).

The potential impact of impostorism on IP is supported by research, which found that employees with higher imposter feelings reported less career planning and motivation to lead (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). These behaviours can be explained by the IP cycle, posited by Clance (1985). Upon receiving an achievement-related task, individuals with IP experience anxiety or self-doubt, which often results in overpreparation or procrastination to manage. When the task is completed successfully, positive feedback is discounted and attributed to other factors, such as luck. This external attribution, in turn, results in increased self-doubt, feeding into further achievement-related tasks, and individuals remain in a cycle of IP, fearful of failing.

Research has also found that in addition to a fear of failure, individuals with IP may also experience a fear of success. Individuals with IP may deny their successes due to fear of losing connections with those in their networks around them (e.g., through resentment) (Fried-Buchalter, 1997; Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). Others argue that rather than fear of success because of potential rejection, it is specifically the fear that success will result in higher expectations from their networks (Sakulu & Alexander, 2011). IP has also been found to be a strong predictor of self-handicapping behaviours, strategies to avoid negative evaluations by blaming possible failures on obstacles and protect one's self-image (Want & Kleitman, 2005). In turn, IP can impact one's desire for career progression, and in the long term, the anticipation of achievement-related tasks can be associated with anxiety and low self-esteem (Mak et al., 2019), which can encourage avoidance.

Specifically, at an individual level, IP has been associated with maladaptive behaviours such as overworking, perfectionist tendencies (Pearn Kandola, 2020) and poor well-being (Bravata et al., 2020). Employees with IP may experience increased stress, burnout and decreased job satisfaction and performance over time (Bravata et al., 2020; Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017; Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016;).

3.2.3 Minority groups' experiences of the Imposter Phenomenon

IP originated from research conducted with high achieving White women (Clance & Imes, 1978). There were limitations to this initial research, including its sampling only middle-upper-class White women in the US. Caution should be taken when extrapolating these findings to other demographic groups, including ethnic minorities and those who are from or influenced by collectivist cultures.

Research looking specifically at ethnic minority groups has demonstrated a positive correlation of IP with poor mental health (Bravata et al., 2020). Specifically, IP within a minority student population has been a greater predictor of mental health than minority

stress status (Cokley et al., 2013). Black students were found to have significantly higher levels of stress and anxiety relating to discrimination-related depression linked to IP (Cokley et al., 2013). Cokley explained that feeling like an imposter can exacerbate the impact of discrimination, demonstrating its critical implications for diversity and inclusion.

The Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2002) illustrates the varied stereotypes that different ethnic minority groups face. This model posits that two dimensions (warmth and competence) characterise how individuals perceive different groups. A range of factors influence where a group may exist within these two dimensions, such as social status or competitiveness. These factors predict stereotypes of warmth (i.e., trustworthiness) and competence (i.e., how capable the stereotyped group is), which predicts one's emotional prejudices and subsequent discrimination towards these out-groups. Research in the US has demonstrated how Africans, along with immigrants, are perceived to be stereotypically low in warmth and competence, invoking emotions of contempt (Fiske, 2002). Comparatively, Asians are perceived as the 'model minority' characterised by high competence and low warmth, which can elicit feelings of envy in the perceiver (Jang & Zeng, 2022). In addition to these stereotypes influencing the perceiver's behaviour, the varying stereotypes ethnic minorities contend with can influence their behaviour and performance. For example, research sampling students has demonstrated differences in how IP is experienced within and between minority populations. Compared to Latino/a American and African American students, Asian American students were found to experience significantly higher imposter feelings (Cokley et al., 2013). This finding can be explained through the influence of stereotypes. For example, McGee (2018) found that Black students worked to challenge stereotypes around intellectual incompetence, and Asian American students were stereotyped as the 'model minority,' which, while positive, can place additional pressure on them to perform. This, in turn, can elicit greater anxiety and stress, especially for those who may be unable to enact the stereotype (Cokley et al., 2013; Toupin & Son, 1991). These varying stereotypes highlight the importance of research in this area, as extrapolation from evidence sampling only White women is reductionist and based on the assumption that groups are homogeneous, ignoring specific and additional challenges minority groups may face.

IP may be exacerbated by a range of similar constructs, including stereotype threat, as discussed in Chapter 1. Both stereotype threat and IP, along with wider diversity and inclusion issues such as feelings of a lack of belonging and social identity (Tajfel & Turner, 1986), may underpin the experiences of minority groups. Whilst stereotype threat is a similar construct to IP, IP focuses on one's individual competence rather than perceptions of the

group to which they belong. Therefore, to understand individual experiences and one's perceptions of their own competence, IP will be the focus of this systematic literature review.

3.2.4 Rationale for this review

To the researcher's knowledge, IP has been the focus of two systematic reviews (Bravata et al., 2020; Mak et al., 2019). Mak et al. (2019) examined the methodological quality of IP measures. This systematic literature review concluded that while practitioners and researchers commonly use the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS), its popularity does not equate to higher quality. A gold standard measure of IP is yet to be established. Whilst Mak et al. (2019) focused on the psychometric properties of IP measures, their review did not explore IP and ethnic minority-related experiences to help understand IP as a psychological barrier to progression. Bravata et al. (2020) evaluated the evidence on the prevalence, predictors, comorbidities and treatment of Imposter Syndrome. In their review, Bravata et al. (2020) noted that from the studies included, IP was not exclusively experienced by women, did not decline by age and was also experienced by ethnic minorities. Depression and anxiety frequently co-exist with IP, and literature indicates that IP can have a negative impact on job performance, satisfaction and burnout. Whilst Bravata et al. (2020) provided an understanding of the prevalence and co-morbidities of IP, the limitations within the studies reviewed point to an evidence gap in the understanding of IP among ethnic minority employees. Specifically, within Bravata et al.'s (2020) systematic literature review, 62 studies met the inclusion criteria. Half of these studies sampled non-minority students (29 sampled undergraduates and 12 sampled graduates). Only 11 articles reviewed IP within student minority groups. It would be highly reductionist for organisations to develop interventions based on the extrapolation and use of evidence which only samples student minorities and fails to consider ethnic minority employees. Whilst 19 of the studies in Bravata et al.'s review described IP within employed populations, these did not explicitly explore ethnic minority working populations. The diversity characteristics of the studies sampling working populations have not been reported to enable any comparisons or understanding of how ethnic minority employee experiences differ from non-ethnic minority employee experiences. Given the influence of IP on maladaptive behaviours related to career progression, including fear of failure (Rivera et al., 2020) and reduced career planning and motivation to lead in working populations (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016), exploring IP within the workplace for minority groups is essential. Much of the research within the latest systematic literature review (SLR) (Bravata et al., 2020) sampled university students only, which demonstrates the need to understand IP within employees. There has been no

attempt to date to synthesise research on experiences of IP within ethnic minority working populations, which this systematic literature review seeks to address.

An SLR was deemed most appropriate for this topic area for three reasons. Firstly, this approach enables the review of evidence while considering the quality of the data sources. This is particularly important to provide rigour to a novel area with limited empirical evidence. An evidence-based approach is necessary to ensure that workplace interventions or conclusions to support ethnic minorities' experiences of IP in minority groups consider a range of sources and are not based on subjective or biased viewpoints. An approach lacking high quality evidence may result in organisational inefficiencies in interventions, wasted resources, and a failure to achieve desired outcomes such as greater ethnic minority representation at senior levels. Secondly, given the novelty of this research area, a replicable and transparent process is necessary to enable further research to build on these findings. Lastly, an SLR enables the synthesis of a research domain into a single output, which can be helpful for practitioners within organisations to digest and utilise within the workplace.

Therefore, this review will enable the formulation of evidence-based recommendations for further research in this area. By better understanding the experience and influence of IP as a barrier to progression in the workplace for ethnic minority individuals, a greater understanding of achieving greater diversity and inclusion at senior levels can be sought.

3.2.5 Primary objectives

This review aims to answer the following question

What is known about The Imposter Phenomenon (IP) in ethnic minority working populations?

Specifically, this review aims to answer the following two sub questions:

- What is the experience of IP in minority groups?
- What outcomes are experienced from IP within ethnic minority groups?

3.3 Method

This systematic literature review was conducted according to the principles aligned with PRISMA as applied in Kane et al. (2021). This included the search strategy, defining inclusion and exclusion criteria, assessing the quality of studies and data synthesis. These stages are outlined below.

3.3.1 Search strategy

The search strategy was established following an initial literature review in January 2022 and discussions with supervisors and a librarian subject matter expert. The terms 'Imposter Phenomenon' and 'Imposter Syndrome' have been used in a previous systematic literature review (Bravata et al., 2020). Due to the subjectivity of ethnicity, to ensure representation and standardisation, the Office of National Statistics (ONS) recommended list was used. Synonyms of minorities were also included within the search string, such as BIPOC (Black, Indigenous, People of Colour), which was predominantly used in US literature. The search string was (work* OR organi* OR employ*) AND (imposter* OR "IP" OR "imposter phenomenon") AND (Asia* OR India* OR Pakistan* OR Bangladesh* OR Chin* OR Black OR Africa* OR Caribbean OR Arab OR minorit* OR rac* OR ethnic* OR BAME OR BIPOC OR "person of colo*" OR "people of colo*"). Work/Organi*/employ* were used to capture experiences of IP within the workplace rather than academic institutions or student populations.

Searches were conducted in April 2022 in the following databases: SCOPUS, MedLine, Academic Search Complete, Business Source Premier, ProQuest One Business, and Bielefeld Academic Search Engine (BASE). Empirical, peer-reviewed research or dissertations and theses using a sample of adults (18+) from 1978 onwards, published in English only, were considered. The term 'The Imposter Phenomenon' was first coined in 1978 and used as a cut-off time for inclusion.

3.3.2 Review strategy

Results were exported from the various databases and collated into Microsoft Excel with duplicates removed. Results were subject to three subsequent sifts. Firstly, a title sift was conducted, reviewing titles of the research yielded against the inclusion criteria. A second reviewer reviewed a random sample of these titles to ensure inter-rater reliability. Where disagreements arose between titles being included, a third reviewer independently reviewed the articles, inviting discussion. Where it was unclear whether the sample was an ethnic minority, the title was included and screened within the abstract sift.

Second, the abstract sift was reviewed by the researcher, and a second reviewer reviewed a random sample. Any discrepancies were discussed, and an optimum level of kappa was reached. The full paper sift was conducted by the researcher. At each review stage (title, abstract and full paper), the studies were reviewed against inclusion and exclusion criteria.

3.3.3 Inclusion criteria

The inclusion and exclusion criteria were informed by the Study Design, Participants, phenomenon of Interest and Outcomes (SPIO) framework (Richardson et al., 1995). Interventions or specific outcomes were not criteria for inclusion as the purpose of this research is exploratory and to understand individual experiences of IP rather than intervention-focused. Therefore, in this context, 'interventions' was replaced with the phenomenon of interest, IP.

Table 1: SLR Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

Inclusion Criteria	Exclusion Criteria
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Empirical research only 2. Study population: adults (18+), ethnic minority group 3. Study settings: not specified 4. Time period: 1978 onwards (IP was first coined by Clance and Imes in 1978) 5. Publication: English language, peer reviewed OR dissertation/thesis 6. Study relating to individuals' experiences of IP/imposter phenomenon 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Theoretical, thought pieces or descriptive 2. Study did not contain original data 3. Study population of children 4. Study of IP not relating to work or performance or progression e.g., studies focusing purely on wellbeing 5. Any studies not published in English 6. Samples consisting of both minority and majority ethnic participants

This SLR only included empirical, peer-reviewed research to provide a high-quality evidence base. The focus on empirical research was necessary given how terms such as 'Imposter Syndrome' are commonplace in lay literature. The researcher considered incorporating other data sources within this review, such as book chapters, acknowledging the further evidence and viewpoints this could have captured. However, whilst, for example, books could have significantly increased the volume of the literature, these were less likely to have undergone the same rigour of peer review as empirical research. Secondly, incorporating further data sources would have significantly increased the time required for subsequent stages of the SLR processes in reviewing a higher volume of sources. Incorporating more data sources risked the completion of the systematic literature review within the given time constraints of the programme and the ability to provide a focused review. Thirdly, books were more likely to be thought pieces, which was identified as an exclusion criterion. Lastly, the author chose not to 'cherry pick' any additional sources beyond what existed within these search parameters. This decision was to ensure that selection bias was minimised as

evidence suggests cherry-picking can increase the chance of biasing findings towards a pre-conceived hypothesis and poses the risk of decreasing the reliability of conclusions (Ahmed et al., 2012; Yoneoka & Rieck, 2023).

Given that the focus was on employees and building an understanding beyond students, this SLR had an inclusion criterion of study samples being composed of adults belonging to a minority ethnic group. The SLR aimed to capture a broad range of evidence, and therefore, no restrictions were placed on the organisational sector, country or industry.

The terms 'Imposter Syndrome' and 'Imposter Phenomenon' were coined following research from Clance and Imes (1978), and therefore, research published before this year was excluded. The primary aim of the research was to understand individuals' experiences of the phenomenon, and any study not relating to work or performance was excluded as this was not the focal point of the study. Additionally, to understand the specific experiences of minority groups, studies including both minority and majority participants were excluded.

3.3.4 Data extraction

Data was extracted and collated into an Excel spreadsheet using the SPIO framework and discussed with a second reviewer. The study's aims were noted in addition to the study design and information regarding the population (sample size, gender, which minority group was used, sampling methodology, and whether the sample was from a student or working population). Measures used within the study were captured (demographic characteristics, the outcome variables including whether any moderators or mediators existed, measures of IP, e.g., Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale and topic guide or survey questions).

Study outcomes were also extracted, detailing the study results, including any key themes from qualitative research and statistical results for quantitative data. Additionally, contextual information, such as the country in which the study took place and theoretical frameworks underpinning the research, were also extracted. Limitations and suggestions for future research were included in addition to any conclusions made.

3.3.5 Data synthesis

To answer the research questions, findings from the extraction spreadsheet were explored to identify common themes within the 15 studies. Themes were identified following principles of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006). All fifteen studies were read and re-read by the author. Findings were coded. From these codes, initial themes were developed and defined into the factors discussed below as key findings to each research question. An additional reviewer reviewed these themes to ensure objectivity was maintained. From these themes,

evidence statements were produced. Due to the small number of studies yielded by the search and the high proportion of qualitative research, a meta-analysis would not have provided any greater utility.

3.3.6 Quality assessment

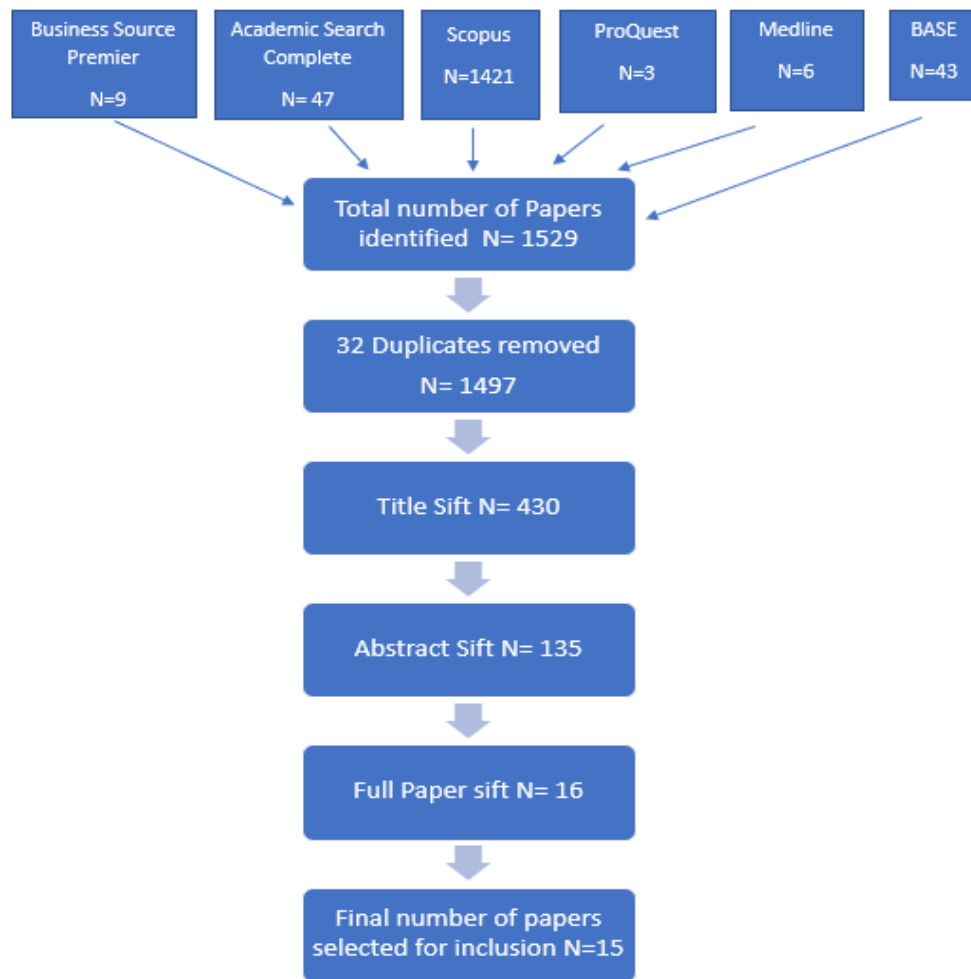
A quality assessment (QA) was undertaken to ensure the quality of research was considered when formulating evidence-based conclusions. This QA used a framework based on quantitative and qualitative checklists from Snape et al. (2017). For quantitative studies, the framework considers design, method, appropriateness of analysis and consistency of evidence. For qualitative research, the framework included consideration of the appropriateness of methodology, research design, clarity of statement of findings, data collection, recruitment strategy and ethics. As Snape et al.'s QA framework emphasises the intervention aspect of research (less applicable to this area of research), additional statements not captured by Snape's checklist were added from Sirriyeh et al. (2012). Each research paper was assessed against each statement, and a quality score was assigned. Quality scores were classified into one of the following categories: very low quality, upper low, moderate, or high quality. This scoring was conducted independently by the researcher and reviewed by a second reviewer. Any disagreements were discussed. The output of the quality assessment was a list of evidence statements summarised in Table 4.

Four qualitative studies were assigned a rating of moderate quality (Burt et al., 2017; Chakraverty, 2020; Chakraverty, 2022; Robinson, 2018). One qualitative study was assigned lower low quality (Robles et al., 2021), particularly as there was a lack of detail provided necessary to understand the methodology and specific findings. The remainder of the qualitative studies were assigned upper low quality (Fields & Cunningham- Williams, 2021; McGee et al., 2021; Lira, 2019; West et al., 2021). Three quantitative studies were assigned upper low quality (Cokley et al., 2022; Bernard et al., 2017; Bernard et al., 2020). The remaining three studies were assigned as low quality (Edwards, 2021; Graham & McClain, 2019; Peteet et al., 2015).

3.4 Results

A total of 1,529 studies were identified as possibilities for inclusion in the SLR. Once duplicate titles were excluded and titles, abstracts and full papers were sequentially sifted using the inclusion and exclusion criteria, a total of 15 papers remained (Figure 1). Findings from the final 15 papers have been summarised in Table 2 (Population and Method) and Table 3 (Findings) below, and this is followed by a narrative summary exploring the research questions in depth.

Figure 1: Systematic Literature Review Search Results Diagram



3.4.1 Study Characteristics

The study characteristics are summarised in Table 2.

3.4.1.1 Study Design and Methodology

The final fifteen papers consisted of both qualitative and quantitative research. Qualitative studies (nine out of fifteen) included gathering data through interviews (Burt et al., 2017; Chakraverty, 2020; Chakraverty, 2022; Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021; Lira, 2019; Robles et al., 2021 and Robinson 2018) and via focus groups through collective ethnography (West et al.,2021) and one paper using both focus groups and interviews (McGee et al., 2021). Four papers incorporated a survey prior to their interviews (Chakraverty, 2020; Chakraverty, 2022; Lira, 2019; Robles et al.,2021).

A minority of the papers (six) used quantitative approaches of surveys (Bernard et al., 2020; Bernard et al., 2017; Cokley et al.,2022; Edwards, 2021; Graham & McClain, 2019; Peteet et al., 2015). These took various analytical approaches: correlational (Bernard et al., 2017;

Graham & McClain, 2019), regression analysis (Bernard et al., 2020; Cokley et al., 2022) and cluster analysis (Edwards, 2021).

There were two longitudinal studies. Robles et al. (2021) followed the implementation of a yearlong fellowship and asked individuals for feedback in a three-day workshop. Bernard et al. (2017) collected data from two successive cohorts of first-year students at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). The remaining studies were cross-sectional.

3.4.1.2 Participant Characteristics

Most of the final studies selected for inclusion sampled Black students or Black professionals; the remaining two studies sampled Latino students (Lira, 2019) and Native American students and scholars (Chakraverty, 2022). Sample sizes varied between these fifteen studies, with qualitative approaches using an average of eighteen participants, while the studies incorporating quantitative methodology included an average of 180 participants. Of the fifteen, three had exclusive samples of women (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021; Robinson, 2018; West et al., 2021), two exclusively men only (Burt et al., 2017; Edwards, 2021), and the remaining studies included both men and women in their samples.

3.4.1.3 Organisational Settings

All fifteen studies took place in the US. The study settings varied, with the majority being in a higher education setting. Out of the fifteen studies, four studies sampled graduate students (Burt et al., 2017), specifically PhD or postdoctoral students (Chakraverty, 2020; Chakraverty, 2022; McGee et al., 2021). An additional six studies sampled undergraduate students (Bernard et al., 2020; Bernard et al., 2017; Edwards, 2021; Graham & McClain, 2019; Lira, 2019; Peteet et al., 2015). Of these ten studies which sampled students, the majority of them were in universities which were deemed as Predominantly White Institutions (PWI) (Bernard et al., 2017; Bernard et al., 2020; Burt et al., 2017; Chakraverty, 2022; Edwards, 2021; Graham & McClain, 2019; Peteet et al., 2015). One research study (Bernard et al., 2020) compared students who attended a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) and those who attended a Historically Black College/University (HBCU).

A minority of the research papers (five out of fifteen) selected for inclusion sampled working professionals. These studies varied in the organisational sector and included employees working in a community college (Robinson, 2018), social work employees (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021), family medicine physicians (Robles et al., 2021) and lawyers/attorneys (Cokley et al., 2022). One study sampled both students and employees of a university (West et al., 2021). Out of these five studies, three included professionals who

were working in a PWI (Cokley et al., 2022; Fields & Cunningham-Williams; West et al., 2021).

3.4.1.4 The Imposter Phenomenon Measures used

All fifteen studies defined IP incorporating or with reference to Clance and Imes's (1978) research, which highlighted three defining components: 1) feeling that others have an inflated perception of their abilities, 2) fear that one's true abilities will be found out, 3) attributing success to external factors (BPS, 2010). For example, as cited by Cokley et al. (2022), IP was defined as a "sense of fraudulence among high achievers (Clance & Imes, 1978), and as cited by Fields and Cunningham-Williams (2021), "one's hesitation in believing they are as intelligent, skilled and deserving of their success as their colleagues and often believe this unfounded truth will be discovered by others at any moment" (Abdelaal, 2020; Clance & Imes, 1978).

The studies which quantitatively investigated IP (six out of fifteen) all used the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS). All but two (McGee et al., 2021; Lira, 2019) of the nine qualitative research studies explicitly asked about experiences of IP. Two of the qualitative studies incorporated the CIPS scale within their design, asking individuals to complete this scale prior to having an interview (Chakraverty, 2020; Chakraverty, 2022). As no topic guides were included within the publication for three studies (Burt et al., 2017; Robles et al., 2021), it is not possible to determine how central IP was to their methodology.

Study characteristics, population and methodology are summarised in Table 2. Below this, Table 3 highlights the experiences and outcomes followed by Table 4 which summarises the study findings. This is followed by a thematic narrative exploring the key findings in depth drawing conclusions in response to the research questions. Table 5 highlights the quality rating, rationale, and evidence statements summarised.

Table 2: Summary of study characteristics, population and methodology¹

Author, Date	Study purpose	IP explicitly explored in method	Country of Origin	Study Setting	Predominantly White Institution	Sample size	Sex of sample (%)	Minority Group	Methodology	Measures Used
West et al. (2021)	To explore how Black women at various stages of their journeys in higher education navigate their academic and professional experiences and aspirations using the metaphor of funambulism (i.e., tightrope walking) to construct their academic and professional identities and navigate their	✓	US	Students and employees of US university	✓	6	100% women	Black	Qualitative: Focus Groups; Collaborative autoethnography	Questions in relation to IS included "Discuss your experiences with IP. How do you deal with it in your daily life?"

¹ The highlighted rows are those which sampled working populations.

Author, Date	Study purpose	IP explicitly explored in method	Country of Origin	Study Setting	Predominantly White Institution	Sample size	Sex of sample (%)	Minority Group	Methodology	Measures Used
	experiences in academia.									
Fields & Cunningham-Williams (2021)	To explore Black women social work faculty members' sense of self through the prisms of IP and authenticity.	✓	US	Professionals; Faculty members at US Research university	✓	9	100% women	Black	Qualitative Case study methodology.: in depth semi structured interviews	Questions in relation to IS included: "Have you experienced imposter syndrome at any point throughout your journey to and as a faculty member?"
Burt et al. (2017)	To explore the experiences of foreign born and/or ethnically diverse Black male graduate students in engineering	CT ²	US	Graduate Engineering students	✓	9	100% men	Black; those who self identifies as foreign-born and/ or identified ethnically as other than African American. Sample	Qualitative: semi structured 1 to 1 interview	Semi structured interview

² Cannot Tell (CT): A topic guide was not provided and therefore it is not possible to determine whether specific questions were asked around IP

Author, Date	Study purpose	IP explicitly explored in method	Country of Origin	Study Setting	Predominantly White Institution	Sample size	Sex of sample (%)	Minority Group	Methodology	Measures Used
								consisted of 3 Nigerian, 2 Jamaican, 1 west African, 1 Ethiopian, 1 Ghanaian, 1 Togolese.		
McGee et al. (2021)	To explore how Black engineering and computing doctoral students discussed impostorism in the context of racism.	X	US	Doctoral students and Postdoctoral researchers; across 13 US engineering schools.	X	62	40% women (25), 60% men (37)	Black or African American	Phenomenological analysis from in depth semi structured interviews or focus groups	Semi Structured Interview or Focus group
Robinson (2018)	To explore experiences of IP for Black women in faculty roles in community college.	✓	US	Professionals and students; Faculty at a California community college.	X	23	100% women	Black	Qualitative interviews	Semi structured interview. Questions relating to IS included: "To what degree have you felt like an "imposter" at work?"

Author, Date	Study purpose	IP explicitly explored in method	Country of Origin	Study Setting	Predominantly White Institution	Sample size	Sex of sample (%)	Minority Group	Methodology	Measures Used
Chakravarty (2020)	To investigate experiences related to IP among Black Doctoral and Postdoctoral scholars in STEM.	✓	US	Students/Postdoc scholars in STEM at US universities	X	15	87% women (13); 13% male (2)	Black (Of this sample, 20% Foreign Born)	Qualitative: CIPS scale followed by one to one semi structured telephone interview.	Clance IP Scale (CIPS). Semi Structured Interview focusing on 4 aspects: 1) How racial identity in STEM shape experiences of IP 2) Personal and environmental factors contributing to IP 3) Day to day manifestations of this phenomenon 4) Other identities contributing to this phenomenon.
Robles et al. (2021)	To gain qualitative feedback from a 1-year pilot fellowship for those underrepresented in medicine. This pilot	CT	US	Professionals (Junior underrepresented minorities within family medicine physicians).	CT	7	86% women (6), 14% men (1)	Black or Latino (Specific breakdowns not specified)	Qualitative feedback	Not Specified

Author, Date	Study purpose	IP explicitly explored in method	Country of Origin	Study Setting	Predominantly White Institution	Sample size	Sex of sample (%)	Minority Group	Methodology	Measures Used
	programme targeted challenges faced by this group. This included via workshops on career advancement.									
Chakraverty (2022)	To explore how Native American Postdoctoral Scholars/PhD students experienced IP.	✓	US	Postdoctoral students at Historically White institutions from STEM fields.	✓	7	86% women (6), 14% men (1)	American Indian/Alaska Native/Native American	Qualitative: Phenomological approach	CIPS, semi structured interview relating to IP including "How did your identity as a Native American shape your imposter experiences?"
Lira (2019)	To capture the experiences among first generation Latino American college	X	US	Study Setting	CT ³	23	Not specified	Latinx	Qualitative: survey with open free text questions	Questions included: "describe if you have ever felt discriminated against

³ While results from Lira's research (2019) discussed individuals assimilating into a PWI, it is not clear how many of the PPs are from a PWI as this is not detailed within methodology

Author, Date	Study purpose	IP explicitly explored in method	Country of Origin	Study Setting	Predominantly White Institution	Sample size	Sex of sample (%)	Minority Group	Methodology	Measures Used
	students and The Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) recipients who face forms of discrimination and prejudice, to understand what can be done to support them.									due to your racial/ethnic background while attending college.”
Cokley et al. (2022)	To explore whether perceived stress is a mediator of IP, race related stress, and mental health among a sample of Black attorneys.	✓	US	Professionals: Attorneys	✓	142	80% women (114);18% men (25) (3 had missing data)	All identified as Black; 127 (90.7%) identified as African American, 8 (5.7%) as Afro-Caribbean/West-Indian, 4 (2.9%) as African, and 1 (.7%) as Latinx/Hispanic American.	Quantitative: Survey	CIPS used to assess IP feelings; experiences of race related stress measured via the Index of Race Related Stress-B (IRRS-B); Mental Health Inventory-18 used to assess mental health; Perceived Stress Scale-10 (PSS-10)

Author, Date	Study purpose	IP explicitly explored in method	Country of Origin	Study Setting	Predominantly White Institution	Sample size	Sex of sample (%)	Minority Group	Methodology	Measures Used
										measured perceived stress.
Edwards (2021)	To explore what Black college men believed about their career preparedness, their ability to manage their careers, and how optimistic they are about their career prospects following graduation. Additionally, to identify different subgroups with differing beliefs related to their career readiness using career constructs of: Career Adaptability (CA), Career Optimism (CO), Career Decision Making Self-Efficacy	✓	US	University students	✓	228	100% men	Black	Quantitative: Online survey	Demographic characteristics; Career Optimism measured via the Futures Inventory (CFI); Career decision self-efficacy measured via the Career Decision Self-Efficacy Scale (CDSE-SF); CIPS to assess IP feelings; racial identity measured via the Multidimensional Inventory of Black Identity (MIBI).

Author, Date	Study purpose	IP explicitly explored in method	Country of Origin	Study Setting	Predominantly White Institution	Sample size	Sex of sample (%)	Minority Group	Methodology	Measures Used
	(CDSE), and Impostor Phenomenon (IP).									
Graham & McClain (2019)	To explore whether mentoring, belongingness and Imposter feelings predicts GPA and college adjustment among Black college students	✓	US	Undergraduate students	✓	117	77% 92 women (92), 23% men (25))	All identified as Black/African American: 82% Black and 18% biracial.	Quantitative: Online survey	CIPS used to assess Imposter Feelings; Campus Connectedness Scale (CCS) used to assess level of belongingness; College Student Mentorship Scale used to measure experiences of mentoring and The Student Adaptation to College Questionnaire (SACQ) used to assess College Adjustment
Peteet et al. (2015)	To explore the extent to which first generation status,	✓	US	Undergraduate students	✓	161	74% women (117);	Black (73%), Hispanics (27%)	Quantitative; survey	CIPS used to measure IP; Multi Ethnic Identity

Author, Date	Study purpose	IP explicitly explored in method	Country of Origin	Study Setting	Predominantly White Institution	Sample size	Sex of sample (%)	Minority Group	Methodology	Measures Used
	psychological wellbeing and ethnic identity predicted IP scores in high-achieving URM undergraduates.						26% men (44)			Measure (MEIM) used to capture ethnic identity; Ryff Psychological Well-being Scale to assess Wellbeing. Generation status was also captured.
Bernard et al. (2020)	To examine the moderating roles of John Henryism and institutional racial composition on the relationship between IP and psychological well-being indicators (i.e., social anxiety, self-esteem, and maladaptive perfectionism)	✓	US	University students (2 x PWIs, 2X Historically Black colleges/universities (HBCU))	✓Comparison of PWI and HBCU	266	76% women (203); 24% men (63)	Black	Quantitative: survey	CIPS used to assess IP; sociodemographic information collected (gender, SES, age); John Henryism Scale for Active Coping (JHAC) used to indicate active coping; Minority stress status measured via the Minority Status Stress Scale (MSSS); Self-esteem measured via the

Author, Date	Study purpose	IP explicitly explored in method	Country of Origin	Study Setting	Predominantly White Institution	Sample size	Sex of sample (%)	Minority Group	Methodology	Measures Used
										Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES); social anxiety via Social Interaction Anxiety Scale (SIAS)
Bernard et al. (2017)	To explore the longitudinal relationship between IP and mental health (in a sample of African American young adults and whether gender and racial discrimination moderate IP and mental health.	✓	US	University Students	✓	157	68% women (107); 32% Men (50)	Black (African American)	Quantitative; Survey	CIPS used to assess IP; Daily Life Experiences Scale used to measure racial discrimination; The Symptom Checklist 90-Revised used to measure mental health functioning.

The highlighted rows are the studies which sampled working professionals

3.4.2 Experiences and outcomes of IP

Table 3: Summary of study findings: experiences and outcomes of IP

Author, Date	Factors associated with experiences of IP						IP influenced outcomes of					
	Feelings of not belonging	Racism, Discrimination /Micro-aggressions	Perceptions of stereotypes around one's minority group	Feeling supported	Cultural Differences	Racial Identity	Success being attributed to being a minority (not talent)	Poor mental wellbeing	Working twice as hard	Unhealthy behaviours e.g., overworking	Negative career attitudes	Not wanting to stand out
West et al. (2021)	✓		✓							✓		
Fields & Cunningham-Williams (2021)	✓	✓	✓				✓		✓	✓		
Burt et al. (2017)	✓				✓							
McGee et al. (2021)		✓	✓									
Robinson (2018)	✓	✓		✓						✓		
Chakravarty (2020)	✓	✓	✓				✓					✓
Robles et al., (2021)				✓					✓			

Author, Date	Factors associated with experiences of IP						IP influenced outcomes of						
	Feelings of not belonging	Racism, Discrimination /Micro-aggressions	Perceptions of stereotypes around one's minority group	Feeling supported	Cultural Differences	Racial Identity	Success being attributed to being a minority (not talent)	Poor mental wellbeing	Working twice as hard	Unhealthy behaviours e.g., overworking	Negative career attitudes	Not wanting to stand out	
Chakraverty (2022)	✓	✓			✓		✓					✓	
Lira (2019)	✓	✓											
Cokley et al. (2022)								✓					
Edwards (2021)						✓					✓		
Graham & McClain (2019)	✓			✓									
Peteet et al. (2015)						✓		✓					
Bernard et al. (2020)								✓					
Bernard et al. (2017)		✓											

The highlighted rows are the studies which sampled working professionals.

3.4.3 Summary Findings

Table 4: Summary of study findings

Author, Date	Results
West et al. (2021)	PPs believed IS could be exacerbated for Black women as they have to challenge negative stereotypes and overcompensate through perfectionist tendencies and experience 'Black tax' whereby similar to IS, achievements are a result of e.g., diversity initiatives as opposed to competence or skill (Prince 2017). IP is likened to feelings of not belonging by Black women (personal feelings of not belonging but perceptions of others who feel the Black women also do not belong).
Fields & Cunningham-Williams (2021)	IP impacted Black women in a range of different ways including over-productivity and over-preparation which was found to be exhausting. Concerns around others' perceptions of them led to women not being authentic in academic settings or on the contrary some refused to 'assimilate to the dominant White culture'. 6 key themes arose. IP was underpinned by themes of a) lack of inclusion, b) productivity and c) student interactions.
Burt et al. (2017)	PPs noted feelings of not being good enough they compared themselves to US Black peers which could also exacerbate IS. In addition to some feeling as if they did not belong in the Black community, several described feeling like they did not belong in their classes, departments, nor field of study. Many described being questioned about their legitimacy as graduate students in engineering e.g. comments, looks from other students. This sense of feeling 'othered' exacerbated feelings of IP.
McGee et al. (2021)	The majority described how the racism they experienced positioned them to feel like imposters and demonstrate their competence. Descriptions of managing others' perceptions and being e.g., mistaken for a janitor led to feeling you had to prove yourself. A minority of PPs described their experiences with IS as being self-attributed e.g., through perfectionism or self-doubt, normalising this with a graduate experience.
Robinson (2018)	Women did not reflect IP to the expected extent. Validation was gained through students and working in a diverse community college may have supported their experiences. Negative interactions included microaggressions, being mistaken for another Black person, or feeling invisible, or feeling guarded against colleagues to manage perceptions. Additionally, microaggressions were experienced in relation to appearance or looking youthful. Concerns were expressed around hair fitting into workplace norms. Tips to combat feelings of impostorism were to mentorship, allies, the power of authenticity and staying true to oneself.

Author, Date	Results
Chakravarty (2020)	All participants had moderate to intense IP scores. 6 key themes arose from PPs sharing their experiences of IP as a Black person: 1) Being the only one: which contributed to IS, not being invited to things, erosion of self-confidence and increased one's fear of being singled out, and having greater representation would support experiences of IS. 2) Lack of belonging: doubt of this not being the PPs world, others' perceptions, feelings of representing an entire race 3) Stereotyping, micro-aggression and judgment: hiding success due to concerns others would attribute this to colour 4) External appearances: being mistaken for another person making one feeling like an imposter and success attributed to not sounding Black. 5) Feeling like the "diversity enhancers,": feeling achievement was attributed to being Black not competence. Feelings of acceptance to programmes in order to fulfil diversity quotas.6) Complications of intersecting identities e.g., Black women faced double penalty, bi racial PPs unable to fit into either, Foreign born Black PPs held to different standards e.g., called "good Black" by White faculty
Robles et al., 2021	Feedback from the programme was positive. Mentors provided support of mitigating high cost of minority tax e.g., providing D&I education. IP was felt to decrease time and confidence and without peers/mentors to help face barriers, validation is sought outside of work i.e., through family and friends.
Chakraverty (2022)	PPs had high to intense IP scores. 5 key themes emerged from the interviews of being an imposter in relation to being a Native American, a minority identity. 1) Cultural differences: e.g., others making no effort to understand the Indigenous culture, derogatory comments and the cumulative effect this has. 2) Lack of critical mass and fear of standing out: Acknowledgement of being the minority and feeling isolated and experiencing a lack of belongingness as a result. 3) Academic environment: success being attributed to diversity quotas, lack of social networks, feeling of being judged. 4) Family background and upbringing: reflections of being the first generation, conflicts between family and academic identity, lacking a family support network, intersects with class difference. 5) Looks and diversity status: attributing success to e.g., others' kindness, pressure to conform to social standards, failure to fit into different groups due to multicultural heritage.
Lira (2019)	Key themes included fear of failure, challenges assimilating into a PWI due to racial identity or appearance, expectations (personal and family), feeling unprepared, feelings of not belonging in the PWI and not being smart enough.
Cokley et al. (2022)	Imposter feelings were positively associated with perceived stress and mental health (depression and anxiety). Perceived stress fully mediated the relationship between imposter feelings and depression ($b = .00, p = .963$). Perceived stress fully mediated the relationship between cultural racism and depression ($b = .14, p = .106$). This indicated that Higher imposter feelings were associated with increased perceived stress ($b=.46, p<.001$) and higher perceived stress was associated with increased anxiety ($b=.96, p<.001$). Perceived stress fully mediated the relationship between impostor feelings and anxiety ($b = .09, p = .282$).

Author, Date	Results
Edwards (2021)	IP was negatively correlated with, career adaptability, career decision self-efficacy (CDSE) and significantly negatively correlated with career optimism (CO). IP was negatively correlated with racial identity which suggested that for those who had IS, identifying with minority groups may be important to them. Cluster analysis grouped PPs into 6 clusters/ distinct profiles of how college men perceived their future careers.
Graham & McClain (2019)	Students who had higher connectedness to the university had higher belongingness, greater mentoring experiences and less imposter feelings. Imposter feelings were negatively associated with college adjustment i.e., students with high levels of imposter feelings reported lower levels of college adjustment. No significant differences were found in imposter feelings or GPA in those who had a mentor and those who did not. However, those who had a peer mentor had significantly higher levels of belonging and college adjustment than those who did not.
Peteet et al. (2015)	<p>Low psychological wellbeing and low ethnic identity were predictors of IP. There was a significant correlation between IP and generation status, all subscales of psychological wellbeing (autonomy, self-acceptance, environmental mastery, positive relationships with others, and purpose in life; but not personal growth) and the only affirmation and belonging subscale of racial identity.</p> <p>While first generation status was positively correlated to IP scores, it was not a significant predictor, indicating other mediating factors. Two components of racial identity (high affirmation and belonging) predicted IP scores in this sample. Environmental mastery (psychological wellbeing) was also a significant predictor of IP.</p>
Bernard et al. (2020)	<p>IP was associated with decreases in wellbeing indicators among students attending PWIs and HBCUs. Differences between PWIs and HBCUs: Students at PWIs reported significantly higher IP scores than students at HBCUs. IP was found to positively predict social anxiety, but only among students attending PWIs who reported higher levels of John Henryism.</p> <p>Wellbeing: Students who attended PWIs and reported higher levels of John Henryism (+1 SD) were most vulnerable to increases in social anxiety, particularly at higher levels of IP. Higher levels of self-esteem were associated with lower levels of IP and higher levels of active coping. John Henryism was not found to independently moderate the link between IP and psychological well-being. John Henryism nor institutional diversity influenced the relationship between IP and maladaptive perfectionism. John Henryism did not serve as a significant moderator between IP and self-esteem.</p>
Bernard et al. (2017)	Mental health: IP did not predict increases in negative mental health in the full sample. Moderators: Gender or racial discrimination was not found to independently influence the association between IP and mental health. Frequency of racial discrimination frequency and bother from this, and gender (African

Author, Date	Results
	American women) moderated the imposter mental health link: Young African women reporting higher levels of discrimination and frequency and low levels of distress as a result of the discrimination were most susceptible to the negative mental impacts of IP.

The highlighted rows are the studies which sampled working professionals

3.5 Thematic Narrative

3.5.1 Primary objectives

The primary objective of this review was to understand what is known about IP within ethnic minority working populations, their experiences and outcomes from IP. It must be noted that due to the limited literature which was yielded from the search focusing on professionals only (5/15), research using student samples (postgraduate and undergraduate) has also been included as this provides additional insights to compare how experiences of professionals and students at universities, in the context of progression and performance.

3.5.2 Research Question 1) *What is the experience of IP in minority groups at work?*

There is clear evidence from all the studies within the papers selected for inclusion that both ethnic minority students and professionals experienced IP (See Table 5). There were a range of factors found to be influential in ethnic minorities' experiences of IP. The selected studies demonstrated promising evidence from multiple studies with varying quality to suggest that feelings of not belonging, racism, and perception of one's minority group stereotypes were influential factors in ethnic minority groups' experiences of IP. There was initial evidence of varying quality to suggest that cultural differences, feeling supported, and racial identity also contributed. These factors are discussed below.

A) Feelings of belonging

Studies illustrated the influence and underpinning concept of belonging in relation to experiences of IP (Burt et al., 2017; Chakraverty, 2020; Graham & McClain, 2019; West et al., 2021). Research studies used different terms to explain this experience within their institutions or organisational setting, such as 'lack of inclusion' (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021), 'lack of belonging' (Burt et al., 2017; Chakraverty, 2020), 'feeling isolated' (Chakraverty, 2022), and feeling 'invisible' (Chakraverty, 2022; Robinson, 2018).

This absence of belonging is related to both the institution level and with peers or colleagues (Burt et al., 2017; Chakraverty, 2020; Lira, 2019). Feeling a lack of belonging with other peers was clear through examples of behaviours from the majority group. Experiences of a lack of belonging included not being invited to things or White peers 'name-dropping', which led to the minority group doubting that they belonged in the institution (Chakraverty, 2020). Additionally, the lack of critical mass where similar others are seen makes individuals doubt themselves (Lira, 2019). The sense of 'feeling othered' exacerbated feelings of IP (Burt et al., 2017). 'Othering' can be defined as "the simultaneous construction of the self or ingroup and the other or outgroup... through identification of some desirable characteristic that the self/in-group has and the other/out group lacks, or some undesirable characteristic that the

other/outgroup has and the self/in group lacks” (Brons, 2015 p.70). The process of othering creates a superior positionality for the ingroup, however Brons (2015) notes this is implicit. Within two studies, ethnic minorities used the term ‘invisible’ to describe how they did not feel they belonged (Chakraverty, 2022; Robinson, 2018). This included feeling invisible to White colleagues (Robinson, 2018) and a contradiction between a ‘fear of being singled out’ and feeling invisible (Chakraverty, 2022).

Other studies in the final fifteen support these findings. The presence of belonging was found to elicit fewer imposter feelings. One research study (Graham & McClain, 2019) reported that students with higher levels of connectedness to their institution had subsequent higher levels of belonging and fewer imposter feelings, demonstrating the influence of belonging in the experience of IP (Graham & McClain, 2019). Bernard et al. (2020) compared students in a PWI and HBCU and found that those in a PWI reported significantly higher IP scores than students in an HBCU, illustrating the importance of critical mass and belonging. Additionally, other research highlighted that greater representation from the minority group, including where ‘people like me are seen’, would support an individual’s experience of IP (Burt et al., 2017; Chakraverty, 2020).

Interestingly, two studies noted how participants felt a lack of belonging within their minority group. This included bi-racial participants (Chakraverty, 2020) and foreign-born Black students (Burt et al., 2017). In contrast, participants in Lira’s (2019) research into Latino students found that having more than one racial identity was advantageous to support assimilation into a PWI.

While most studies selected for inclusion within the final papers did not reflect on intersectionality, two papers did. Chakraverty (2020) highlighted that intersectionality resulted in a sense of not belonging, contributing to feeling like an imposter. For example, Black women were found to face a ‘double penalty’ of being both Black and female among doctoral and postdoctoral scholars in STEM fields. Chakraverty (2022) noted how family background and upbringing also intersected with class differences in Native American postdoctoral students and influenced their experiences.

Overall, the quality assessment indicated there was promising evidence to suggest that belonging was an influential factor in ethnic minorities experiencing IP. However, these studies utilised varying definitions of belonging and not all studies explored belonging and IP specifically.

B) Racism and discrimination, including microaggressions

Evidence also indicated that implicit and explicit racism and discrimination, including microaggressions, were influential factors in ethnic minorities' experiences in IP. Minority individuals' appearance influenced experiences with IP across both professional and student populations (Chakraverty, 2020; Chakraverty, 2022; Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021; Lira, 2019; Robinson, 2018). Minorities were judged by their appearance, misidentified with other minorities, and concerned about not looking professional. Interestingly, these studies were not all based in a PWI where greater racism may be anticipated.

Appearance: Minorities were mindful of standing out because of their physical appearance (Chakraverty, 2020; Chakraverty, 2022; Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021). Hair was reported on in two studies (Chakraverty, 2022; Robinson, 2018). Black students in Chakraverty's (2020) study shared how they had to self-monitor and be mindful of how they spoke and styled their hair. Maintaining these appearances was felt to contribute to an individual's IP. In Robinson's professional sample, some participants deliberated having straight hair to conform to workplace norms and felt that braids, for example, were too Afrocentric. In contrast, others felt a sense of freedom with their choices around natural hair. Additionally, in the workplace, participants described how they were judged in relation to their clothing or appearances as opposed to their professional performance, which again fed into the experience of IP (Chakraverty, 2020; Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021). They felt they could not belong due to their clothes or were made to feel this way through microaggressions related to their appearance. For example, in the workplace, where minorities looked youthful, it also led to microaggressions around perceptions of employees being inexperienced, e.g., being called 'kid' (Robinson, 2018).

Microaggressions: Microaggressions of being overlooked, ignored, or mistaken for someone else, such as a janitor' or 'the help' (Robinson, 2018) further exacerbated feelings of IP within minorities. Feeling invisible, a lack of belonging and the need to prove oneself were also demonstrated by Chakraverty (2020), McGee et al. (2021) and Robinson (2018).

Racism: McGee et al.'s (2021) findings highlighted how the majority of their participants (postgraduate and researchers) felt racism positioned them to feel like imposters. Interestingly, McGee et al. acknowledged the role of racism and microaggressions in IP and concluded that "if structural, institutional and everyday racism in STEM were eradicated, impostor syndrome would likely no longer exist" (McGee et al., 2021, p.449). In contrast, Bernard et al. (2017) examined the longitudinal relationship between IP and mental health, with racial discrimination and gender as moderators. Interestingly, racial discrimination alone did not influence the association between IP and mental health. IP was only associated with

higher levels of depressive symptoms when moderators of gender (women) and racial discrimination were introduced. These findings suggest that IP may interact with various factors to influence mental health outcomes.

Overall, the quality assessment indicated there was promising evidence to suggest that racism and discrimination, including microaggressions, were influential factors in ethnic minorities experiencing IP. However, other variables may moderate this experience, including gender (Bernard et al., 2017). Further research is needed to establish the direction of this relationship, as previous research on Black students (Cokley et al., 2013) found that feeling like an imposter can exacerbate the impact of discrimination.

C) Perceptions of stereotypes around one's minority group

These perceptions were referred to in varying degrees with a view that they influenced one's experience of IP (Chakraverty, 2020; Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021; McGee et al., 2021). Findings from McGee et al. (2021) highlighted how research participants who acknowledged the influence racism had in their experiences of IP were aware of stereotypes they had to contend with, including race and intelligence. Their findings also illustrated how even if success was achieved, these stereotypes remain, and success, therefore, does not mitigate further experiences of IP.

Managing others' perceptions of stereotypes was common across studies (Chakraverty, 2020; Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021). Fields and Cunningham-Williams (2021) found that considerations of other's perceptions inhibited women from being authentic or, in contrast, consciously prevented minority women from assimilating into the dominant culture. These perceptions related to feelings of not belonging or that the minority group were only at the university because of their minority status, e.g., to fulfil diversity quotas. Managing these perceptions led to some of the outcomes of IP, such as over-preparation (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021), hesitancy in asking questions in class (Chakraverty, 2020) and having to prove yourself (McGee et al., 2021). Overall, the quality assessment indicated promising evidence that perceptions of stereotypes around one's minority group was an influential factor in ethnic minorities experiencing IP.

D) Feeling supported

Support was highlighted to varying degrees in four studies as being influential in minority experiences: Graham & McClain (2019), Robinson (2018), Robles et al. (2021), West et al., (2021). Robinson et al. (2018) found that teachers working at a community college who did not feel supported by their colleagues interestingly did not reflect IP to the expected degree.

The teachers sampled described how their minority students were a source of motivation for them, which offers an explanation for the lack of IP experienced.

Finding support was also cited as a strategy to support minority experiences within these four studies. While combating IP was not the focus of many of these studies, participants in Robinson et al.'s (2018) research shared that mentorship and allies were also sources of support and potential strategies to minimise IP. Similar to Robinson et al. (2018), employees in a US university highlighted the importance of creating their own diverse support system, and whilst they did not necessarily receive support from their colleagues, engaging with Black students reaffirmed they belonged in their institutions (West et al., 2021). This was supported by Graham and McClain (2019), who found that students with a peer mentor had significantly higher levels of belonging and college adjustment compared to those who did not. Where having peers and mentors was not possible, seeking validation outside of work through personal networks was also sought (Robles, 2021). Overall, the quality assessment indicated there was initial evidence to suggest that feeling supported by individuals within their environment helped ethnic minorities navigate their experiences of IP.

E) Cultural differences

Two research studies highlighted the influence of cultural differences on experiences of IP (Burt et al., 2017; Chakraverty, 2022). Chakraverty (2022) found that cultural differences, including levels of eye contact, contributed to feeling like an imposter. As described by the participant, in Native American culture, eye contact with someone superior is 'threatening'; however, by avoiding eye contact, this individual described how others saw her as 'rude' and thus contributed to feelings of an imposter. Cultural differences may remind the individual that they are a minority and may compound feelings of lack of belonging. Interestingly, this extended to cultural comparisons between minority groups; Burt et al. (2017) found that those who identified themselves as foreign-born made comparisons to their US Black peers, which exacerbated IP. Overall, the quality assessment indicated initial evidence from two studies with some limitations suggesting that cultural differences influenced ethnic minorities' experiences of IP.

F) Racial identity

Two studies explored racial identity (Edwards, 2021; Peteet et al., 2015). Edwards (2021) found that IP was negatively correlated with racial identity, which suggested that for those with IP, identifying with minority groups may be important to them. Similarly, Peteet et al. (2015) found two components of racial identity (high affirmation and belonging) predicted IP scores within their sample of undergraduate students at a PWI. Overall, the quality

assessment indicated there was initial evidence from two studies with some limitations suggesting that racial identity influenced ethnic minorities' experiences of IP.

3.5.3 Research Question 2) What outcomes are experienced from IP within ethnic minority groups at work?

This systematic review found a range of outcomes experienced in ethnic minority groups. Promising evidence from multiple studies demonstrated that minority groups attributed their success to being a minority, not their own competence. Initial evidence suggested IP was associated with poor mental well-being, feelings that minority individuals have to work twice as hard as their peers and also that IP manifested in unhealthy behaviours such as overworking. There was unclear evidence to suggest that IP in ethnic minorities influenced outcomes of negative attitudes towards one's career and feelings of not wanting to stand out. These are discussed below.

A) Feeling of success being attributed to being a minority, not a talent:

Three studies found how individuals from ethnic minority groups attributed academic successes to being a minority rather than their own competence (Chakraverty, 2022; Chakraverty, 2020; Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021). Individuals themselves felt their success was to fulfil diversity quotas (Chakraverty, 2020; Chakraverty, 2022; Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021). Specific examples included successfully achieving a place in a PhD program being attributed to a mistake as they did not belong (because they were Native American) (Chakraverty, 2022) and receiving an internship offer letter because they were 'Black.' The easiness of the process was attributed to the company ensuring they fulfilled their diversity quota (Chakraverty, 2022).

Minority individuals heard the narrative around them from their own networks that their success was due to them being a minority. For example, they were told it would be easy to secure career roles because an individual was both a woman and Black (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021). This narrative led them to question whether their success was due to their own competence and subsequently initiated behaviours such as hiding success (Chakraverty, 2020; Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021). For example, participants reported not using the title 'Dr' so as not to elicit high expectations (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021). This research suggests that feelings of tokenism are present within ethnic minorities' experiences of IP.

Overall, the quality assessment indicated promising evidence that IP influenced feelings that success was attributed to being a minority not having talent. There is insufficient evidence to determine the direction of this relationship, i.e., whether perceptions that success is

attributed to minority status contribute to IP or whether individuals who experience IP are more likely to develop these perceptions about the attribution of their career success.

B) Poor mental wellbeing

While IP has been consistently associated with poor well-being, there were mixed findings among the studies measuring this (Cokley et al., 2022; Peteet et al., 2015). Low psychological well-being was a predictor of IP in a student sample from a PWI (Peteet et al., 2015). However, findings from Cokley et al. (2022) research did not find a definitive link. In a professional sample of Black attorneys (Cokley et al., 2022), it was the attorneys' perceptions of stress that were critical for their mental health compared with cultural racism or IP. Perceived stress mediated the relationship between imposter feelings and depression, and also imposter feelings and anxiety. This finding demonstrates other compounding factors, such as individual perceptions and interpretation of events, which are likely to be influential in experiences of IP.

In Bernard et al.'s research (2020), IP was found to positively predict social anxiety; however, this was only within the sample of students who attended a predominantly White institution (compared to an HBCU) and those who reported higher levels of John Henryism⁴. A third study found that IP did, again, not predict increases in adverse mental health in the whole sample and gender and racial discrimination together moderated the mental health link (Bernard et al., 2017). This is not to say that others did not experience IP, but it was the young African women who reported frequent and high levels of discrimination and low levels of distress as a result of the discrimination who were most susceptible to the negative mental impacts of IP, highlighting the influence of intersectionality on outcomes of IP.

The quality assessment indicates initial evidence of IP influencing poor mental well-being. However, other influential factors, such as gender and discrimination, are also likely to contribute. It should be noted how studies measured well-being using various scales, which may explain the varied findings.

C) Feeling they have to work twice as hard (minority tax)

The research highlighted how perceptions of working twice as hard (minority tax) were influential to varying degrees in individuals' experiences of IP. Perceptions around organisational injustice were also influential in the development of this belief, as

⁴ John Henryism, as cited by Bernard, Jones and Volpe (2020), refers to an individual coping strategy and can be defined as an "individual's self-perception that they can meet [the] demands of their environment through hard work and determination" (James et al., 1983, p. 263)."

demonstrated by Fields and Cunningham-Williams (2021). A participant in this study described seeing colleagues advance to leadership positions whilst others, more often in minoritised groups, felt overlooked, leading to feelings of IP. West et al. (2021) explained how Black women experienced a 'Black tax' whereby when success was achieved, women were overlooked; however, when they did something wrong, they received backlash. Ethnic minorities who experienced IP felt they had to work 'twice as hard' to challenge any negative stereotypes which existed (Robinson, 2018). This extra work included overcompensating for negative stereotypes by routinely over-preparing, causing anxiety and time wasting.

Robles et al. (2021) also found the high cost of minority tax as a key theme from their qualitative feedback from a pilot workshop for underrepresented minorities in a medical school faculty. Feedback noted how ethnic minorities had to engage in additional workloads, such as serving on additional committees or providing D&I education to others, which resulted in less time for scholarly work. These findings were also supported by research from West et al. (2021), which found that Black students and staff engaged in 'pro-bono or pro-social diversity work', which, despite benefitting their PWI, resulted in limited personal recognition. West et al. (2021) explained how this fed into minority groups' feelings of having to represent their race. This pressure may fuel an individual's behaviour to ensure success in whatever they do to avoid negative views of their race.

Overall, the quality assessment indicated there was initial evidence to suggest IP in ethnic minorities is associated in some way with associated feelings of minority tax. However, again, it is not possible to determine the causal relationship or direction of this on IP, i.e., whether perceptions of minority tax contribute to one's experience of IP or whether working twice as hard shapes one's belief of IP. Further research is needed to understand how minority tax interacts with IP.

D) Unhealthy behaviours such as overworking

Two studies noted that to manage others' perceptions and challenge negative stereotypes, IP manifested in unhealthy behaviours such as overworking and perfectionist tendencies (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021; West et al., 2021). Individuals overprepared for tasks so that they were not seen as deficient; however, the pressure to outperform peers and demonstrate one's competence resulted in exhaustion (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021). For example, one participant in Fields and Cunningham-Williams (2021) described over preparing for meetings to ensure they could ensure they contribute. They believed that if they did not contribute, others may see them as "incapable of meeting the standards of her position." Interestingly, these behaviours of overworking and over-preparation were posited within the original IP cycle by Clance and Imes (1978), along with procrastination, which has

not been highlighted as a behaviour within the final fifteen papers selected for inclusion. Overall, the quality assessment indicated there was unclear evidence to suggest IP in ethnic minorities influences overworking. Greater evidence is needed to understand these behaviours more specifically.

E) Negative attitudes towards one’s career

One study found that IP was correlated with negative attitudes towards research participants’ careers (Edwards, 2021). Specifically, this study found that IP was negatively correlated with career adaptability and career decision self-efficacy and significantly negatively correlated with career optimism. The quality assessment indicated unclear evidence around whether IP elicited negative attitudes towards one’s career. Greater evidence is needed within working populations.

F) Feelings of not wanting to stand out

One outcome of IP highlighted by Chakraverty (2022) was the fear of standing out while being a minority. The quality assessment indicated unclear evidence around whether IP elicits the outcome of not wanting to stand out.

3.6 Evidence Statements

Table 5: Evidence statements accounting for the varying quality of the empirical study

Evidence statement	Quality Rating	Reasoning	In the following studies:
Ethnic minority populations experience IP	Strong evidence	There are multiple studies all of which are limited in their quality, design and execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All
.... are influential in ethnic minorities experiencing IP			
Feelings of not belonging	Promising evidence	There are multiple studies all of which are limited in their design and execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Burt et al. (2017) Chakraverty (2020) Chakraverty (2022) Fields & Cunningham-Williams (2021) Graham & McClain (2019) Lira (2019) West et al. (2021)

Evidence statement	Quality Rating	Reasoning	In the following studies:
Racism and discrimination, including microaggressions	Promising evidence	There are multiple studies all of which are limited in their design and execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bernard et al. (2017) • Chakraverty (2020) • Chakraverty (2022) • Fields & Cunningham-Williams (2021) • Lira (2019) • McGee et al. (2021) • Robinson (2021)
Perceptions of one's minority group stereotypes	Promising evidence	There are multiple studies all of which are limited in their design and execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chakraverty (2020) • Fields & Cunningham-Williams (2021) • McGee et al. (2021) • West et al. (2021)
Feeling supported	Initial evidence	There are some studies all of which are limited in their design and execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graham & McClain (2019) • Robinson (2018) • Robles et al. (2021) • West et al. (2021)
Cultural differences	Initial evidence	There are two studies with some limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Burt et al. (2017) • Chakraverty (2022)
Racial identity	Initial evidence	There are two studies with some limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edwards (2021) • Peteet et al. (2015)
IP in ethnic minorities influences outcomes of			
Feelings of success being attributed to being minority, not talent	Promising evidence	There are multiple studies all of which are limited in their design and execution	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chakraverty (2020) • Chakraverty (2022) • Fields & Cunningham-Williams (2021)
Poor mental wellbeing	Initial evidence	There are some studies with some limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bernard et al. (2020) • Cokley et al. (2022) • Peteet et al. (2015)
Feeling they have to work twice as hard (minority tax)	Initial evidence	There are some studies with some limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fields & Cunningham-Williams (2021) • Robinson (2018) • Robles et al. (2021)

Evidence statement	Quality Rating	Reasoning	In the following studies:
Unhealthy behaviours such as overworking	Unclear evidence	There are two studies with some limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Fields & Cunningham-Williams (2021) • West et al. (2021)
Negative attitudes towards one's career	Unclear evidence	There is a single study with some limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Edwards 2021
Feelings of not wanting to stand out	Unclear evidence	There is a single study with some limitations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Chakraverty (2022)

3. 7 Discussion

This systematic literature review sought to understand what is known about IP in ethnic minority working populations: their experiences and the outcomes from IP experienced by minority employees at work. There is promising evidence that a range of factors influence IP. These include feelings of not belonging, racism and discrimination, and perceptions of one's minority group stereotypes, which the individual must manage. The quality of the studies is variable, and further research is needed to explore how these variables interact, particularly those that are causal mediators and moderators of ethnic minorities' experiences of IP.

As originally posited by Clance and Imes (1985), the IP cycle consists of an individual who, upon receiving an achievement-related task, experiences self-doubt or feelings of anxiety, which can result in over-preparation or procrastination to deal with the task. Once success is achieved, this is then attributed to factors such as luck, fuelling the cycle of IP and again, when another achievement-related task is received, self-doubt re-occurs. Some of the systematic literature review findings are consistent with this cycle, including behaviours such as overworking and over-preparation. However, this original model and definition do not encapsulate the broad experiences of ethnic minorities with IP.

3.7.1 Novel Influential factors

This SLR demonstrates that whilst similarities such as behaviours of overworking and over-preparation are consistent with the original cycle posited by Clance and Imes (1978), there are also additional factors not captured by this original model and definition. Clance and Imes (1978) highlighted that individuals experiencing IP attribute success to external factors such as 'luck.' While this SLR also illustrates that minorities attribute success to external factors, a more specific finding is highlighted: ethnic minority groups are attributing their success to their minority status and fulfilling diversity quotas. Broader experiences

highlighted in this research, such as factors of racism, managing others' stereotypes and a lack of belonging, provide an understanding of potential drivers for the self-doubt experienced by an individual with IP after being assigned an achievement-related task.

The research identified experiences of a lack of belonging by minorities brought about by reminders of minority status through visibly being the only minority in the group, comments relating to appearance, organisational injustice with feelings of being overlooked, being mistaken for someone else, or blatant social exclusion. While racism alone was not found to elicit poor mental health outcomes (Bernard et al., 2022), a cumulative effect of factors may likely wear down an employee and fuel the belief of not belonging. The lack of inclusion can harm an employee's wellbeing (Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010), highlighting a possible explanation around IP and wellbeing in minorities.

Perceptions of others' beliefs about one's social group, such as stereotypes, influenced IP experiences. However, none of the 15 studies offered details about the narratives individuals constructed to manage these stereotypes. It is also unclear from the existing research whether concerns around others' perceptions of stereotypes compound IP or are part of its development. A similar phenomenon of stereotype threat may explain these findings. While stereotype threat and IP have been described as distinct concepts, as Robinson (2018) highlights, both are underpinned by belonging. IP illustrates how individuals feel as though they do not belong, and stereotype threat may encourage individuals to prove that they do belong. Initial evidence indicates individuals may do this by engaging in behaviours such as overworking to combat perceived stereotypes. In both cases, individuals are very much aware of how they are 'othered', which influences their behaviour to assimilate into the majority group or to prove that they belong. Further research is needed to understand how these concepts interact with each other.

To a large extent, these factors (a lack of belonging, racism and discrimination, and managing others' stereotypical beliefs) relate to one's environment rather than one's belief system. This finding supports McGee's research (2022), which suggests the label of IP ignores institutional factors and causes minorities to carry the responsibility to cope in environments which do not accommodate them. Further empirical research is needed to understand how these variables connect.

3.7.2 Outcomes of IP

Relating to outcomes of IP, there is promising evidence to suggest that IP in ethnic minorities influences success being attributed to being in a minority group, e.g., to fulfil a diversity quota as opposed to one's competence. As per Clance and Imes' original IP cycle (1985), success was found in this SLR to be attributed to an external factor, specifically

being an ethnic minority. This may have subsequent damaging implications for the minority employee as it can fuel the IP cycle and belief that they do not belong and are not appointed for their success but instead for organisational gain, a token. This can potentially encourage minority employees to internalise this belief or overcompensate to challenge the belief others may have.

This SLR has provided greater context to the initial IP cycle by demonstrating initial evidence of the drivers for over-preparation for minority groups: to discount stereotypes, feelings of injustice or belief in minority tax. Greater empirical evidence is needed to underpin the narrative of IP experienced by ethnic minorities. There is currently unclear evidence around whether IP influences unhealthy behaviours such as overworking and how this relates to one's career.

Furthermore, the research highlighted supports the wider diversity and inclusion literature, such as how stereotypes about minorities may limit individuals' career progression (Kanter, 1977). Minorities are conscious of being 'othered' and visible, which may fuel feelings that success is due to their minority status or that they have to manage this perception others have. Further research is needed to establish the implications of this and the compounding effect of these factors in relation to one's career. It is possible that the feeling to prove oneself elicits unhealthy behaviours, including overworking or disengagement with career growth due to fears of criticism arising from higher visibility.

Arguably, this SLR indicates that IP encompasses far more than just the attribution of success to other factors for minority groups. It reminds organisations of the importance of addressing systemic issues and creating cultures of inclusion to enable individuals to thrive and reach their potential while providing the support necessary for employees to progress and address any injustice they experience.

3.8 Strengths and limitations of research to understand minority ethnic employees experience to IP

To the author's knowledge, this is the first SLR focusing on exploring ethnic minorities' experience of IP within the workplace. This SLR, therefore, offers new insights and highlights potential implications of future research and practice into how the definition of IP does not necessarily encapsulate the minority experience.

The quality of the final fifteen papers is variable. All papers were Western-centric, with all research studies taking place in the US, the majority sampling students. It is important to note that the SLR did not actively seek to include or only select studies conducted within the US. No restrictions were placed on the organisational sector, country, or industry. Whilst the

author could have selected other studies beyond the outputs of the SLR process and inclusion criteria to capture greater representation from other countries, this risked increasing selection bias and deviated from the SLR methodology, which seeks to follow a replicable and transparent process. Despite the aim to conduct an SLR on ethnic minorities within the workplace, there was insufficient literature to review, with only five out of the fifteen papers being focused on the workplace. If only five papers were reviewed, this would have omitted significant findings which have contributed to an understanding of ethnic minorities' experiences of IP, particularly as some of these studies sampled both employees and students. However, despite similarities between professional and student samples in the findings, there is a risk that the student populations may have diluted findings. Additionally, within the final fifteen studies, there was a lack of randomised samples, with mostly convenience and opportunity sampling used. Further high-quality evidence, including the use of control groups and longitudinal empirical research, is needed to determine how these factors specifically contribute to the construction of IP within ethnic minorities in the workplace.

This SLR highlighted the lack of diversity in ethnic minority samples when exploring IP, with the majority of research (thirteen out of fifteen studies) sampling Black participants. Previous research highlighted how differently IP is experienced across different minority groups (Cokley et al., 2013). This SLR, therefore, may not be representative of the experiences of IP across all ethnic minority groups. Caution must be taken when extrapolating these SLR findings to other minority groups. Assuming homogeneity between Black populations and other ethnic minority groups in the workplace would be overly simplistic, and generalising these findings poses significant risks to the accuracy of data. Firstly, extrapolation of these findings to other minority groups may mask potential differences between other ethnic minority groups' experiences of IP and subgroup differences. Clinical research (Holland & Palaniappan, 2012) has demonstrated, for example, how Asian subgroups differ in rates of cardiovascular disease and cancer, with each subgroup having different risk factor profiles. This demonstrates the importance of having a greater representation of diversity before drawing conclusions and, secondly, the importance of subgroup-level data to enable tailored interventions. The lack of other minority groups captured from studies within this SLR data collection is a limitation. It leads to the absence of knowledge regarding the experiences of these populations, such as South Asians, which Chapter 3 seeks to address.

Half of the research was conducted within a Predominantly White Institution (PWI). This may also limit the extrapolation of research into more diverse settings, particularly as one study comparing PWIs and HBCUs found that IP was higher in PWIs (Bernard et al., 2020). This

review also highlights the lack of research in the workplace, limiting understanding of how explicitly IP can manifest and affect minorities' careers.

All the final studies are Western publications and US-based, where the White group is the majority in all this research. Experiences and findings, therefore, are likely to be influenced by Western ideology. This SLR would also fail to account for other social hierarchies and to represent collectivist cultures. For ethnic minorities, the potential influence of internalised racism which reflects social hierarchies cannot be ignored. Pyke (2010) describes how minority groups may internalise racist stereotypes and ideologies which are perpetuated by the White dominant society about one's racial group. This internalised racism can lead to feelings of self-doubt, disgust and disrespect for one's race and oneself (Pearn Kandola, 2020). Further research is needed to incorporate how Western ideology including how the minority positionality within social hierarchies can influence minority experiences of IP.

While this SLR used a rigorous and methodological approach, it is not without limitations. Six databases were used and were confined to the researcher's university library access, which may have resulted in missing relevant information from other databases. Secondly, while using the ONS recommended list of ethnicities to ensure representation across minority ethnic groups, other more colloquial search terms may have yielded further results. It is also possible that studies may have been excluded from the review due to incomplete reporting of the criteria of which this study was sifted, e.g., population and minority group. Thirdly, the inclusion and exclusion criteria may be a limitation of the SLR approach. Studies focused on wellbeing were excluded; however, given the findings of how IP impacts wellbeing, this may be a weakness of the approach as incorporating these studies may have yielded further relevant data. Additionally, as detailed in Chapter 1, a range of external factors such as parenting styles, upbringing and the importance of education may impact IP. Whilst excluding studies not related to work or performance offered the benefit of providing a focused review, this was not without the limitation of potentially reduced understanding around how individuals developed these experiences or internalised this in the workplace. A reduced focus on work-related experiences may have expanded the ability to understand, for example, how socio-cultural influences could have explained some of these findings around belonging or the importance placed on perceptions others had of one's minority group. Samples consisting of both minority and majority ethnic minorities were also excluded to ensure the findings explored the minority experiences specifically. However, this may have excluded comparative studies that future research should seek to explore.

3.9 Implications for practice

The label 'Imposter Phenomenon' or 'Imposter Syndrome' is increasingly being used in the popular literature to describe individuals who fail to internalise success and instead attribute this to external factors. While this label may describe some individual barriers to progression or fulfilling potential, it is essential to explore the factors from an organisational perspective, as highlighted in this SLR. Individuals cannot fulfil their potential if they are in an environment which does not encourage them to thrive and perpetuates the belief that minorities are only appointed due to being an ethnic minority. If organisations seek to employ diversity, individuals need to be welcomed and encouraged to be authentic and not feel they have to assimilate into the majority group. Employers can ensure this by remaining mindful of the power dynamics between minority and majority groups and emphasising inclusion for all.

Research cites a range of strategies individuals have employed to relieve feelings of impostorism. Strategies include cognitive reframing, avoiding overpreparation, practising self-compassion and having a community of support (Baumann et al., 2020; Rivera et al., 2021; Siddiqui et al., 2024). Additionally, when individuals are experiencing self-doubt or anxiety-provoking situations associated with feelings of impostorism, power poses may offer temporary relief as they can encourage feelings of power and risk-taking behaviours (Carney et al., 2010).

Employees who experience IP may also find coaching beneficial. Zanchetta et al. (2020) found that coaching was an effective mindset intervention for IP as it reduced fear of negative self-evaluation and improved self-efficacy. This research suggests that exploring the idea of a growth mindset enables individuals to challenge their views, including the belief that success is due to external factors, which in turn challenges one's IP-related thought processes.

This SLR has identified influential factors in IP experiences, including feelings of not belonging and racism and discrimination, including microaggressions. Feedback has been found to play a pivotal role in fostering a sense of belonging within academic environments (Chapman, 2017). Therefore, if employees do not receive frequent feedback from managers or peers or only receive this at annual time points for end-of-year assessments, actively seeking this more regularly can continuously strengthen one's sense of belonging and help gather objective evidence to counter feelings of impostorism (Baumann et al., 2020; Chapman, 2017).

Ethnic minority employees may also find mindfulness beneficial which has been found to specifically support ethnic minority wellbeing and moderate the relationship between

perceptions of discrimination and emotional exhaustion (Sun et al., 2022; Thoroughgood et al., 2020). A recent meta-analysis (Costa et al., 2023) has identified the detrimental impact microaggressions can have on one's mental wellbeing, physical health and job outcomes. This is likely due to the rumination microaggressions can cause; for example, one may doubt whether the microaggression was intended to insult them or whether this was imagined, and this can cause the event to be replayed in one's mind. Engaging in mindfulness can interrupt thinking processes which may contribute to emotional exhaustion and other IP related feelings (Thoroughgood et al., 2020). Despite the range of strategies employees may find supportive of their IP experiences, the lack of empirical evidence investigating interventions' effectiveness should be noted as an area for further research to target.

While there is a focus on the individual to address their beliefs around internalising their success, it would be highly reductionist to assume that the environment, structures and societal norms that are in place do not shape conditions to enable feelings of being an imposter to come alive. Rather than use the label of 'Imposter Phenomenon' and burden ethnic minorities to engage in self-help or to 'speak up' to help them overcome their negative experiences, organisations should review their practices to ensure the contributory factors highlighted in this SLR are removed. Firstly, organisations can foster an environment of inclusivity to ensure all individuals feel they belong. At a team level, this includes embedding psychological safety to enable all to speak out and share their views without concerns about how they will be perceived or feel they have to engage with managing others' perceptions of them. Identity safety is also particularly relevant for minority groups and necessary when encouraging employee inclusivity. Whilst it is not possible to remove situational cues such as low minority representation and low numbers of minorities in leadership positions, which may signal to minority groups that they do not belong or are incongruent with leadership positions, it is possible to create identity-safe environments which can encourage individuals to focus on fulfilling their potential rather than concerns around fulfilling any negative stereotypes associated with their identity (Davies et al., 2005). Identity safety cues, such as non-discrimination policies or gender-inclusive language, can signal to minority groups that their identity is valued. As evidenced by Howansky et al, (2021), these cues positively impact students' reported levels of belonging and attendance. Leaders can ask themselves questions about how inclusive the language they use is and whether the workplace environment features inclusivity cues, including how representative pictures and photos are of diverse identities (Howansky et al., 2021). This may be particularly important in predominantly white institutions. Secondly, diversity and inclusion practices need to emphasise inclusivity to encourage the retention of employees. Where organisations strive for diversity targets, these must be communicated to a) ensure individuals do not attribute

success to their minority status and b) communicate to majority groups that minority individuals are fairly appointed and not provided advantageous treatment. As this SLR has demonstrated, the feeling of being appointed due to minority status will likely lead to self-doubt and feelings of working extra hard to prove belonging within the organisation. Individuals are at risk of not attributing their success to themselves and instead to external factors which may inhibit their career growth. Lastly but most importantly, a zero-tolerance approach to racism and discrimination must be adopted and adhered to within workplaces. Organisations can begin to address racism at a systemic level by reviewing their organisational culture and ensuring a strategy is in place to combat these behaviours. Not only do racism, discrimination, and microaggressions impact the individual and their sense of self, but they are also detrimental to the organisation, which will suffer from an underutilisation of talent if individuals are not provided with the environment needed to thrive.

3.10 Future research

Further research is needed to disentangle which factors within the system and which individual factors contribute to IP experiences. It would be beneficial to understand whether these factors and outcomes identified in this review are part of the IP experience or whether this is part of the broader experience of being an ethnic minority within a workplace that fails to be inclusive of minority groups, which may then manifest itself as IP. Additionally, empirical evidence is needed to identify how individuals shape their beliefs of impostorism to understand how these factors intersect and identify triggers and coping mechanisms.

While factors that influence the IP experience have been identified, the causality and direction of these various factors and how they interact with IP are less clear. It is not possible to determine whether these experiences underpin being a minority in the workplace or university, which elicits the manifestation of the IP or whether these experiences exist alongside it. This SLR has illustrated the potential influence of other phenomena, such as stereotype threat, a race-related barrier activated in specific situations. Further research is necessary to understand the interaction between how these experiences explicitly feed into the beliefs a minority has to understand how feelings of impostorism are crafted.

There is a significant lack of empirical research sampling minority groups. It would be reductionist to assume these studies, which mostly involve Black samples, represent all Black individuals in organisations and other ethnic minorities. Rather than assume homogeneity, it is a critical necessity to understand how other minority groups experience IP and whether similarities or differences exist.

Greater research is needed within employee populations to understand how IP can impact career growth and progression within an organisation. This research can support implications for practice and shape D&I narratives within organisations.

3.11 Conclusion

This review found promising evidence indicating that factors likely to contribute to one's experience of IP are feelings of not belonging, racism/discrimination and microaggressions, and perceptions of stereotypes of one's minority group. IP influences ethnic minorities to attribute success to being a minority rather than to their own talent. Evidence suggests a need to update the framework to the IP cycle originally posited by Clance and Imes in 1985 to capture the nuances and experiences of IP amongst ethnic minorities.

This review extends the understanding of ethnic minorities and their experiences of the IP by providing a synthesis of research and, in doing so, highlighting existing empirical research and identifying the gaps where further research is necessary. Chapter Four presents an empirical study designed to address some of these gaps.

Chapter 4: Empirical Study- South Asian employees experiences of Imposter Phenomenon in the workplace

4.1 Abstract

This qualitative study examines experiences of Imposter Phenomenon (IP) among South Asian employees in the United Kingdom, a previously unrepresented group in IP research. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 South Asian employees and thematically analysed. Participants reported feelings of inadequacy, high self-expectations, fear of failure and the attribution of success to factors other than their competence, aligned with previously identified characteristics central to IP. Specific drivers influencing the construction of IP in South Asian employees were noted: a strong work ethic, collectivist values, high standards of success and a lack of workplace belonging due to minority status. Feelings of impostorism were exacerbated by microaggressions, feelings of having to work harder than White colleagues, beliefs of not being good enough and having to self-monitor one's behaviour to fit in with the majority group. This is the first qualitative study to investigate experiences of impostorism exclusively among South Asian employees in the UK. Recommendations for further research to better understand the psychological underpinnings and construction of IP in employees have been highlighted.

4.2 Introduction

4.2.1 Imposter Phenomenon in the workplace

Imposter Phenomenon (IP) describes a psychological experience characterised by perceptions of intellectual fraudulence and self-doubt in one's competence despite contrary objective evidence (Clance & Imes, 1978). Individuals who experience IP feel like a fraud, experience fear of being discovered as such and struggle to internalise success as they attribute achievements to external factors such as luck (Clance & Imes, 1978; Leary et al., 2000). Clance and Imes (1978) initially identified IP within high achieving White women, noting how IP may reflect gender and societal norms reinforcing beliefs of female inferiority. Research has since demonstrated that IP is not gender specific and is experienced by other minority and/or under-represented groups (Bravata et al., 2020; Harvey & Katz, 1985).

IP presents as a barrier to fulfilling employee potential by negatively impacting attitudes toward career progression. Employees reporting greater imposter feelings have been found to report less motivation to lead others and engage in less career planning (Bravata et al., 2020; Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). Clance (1985) described the IP cycle as follows: upon receiving an achievement-related task, individuals with IP experience anxiety or self-

doubt, resulting in overpreparation or procrastination to manage. When the task is completed successfully, positive feedback is discounted and attributed to other factors, such as luck. This results in increased self-doubt feeding into further achievement-related tasks, and individuals remain in a cycle of IP, fearful of failing. Individuals presenting IP may also experience a fear of success as they fear losing connections with those around them (e.g., through resentment) (Fried-Buchalter, 1997; Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). For individuals experiencing IP, success is not internalised but is attributed to factors such as luck rather than one's competence. IP has also been found to be a strong predictor of self-handicapping, a strategy to avoid negative evaluations. Self-handicapping involves placing obstacles in one's way so that subsequent failure can be attributed to the barrier rather than oneself (Kelley, 1987; Want & Kleitman, 2005). IP, therefore, poses an issue in the workplace at both an employee and organisational level, with the potential for talented employees to self-select out of career progression, resulting in talent underutilisation at an organisational level.

IP has also been found to negatively impact wellbeing, highlighting how employers have a duty of care to consider the organisation's role in IP's development, maintenance and outcomes. Employees encountering feelings of impostorism have been found to engage in overworking practices, such as experiencing increased stress, burnout, and decreased job satisfaction and performance over time (Bravata et al., 2020; Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017; Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). IP has also been associated with maladaptive behaviours such as overworking (Pearn Kandola, 2020).

Despite IP originating from research conducted with high-achieving White women (Clance & Imes, 1978), recent evidence shows IP affects ethnic minorities too (Bernard et al., 2020; Bravata et al., 2020; Chakraverty, 2020; Cokley et al., 2022). This is a prominent issue requiring attention, particularly in current Diversity and Inclusion agendas, if organisations aim to boost the representation of ethnic minorities at senior levels. The systematic review presented in Chapter 2 examined the factors contributing to IP experiences within ethnic minority populations. These include feelings of not belonging (Chakraverty, 2020; Graham & McClain, 2019), microaggressions (Bernard et al., 2017; Bernard et al., 2020; Burt et al., 2017; McGee et al., 2022; Robinson 2021) and stereotypes (Chakraverty, 2020; McGee, 2018). This research, however, predominantly sampled Black populations; therefore, it is unknown whether the findings represent other minority groups.

4.2.2 Differences in minority group employee experiences

Attitudes towards career progression have been found to vary (CIPD, 2017). Compared to White British employees, ethnic minority employees were more likely to state that career

progression was essential to them yet had failed to meet their expectations. The top three work-related factors that prevented ethnic minority employees from achieving their career expectations were: “skills and talent being overlooked, negative office politics, and a lack of effective training and development programmes at work” (CIPD, 2017, p.19). Experiences varied between ethnic minority groups with Indian, Pakistani and Bangladeshi employees citing the lack of role models as a critical barrier to their progression (CIPD, 2017).

Ethnic minorities have been found to experience IP differently (Cokley et al., 2013), demonstrating the importance of not assuming homogeneity between and within minority groups. For example, compared to Latino American and African American students, Asian American students experience significantly higher imposter feelings (Cokley et al., 2013). McGee (2018) explained how varying stereotypes may explain these differing IP experiences. McGee’s research (2018) found that Black students worked to challenge stereotypes around intellectual incompetence, whereas Asian students would fear failing to meet the ‘model minority’ stereotypes of success and pressures of high expectations. The term ‘model minority’ has been used to refer to Asian Americans (including Asian Indian, Korean and Chinese Americans). It describes a stereotype of “superior work ethic, high levels of educational achievement, and a highly refined business and economic sensibility” (Paek & Shah, 2003, p.226, para 5). This stereotype can elicit anxiety and stress, especially for those who cannot fulfil the stereotype (Cokley et al., 2013; Toupin & Son, 1991). Intragroup differences in experiences of IP have also been found among foreign-born Black participants and African Americans, demonstrating the importance of individuality and influence of varying cultural norms within one ethnic group (Chakraverty, 2020).

As evidenced by the SLR presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis, most empirical research has sampled Black student populations (e.g., Cokley et al., 2022; Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021; McGee et al., 2021) limiting extrapolation to other ethnic minority groups in the workplace. Minority groups are not homogeneous, and as initial evidence (Chakraverty, 2020; Cokley et al., 2013; McGee, 2018) shows, differences in how IP is constructed and manifests likely vary between groups and individuals. The SLR presented in Chapter 2 of this thesis noted that none of the empirical research sampled South Asian working populations, which this study seeks to address.

4.2.2.1 Stereotypes of ethnic minorities

As highlighted by literature such as ‘The Good Immigrant’ (Shukla, 2015, “Editor’s note” para.5), there is pressure for ethnic minorities to disprove stereotypes and deal with “the biggest burden facing people of colour in this country [United Kingdom] is that society deems us bad immigrants – job stealers, ... benefit scroungers...refugees – until we cross over in

their consciousness, through popular culture, winning races, baking good cakes, being conscientious doctors, to become good immigrants.” This daily burden grows tiresome, often to the ignorance of the majority.

Stereotypes, particularly individuals’ perceptions of the stereotypes others have of their minority group, are influential in minority groups’ experiences of IP (Chakraverty, 2020; Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021; McGee et al., 2021; West et al., 2021). These influential stereotypes include those around race and intelligence, which can drive one’s behaviour to disprove these (McGee, 2018) or impact one’s ability to be fully authentic at work to fit in (Chakraverty, 2022).

The impact of these stereotypes and the heightened visibility of ethnic minorities in predominantly White organisations has both personal and organisational outcomes, including stereotype threat. Stereotype threat can be defined as a situational phenomenon in which the threat of a negative stereotype may become self-relevant. One may feel pressured by the possibility of confirming the stereotype, which leads to decreased performance (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Additionally, stereotypes can negatively impact well-being and performance (Haslam, 2018) as individuals may become more hypervigilant of their surroundings, restricting their capacity to perform (Pearn Kandola, 2020). At an organisational level, minorities may also endure systemic bias and prejudice related to these stereotypes.

4.2.2.2 Intersectionality

Varying stereotypes associated with ethnic minority culture and religion demonstrate the importance of considering intersectionality as an underpinning construct. Intersectionality posits how individuals have multiple identities, such as ethnicity, religion, and sexual orientation, which can result in various layers of discrimination (Crenshaw, 1991). Considering diversity only through one angle would be reductionist and ignore the compounding effect various identities may bring (Özbilgin & Syed, 2010). An intersectional approach enables the consideration of varying perspectives necessary to capture a holistic view of experiences of IP at work. This approach is particularly critical given the subjectivity and fluidity of constructs such as religion, the extent to which one identifies with cultural practices and ethnic identity, and how individuals do not always fit neatly into categories (Bernal, 2002; Dillard, 2000; Lynn & Dixon, 2013). Acknowledging that diversity and individuality exist within every ethnic minority group, this research aims to understand experiences of IP at a broad level within South Asian employees, drawing out themes and, where possible, differences between subgroups.

4.2.3 'South Asian' employees in the UK

'South Asian' refers to individuals whose ethnicity originates from Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, Afghanistan and the Maldives (Britannica, 2023). These countries share historical, cultural and geographic ties. In the UK, South Asians (8.5%) are the largest ethnic minority group: 3.1% are Indian, 2.7% are Pakistani, 1.1% are Bangladeshi, and 1.6% are Asian 'other' (Office for National Statistics [ONS], 2021). Of the 25.7% of employees in 'professional jobs' in the UK, the highest percentage of all ethnic groups (including White groups) are employees from the Asian group (33%). However, differences exist between South Asian subgroups; 39.8% of workers from the Indian ethnic group are in 'professional jobs', compared to 21.9% of workers from the combined Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic groups (GOV.UK, 2022). This difference may be for various reasons, including the recent migration of Pakistani and Bangladeshi communities from rural areas (Dale et al., 2002).

The employment rate is higher for men than women in every ethnic minority group, with the largest gap between men and women being in the combined Pakistani and Bangladeshi ethnic group (72% men and 43% women employed) compared to the Indian ethnic group (84% men, 72% women) (GOV.UK, 2022). These differences can be explained by various factors, including cultural, familial, and societal norms, which are barriers to South Asian women entering the UK labour market (GOV.UK, 2021; Wigfield & Turner, 2013). Barriers to employment for Pakistani and Bangladeshi women include familial and cultural expectations. These expectations include marriage, having children after higher education and views that women's role should centre around domestic responsibilities such as childcare (Dale, 2002; Tariq & Syed, 2017).

4.3.1.1 Stereotypes of South Asians

While minorities may share common stereotypes, some are specific to certain groups. The Western media portray various stereotypes of South Asians, including 'having heavy accents', 'being over-achievers', 'working as taxi drivers', 'working in call centres', 'working in IT', 'being doctors or lawyers' (Bahl, 2020; Forrest, 2010; Sethu, 2021). Specifically, Asians are stereotyped as the 'model minority' (Le, 2019; Mahmud, 2001). While this may seem positive, negative implications for Asians include feeling additional pressure to fulfil this stereotype and succeed (Lee et al., 2009). Negative stereotypes and perceptions of South Asians also extend to the workplace and can manifest in Islamophobia and perceptions, including that women are submissive, weak and oppressed (Bagley & Abubaker, 2017; Bullock, 2002; European Network Against Racism, 2016).

In addition, as detailed in Chapter 1, the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske et al., 2002) explains some South Asian stereotypes. Fiske et al. (2018) highlight how Asians are viewed as “too ambitious, too hardworking, and simultaneously, not sociable” (p. 880). This research conducted in the US found that the combination of high competence and low warmth characterisation of Asians (along with other groups such as Jews, professionals and educated individuals) invoked a sense of envy and admiration in perceivers (Fiske et al., 2002). In contrast, elderly people were characterised as having high warmth but low competence, invoking a sense of pity. Interestingly, Muslims, gay men and young people invoked low envy and lower admiration in perceivers compared to Asians. As a possible explanation for why Muslims were not characterised alongside Asians, Fiske et al. (2002) suggested that Americans’ stereotypes of Muslims might differ from their stereotypes of Asians.

Differences also exist with research applying the Stereotype Content Model to immigrants. While immigrants, in general, are perceived as low in competence and low in warmth, specifically trustworthiness (Lee & Fiske, 2006), research sampling US students found that Indian immigrants were clustered with European immigrants as part of the ingroup, not with other Asian groups. In contrast, African, Mexican, and undocumented immigrants were perceived as having similarly low levels of warmth but low perceived competence. These variations demonstrate how various factors influence stereotypes, including social context and history. This research also demonstrates the variation in stereotypes and the variation of feelings the stereotypes elicit. In addition, it illustrates how generalising research from one minority group to another is heavily reductionist and necessitates the need for research into specific groups.

4.3.1.2. The role of culture and religion

Culture

Culture includes one’s practices, beliefs, values and religions (D’Ardenne & Mahtani, 1999). Asian cultures are predominantly collectivist, emphasising group goals and prioritising the group over the individual, in contrast to individualistic cultures, which prioritise independence and autonomy (Hofstede, 2001; Kawamura, 2012). There is limited understanding of how IP interacts with South Asian culture; however, research sampling other minority groups has found parenting styles, upbringing and the importance placed by family on education to be influential factors in IP development (Abbas, 2003; Ahmed et al., 2020; Kang et al., 2021; Roberson, 2021; Sawyer, 2008; Want & Kleitman 2006; Xu, 2020).

Family networks among South Asian communities have been identified as influential in decision-making relating to health and life choices, including careers (Agarwala, 2008;

Akosah-Twumasi et al., 2018; Hasan & Alvi, 2022; Lucas et al., 2013). Career choices are also influenced by gender and cultural norms. For example, women consider the 'perceived fit' of their jobs with family responsibilities, with teaching jobs offering a family and career balance (Butt et al., 2010). Additionally, research sampling South Asian male nurses identified that views of the wider community and family could hinder career progression, whereas religion was identified as an enabler of career choices (Qureshi et al., 2020). Specifically, religious concepts like 'seva' (selfless service) for Sikhs or, within Islam, the obligation to help others were found to support nursing career choices for men. This demonstrates the difficulties in disentangling religious and cultural norms within this population and the need to consider variables and their impact on the individual holistically.

Religion

Religion is instrumental in constructing one's identity, and the extent to which one identifies with one's faith has been found to affect the degree of assimilation into the workplace (Abbas, 2003). Within the existing model of IP (Clance & Imes, 1978), success is attributed to external factors such as luck rather than competence. Research shows that individuals who believe life events are externally caused (external locus of control) have greater feelings of IP regarding their achievements (Andrews, 2021; Tovey, Kelly & Brown, 2022). Within the South Asian population, historically grounded within a collectivist culture, where one may follow particular cultural practices, including religious traditions, success may be attributed to other or additional factors beyond luck. Health research by Patel et al. (2015) has uncovered fatalistic beliefs within South Asians, particularly older first-generation or migrant British South Asians. Those with diabetes or poor health attributed their diagnosis to external factors like God. Generational differences, however, existed; British-born South Asians attributed diabetes control to lifestyle factors within one's control, such as exercise, rather than external factors. While prayer has been cited as a coping mechanism to deal with IP experiences (Bernard et al., 2020), there is a lack of empirical evidence to understand how religion interacts with IP.

4. 2.4 Impact of minority identity on career progression

Research suggests that ethnic minority women are often excluded from informal workplace networks essential for career advancement (Tomlinson et al., 2013). For some, religion has been found to impact career progression. Many networking events include the presence of alcohol, which, for some, conflicts with their socio-cultural and religious norms, presenting a barrier to advancement in the workplace (Cheruvallil-Contractor, 2012). Additionally, for Muslim women, religious and family conventions can conflict with how one can integrate into masculine cultures, posing further barriers to assimilation and progression (Arifeen & Gatrell,

2020). These experiences may contribute to the sense of feeling 'othered' and to a lower sense of belonging in the workplace, which research highlighted as an influential factor in one's experience of IP (Burt et al., 2017; Chakraverty, 2020; Graham & McClain, 2019; West et al., 2021).

Additionally, factors associated with one's identity, such as having visible identifiers of religion, such as turbans and hijabs, are associated with 'terrorist stereotypes' demonstrated by increased hate crimes following 9/11 (Sikh Coalition, 2021). These stereotypes manifest in the workplace and have been found to result in employment discrimination. Concerningly, a recent meta-analysis synthesising research in the USA and Germany found that the chances of a successful recruitment outcome for Muslim women wearing a hijab were 40% lower than for Muslim women not wearing the hijab (Ahmed & Gorey, 2021). This organisational injustice and associated normalisation of the belief that ethnic minorities have to work harder than their White counterparts (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021; Robinson, 2018; Robles et al., 2021) to succeed is influential in shaping minority groups' experiences of IP as identified in Chapter 2 of this thesis.

Existing research demonstrates the prevalence of IP across minority groups; however, there is a lack of empirical evidence sampling South Asian minority employees. It is unclear how the factors discussed, such as fatalism or lack of employee network access, impact one's IP experience. A possible link may be through internalising norms present in society (Trotman, 2019) or exclusion, compounding one's belief that they are a fraud or the attribution of any success to a higher power through fatalistic beliefs. Understanding how IP affects employees can significantly contribute to our understanding of barriers to talent progression, enabling tailored interventions to support the careers of minority groups.

4.3 Study aims and objectives

This study aims to understand the experiences of Imposter Phenomenon among South Asian employees. Specifically, it aims to explore if and how one's identity as South Asian shapes experiences of IP (inclusive of traditions, culture and faith where appropriate).

The main research question addressed is:

What are South Asian employees' experiences of Imposter Phenomenon?

The sub questions are:

- Does one's identity as a South Asian employee shape experiences of IP (e.g., faith, culture or traditions)?
- How do South Asian employees with IP explain their career successes?
- What, if any, stereotypes do South Asian employees contend with in the workplace?

- What are the perceptions of how IP affects career progression within South Asian employees?

This research contributes to the limited empirical evidence for IP within UK workplaces and broadens the research to other minority groups of South Asians, and is the first known to the author that examines experiences using a qualitative approach. It aims to develop the evidence base to inform tailored support for South Asian employees in navigating their careers and inform how organisations and practitioners can best support South Asian employees.

4.4 Method

4.4.1 Participants

This empirical study sampled 15 South Asian employees who identified with the inclusion criteria advertised in the recruitment poster (Annex A Research Poster) (South Asian, experiencing or recently experienced IP, moderate or high score on the CIPS). As illustrated in Table 6 (section 4.4.3), the majority of participants (60%; nine out of fifteen participants) identified as Asian British Indian, had an average age of 32 (range between 25 and 60), and all were in full-time employment. Participants were from various organisations and sectors, with varying organisational tenures ranging from 3 weeks to 14 years. All participants acknowledged they worked in Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs).

Recruitment began in March 2023, with the final interview taking place in May 2023. Participants were recruited using a snowball sampling approach through the researcher's social media (LinkedIn and Instagram). This approach offered flexibility to reach individuals from various organisations who fit the niche inclusion criteria (Parker & Scott, 2019). Additionally, a UK-based South Asian mental health charity, Taraki, which seeks to reshape approaches to mental health within South Asian communities through research, shared the researcher's LinkedIn post to encourage participation from their network. Prospective participants who emailed the researcher were sent an information sheet outlining the research purpose, procedure and necessary inclusion criteria, enabling an informed decision about whether they wanted to participate in the study. Prospective participants were also asked to complete a consent form, demographic questionnaire and the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (Clance, 1985). Once these documents were returned, the participant's information was screened for fitting the inclusion criteria, and a mutually convenient time for the interview was scheduled. Following guidance for qualitative research, a sample size of 12-15 was aimed for (Guest et al., 2006; Tindall, 2009). Given the snowball sampling approach of social media used to advertise the research participants, mutual connections

might have existed between the participant and researcher. To ensure professional boundaries were maintained, before and after the interview, the researcher emphasised the research was in a professional capacity, highlighting participant anonymity and the researcher's duty to abide by the Health and Care Professionals Council (HCPC) and British Psychological Society (BPS) ethical standards and standards of practice.

4.4.2 Measures

To ensure individuals met the inclusion criteria to participate in the interview, they were asked to complete a 12-item demographic questionnaire (Annex B Demographic Questionnaire) and the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) (Clance, 1985) (Annex C CIPS).

4.4.2.1 Demographic Questionnaire

Individuals were asked to provide their name, age, ethnicity, whether they were currently experiencing IP and details of their employment (employment status, occupational sector, job title and tenure). They were asked to select their ethnicity from the census options (GOV. UK, 2022) as shown in Annex B. No exclusions were made based on age or gender, as research does not suggest differences in IP according to these demographic variables. The researcher was aware of the limitations of using the term 'South Asian', which may encourage assumptions of homogeneity between individuals identifying with this category. However, in the absence of evidence of research representing South Asians, a broad recruitment call for participants was necessary.

4.4.2.2 Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS) (Clance, 1985)

The Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS), a 20-item scale, was used as a screening measure to understand the severity of IP experienced by participants. Scoring of the CIPS measure included totalling responses to each question. The maximum possible score is 100. The higher the respondent's score, the greater interference IP has with one's life (Clance, 1985). Individuals who scored less than 41/100 were excluded from the research as in accordance with guidelines from Clance (1985) these respondents have few imposter characteristics. One individual had a moderate score of 55, with half of the 14 remaining participants scoring between 61 and 80 indicating frequent experiences of IP and the other half scoring 80 and above indicating intense experiences of IP. The CIPS was chosen as a scale as it was the most commonly used measure in IP research (Mak et al., 2019) enabling comparisons to be made with existing research including findings presented in Chapter 2.

4.4.3 Procedures

Ethical approval for this research project was granted by Birkbeck, University of London in January 2023. As a HCPC registered psychologist, the researcher ensured to adhere to both the BPS and HCPC ethical standards and standards of practice. This included communicating effectively and appropriately, respecting participants' confidentiality and treating each participant with respect. Throughout the study, ethics were highlighted to participants including principles of informed consent, the right to withdraw, data security and how confidentiality and anonymity would be protected by removing identifiable information. Prior to the interview, individuals were asked to confirm consent for audio and video recording and reminded they could pause, skip questions or end the interview whenever necessary. At any point where the interviewee became emotional when sharing their experiences, the researcher asked if they were happy to continue or if they wanted a break. At the end of each interview, participants were signposted to relevant support (Employee Assistance Programme, GP, Samaritans) in a debrief information sheet, should they have any follow up welfare concerns.

The semi structured interviews took place virtually on Microsoft Teams, each lasting approximately 60 minutes. All participants provided their consent for their interviews to be transcribed and video recorded. Firstly, individuals were asked to describe their organisations' level of diversity particularly as Fields and Cunningham-Williams (2021) suggested comparisons between those in predominantly White organisations and those in more diverse organisations may illustrate differences and is therefore important to capture. Each interview followed the Topic Guide (Annex D). The approach of semi-structured interviews offered a framework to explore experiences relating to IP in the workplace. Open questions were used with prompts to encourage greater information and ensure understanding as necessary (Saunders et al., 2009). The topic guide followed two key areas listed below which were determined by the systematic literature review presented in the preceding chapter, exploring ethnic minorities' experiences of IP.

- 1) Understanding experiences at work with IP including the impact on progression; and
- 2) Understanding how one's South Asian culture (including South Asian identity, stereotypes, traditions and faith if applicable) interact with experiences of IP.

The interview recordings and transcriptions were downloaded from Microsoft Teams. The researcher ensured the accuracy of the transcripts by watching the recordings and making any necessary corrections. Any identifiable information such as names or organisations which would risk disclosing an individual's identity were omitted. Rather than using pseudonyms to protect participants' anonymity, participant numbers were used. This was not

to dehumanise participants but instead to liberate them from connotations or expectations readers may have when reading 'generic' South Asian pseudonyms.

Table 6: Interviewee Demographic characteristics summary

PP Number	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Sector	Current Org Tenure	CIPS SCORE (Max 100)	Level of IP feelings
1	Female	29	Asian British Indian	Financial Services	6 months	90	Intense
2	Female	27	Asian British Bangladeshi	Civil Service	8 months	86	Intense
3	Female	31	Any other Asian background: Sri Lankan	Civil Service	6 years	77	Frequent
4	Female	30	Asian British Indian	Civil Service	5 years	83	Intense
5	Female	30	Asian British Indian	Human Resources	5 years	55	Moderate
6	Female	28	Asian British Indian	Corporate support function	7 months	89	Intense
7	Male	30	Asian or Asian British: Sri Lankan	Civil Service	5 months	71	Frequent
8	Female	31	Asian British Pakistani	Telecommunications	2.5 years	78	Frequent
9	Male	31	Asian British Indian	Energy and Home Services	3 weeks	72	Frequent
10	Male	29	Asian British Indian	Civil Service	4.5 years	70	Frequent
11	Female	31	Asian British Bangladeshi	Healthcare	8 years	71	Frequent

PP Number	Gender	Age	Ethnicity	Sector	Current Org Tenure	CIPS SCORE (Max 100)	Level of IP feelings
12	Female	30	Asian British Indian	Healthcare	2 years 8 months	73	Frequent
13	Male	29	Asian British Indian	Media	4 years	99	Intense
14	Female	50-60	Asian British Indian	Health education	14 years	88	Intense
15	Female	33	Asian British – Other: Kashmiri	Mental Health	5 years	90	Intense

4.4.4 Data analysis

Reflexive Thematic Analysis (RTA) was identified as an appropriate methodology for data analysis as it offered a flexible approach necessary for a diverse sample (e.g., of varying religions and ethnicities), enabling an understanding of South Asian employees' experiences of IP in the workplace (Braun & Clarke, 2021; Fassinger, 2005). Rather than attempting to fit the data into pre-existing theories and frameworks, an inductive approach was taken for data analysis. This offered an exploratory and data-driven approach to answer the research question (Braun & Clarke, 2006). It also enabled the flexibility of an iterative process needed to build an understanding of employee experiences, capturing the fluidity between one's individual experiences and their interpretations.

Aligned to the RTA methodological framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006), the following steps were taken:

- 1) Familiarisation of the data
- 2) Generating initial codes
- 3) Searching for themes
- 4) Reviewing themes
- 5) Defining and naming themes
- 6) Producing the report

Having re-watched the recording to ensure the accuracy of the transcriptions, the researcher made notes and observations whilst re-reading the transcripts. This encouraged and ensured research familiarity with the data necessary for subsequent stages. Initial codes were generated by labelling data in relation to the research question. Following this, these codes were reviewed, input into Microsoft Excel, and organised into initial themes and subthemes. This included several redrafts to ensure that the semantic and latent codes encompassed and represented the data. Semantic codes take a descriptive form, for example, where participants described what IP physically felt like for them (e.g., anxiety). Latent codes involved greater interpretation of the data, capturing underlying assumptions from the participant, such as the importance of family or concerns for the perceptions of others (Byrne, 2022). The researcher then built these codes into themes and subthemes as seen in Annex E. This stage was followed by reviewing themes, defining subthemes and the subsequent stage of defining and naming these. Each theme was reviewed against the data codes in the last few stages of an iterative process.

4.4.4.1 Paradigm

A critical realism approach was adopted for this research. This paradigm notes how whilst all entities are not always observable, outcomes may be (Haigh et al., 2019; Hoddy, 2019) This is appropriate for this study as while IP may be invisible to some, the frequency of IP related beliefs are measurable through the CIPS.

4.4.5 *Researcher reflexivity*

RTA also acknowledges the researcher's subjectivity and central role in knowledge production, noting the importance of reflexively engaging with theory, data and interpretation (Braun & Clarke, 2019; Braun & Clarke, 2021). Taking a reflexive approach was critical given the researcher's identity as a British Asian Indian, part of the ingroup sampled.

As Dwyer and Buckle (2009) explain, the benefits of the researcher holding ingroup status include trust and openness in participants. However, this insider/outsider view of researcher positionality undermines its complexity (Levy, 2013). The researcher brought a range of dimensions of her identity to this research, including varied religious beliefs, how this interacts with South Asian culture, being female and its connotations within South Asian norms, accent, employment and educational background, educational status, age, ethnicity, and bearing the label of 'Indian' whilst having no connections to India. The researcher was mindful of her upbringing in a multi-generational household with her grandparents born in Kenya and parents born in Uganda, forced to immigrate to the United Kingdom in the 1970s. She was mindful of how she and her family found their place in society, including through education and the workplace, whilst maintaining collectivist values and integrating into

Western society. Additionally, the researcher was not ignorant of the differing cultural norms between South Asian groups or even understanding various cultural norms which exist spanning culture and religion associated with South Asians, which enabled an inquisitive stance, including through probing where the interviewee may have made assumptions about the researcher's position. Throughout the research, the researcher maintained a journal noting assumptions, changes in worldview and differing viewpoints. In addition, following each interview the researcher noted key points and personal reflections which provided clarity around the interviewee's experiences and how this was interpreted through the researcher's lens.

4.5 Findings

The semi-structured interviews with 15 South Asian employees yielded 15 hours of transcribed recordings which were thematically analysed. While the themes and subthemes are discussed separately in response to the research questions, they are not fully independent as expected given the complexity of lived experience. For an overview of the themes and subthemes please see Table 7 and example quotes in Annex F.

Participants described experiences of impostorism at work through the following themes;

- 1) Descriptions of IP
- 2) Impact of IP
- 3) Hard work
- 4) Lack of belonging
- 5) Inauthenticity

Table 7: Summary of themes and subthemes

Final themes	Summary description	Subthemes
1. Descriptions of IP	IP was described in a range of ways including a lack of belonging, wearing a mask and having feelings of self-doubt. One's success was attributed to external factors rather than competence including luck and prayer which prohibited success being internalised. Specific triggers of IP included receiving negative feedback or being in a new role.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Feelings of IP - External attribution of success - Workplace triggers

Final themes	Summary description	Subthemes
2. Impact of IP	IP had both personal and professional impact including inducing attitudinal impact of withdrawal and demotivation, risk aversion of hesitancy to speak out in meetings or apply for other career positions, inhibiting one's achievement of potential and impact on wellbeing in the form of anxiety and burnout.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Attitudinal - Risk aversion - Poor wellbeing
3. Hard Work	<p>Hard work was shaped by individuals' culture including family values. The view of success was felt to be predetermined which included success involving struggle, shaped by hard work of prior generations resulting in high expectations to not waste the opportunities given and a fear of failure.</p> <p>Hard work was also driven by a feeling of having to prove oneself was deserving of 'a seat at the table' due to ethnic minority status.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Upbringing and Values - Success is struggle - Working harder due to minority status - Comparison with others - Fear of failure and negative evaluation
4. Lack of belonging	South Asian employees shared feelings of being out of place due to the lack of others similar to them, both other minorities or others who shared similar values such as importance of family. This feeling of not belonging was exacerbated by microaggressions from the majority group.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Absence of similar others - Being othered through microaggressions and positive discrimination
5. Inauthenticity	Participants described putting on a mask to act in ways they thought congruent with the workplace majority, including taking part in transactional conversations and acting in a way to disprove beliefs that others may have negative perceptions of them.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Acting - Managing other's perceptions

4.5.1 Theme 1: Descriptions of IP

4.5.1.1 Feelings of IP

Interviewees described feelings of IP in a range of ways. Some described feelings of not belonging, and being out of their depth, while others described low confidence, all of which are characteristic of IP. Participant 5 (PP5) defined IP as *“lacking confidence even though when you were to look at the evidence there’s nothing to suggest that you’re not capable.”* Common thoughts related to ‘not feeling good enough’ and ‘waiting to be caught out’. One interviewee summarised IP as feeling like; *“carrying a massive amount of rocks...whereas everyone else is walking freely. I just have this intense amount of weight on me and feeling extremely demotivated. It’s like a fight within myself.”* Here, PP15 demonstrates the paralysis her IP-related thoughts at work bring, the intense burden this feels to carry compared to others and feelings around career stagnation due to feeling so weighed down and stuck. Others described IP as a feeling of *“walking on a tightrope,”* being a *“massive feeling of discomfort,”* and *“nerve-racking”*. Related to the feelings of inadequacy, participants were concerned others would realise they did not live up to others’ expectations of them. This resulted in hypervigilance and fear of being *“caught out and be told you don’t deserve to be here”* (PP3).

4.5.1.2 External attribution of success

A key subtheme was the characteristic of attributing one’s success to external rather than internal factors. Rather than intelligence or one’s competence, participants described how their career success was attributed to factors including luck, being in the right place at the right time, the help of others or hard work. The attribution of success to external factors prohibited success from being internalised.

Participants described working hard to achieve their roles or progress in their careers yet still attributed success to external factors like luck. This demonstrates how beliefs around the influence of internal and external factors co-exist, yet the internal factor of hard work was the factor that was overlooked. For some, this was because family members and those around them reinforced beliefs around the influence of external factors such as prayer. For instance, PP1 described her thought process: *“Even though I’ve studied so, so, so hard and I genuinely thought that without my Grandma doing her prayers at home, I wouldn’t have passed my exams.”* This was also the case for other participants who lived with religious family members. Similarly, PP2 shared how her family would attribute success to a higher power and external locus of control: *“And she (mum) does contribute a lot to luck again. She’s like it’s because Allah wanted this for you. Everything happens for a reason. And so I’ve never had that feeling where it’s because I put the hard work in or I put the extra hours*

in.” In contrast, others found faith and religion to be essential coping mechanisms for dealing with negative thoughts around IP. While acknowledging that some success may be predetermined, they did not believe it was the sole factor.

Participants cited luck as a reason for their achievements. This attribution of success to luck was often in the context of when their career did not go as planned or after unsuccessful job applications, which led them to feel disheartened and not good enough. However, following what they perceived to be a series of failures, an anomaly of success, such as passing an interview, was conceptualised as being due to chance or luck. For some, the origin of attributing success to luck was shaped by childhood templates and early experiences of immigrating to the United Kingdom. Immigration or generational status was not a factor present in the original research by Clance and Imes (1978) due to the population sampled. However, these study findings illustrate how instrumental these life experiences have shaped external attribution. For example, two participants explicitly described escaping the Sri Lankan genocide and another escaping the expulsion of South Asians from Uganda. For instance, PP14 explained how, as a result of this perspective, her belief in external factors is reaffirmed; *“I think definitely like faith and trust in something higher that we came out safely. We... we’re in safety now.”* These templates of ‘luck’ have then progressed and generalised to other successes, including careers. Similarly, success was attributed to the support and help from others, including parents having the privilege of coming to the United Kingdom, their education or parents’ support.

4.5.1.3 Workplace triggers

Different triggers for IP related thoughts and feelings were cited by participants. For some, IP was situational and heightened at the start of a new role or task due to its novelty and lack of benchmarks of success. This feeling reduced as participants became more familiar with the work and built credibility and rapport with their team. For others, negative feedback triggered IP-related beliefs, exacerbating pre-existing feelings of not being competent. These thoughts included *“I’m going to be fired any minute... which creates its own anxieties”* (PP13) or an internal dialogue of *“How did I get so much wrong? This really isn’t good enough. I should have worked to a better standard. Why am I not smart enough to think that?”* (PP3). The negative feedback for participants felt like their thoughts were reaffirmed by others, heightening concerns of being caught out as frauds and not good enough to be here.

4.5.2 Theme 2: Impact of IP

IP was described as having varying degrees of professional and personal impact. Participants described how IP established itself as a barrier to achieving their full potential,

with three sub-themes identified: a) attitudinal impact, B) behavioural impact of risk aversion and c) negative impact on wellbeing.

4.5.2.1 Attitudinal Impact

A minority of participants explained how IP fed into their career success. For example, PP2 shared how she chose to “*lean into her imposter syndrome,*” which, despite resulting in overworking, still led to positive outcomes. She explained how she would not be where she is today without IP; “*I feel like its probably positively affected my career being this imposter... doing that extra piece of work and pushing myself, because if I didn't, I wouldn't be where I am right now.*”

Most participants detailed feelings of demotivation, disengagement and poor well-being in the form of anxiety, exhaustion and burnout. For some, IP was a barrier to their career advancement and reaching their full potential, resulting in feelings of stagnation. For example, PP15 explained how, despite her role being something she is passionate about, her IP and associated thoughts resulted in a lack of motivation: “*It's demotivating. I wake up sometimes and I don't want to come to work... I constantly think about leaving. I'm stuck. I have no idea what I want to do with my future ...I feel like where can I go? What opportunities do I have? And I feel like it stops. It stops at, I think Imposter syndrome is like a slow killer. It can. It can stop you from like going past that step of imposter syndrome and fear and actually achieving great things.*”

4.5.2.2 Risk aversive behaviours

Experiences of IP, specifically the fear of being caught out, were debilitating and, for some, resulted in actively not applying for promotions and new positions. Instead, participants preferred staying in their comfort zones and taking fewer risks. For instance, PP3 explained, “*It means that I'm more reluctant to go for promotions. I'm more reluctant to move to other jobs...I have this fear that if I go into another job, they're gonna realise, Oh my God, how has she kept held a job for so long? That they're going to realise, oh, God, like she doesn't deserve to be here.*” This feeling of opting for safety was also due to not being confident in fulfilling more senior positions. As described by PP12, “*I'm terrified to apply to [the next level] because I don't feel confident that I'd be able to handle it when I probably could.*” In addition to not applying for promotions out of fear, IP negatively influenced career choices. This included preferences to stay in one's comfort zones. For example, rather than applying for management roles and senior positions, PP8 described how, due to not feeling confident in her ability to fulfil that role, she chose to follow a more supportive career function in mentoring and coaching. This risk aversion illustrates a strong level of self-awareness within participants, that they were aware that their thoughts were not reality and that despite having

the skills, fear of being caught out or not being good enough was holding them back from success. However, one participant highlighted how she actively chose not to apply for positions which she felt would not serve her career, rather than not applying because she did not feel good enough.

Day to day, IP manifested in various behaviours, including hesitancy to contribute during meetings due to fear of being caught out as a fraud. Participants described how negative thoughts ran through their minds, prompting this hesitation. For example, PP1 explained, *“I’m not gonna say anything because that’s silly or I should know this.”* This self-induced pressure of having all the knowledge and concerns of how others would perceive her if she was wrong led to silence. Likewise, PP6’s inability to contribute due to negative self-talk impacted her confidence; *“I feel like it [IP] has absolutely shattered my confidence in the workplace... I know that I have these abilities and I know that I have these skills, but because of all of these things that go through my head, I can’t just say something I can’t just say my opinion. I feel like I have to explain or like explain my right to have an opinion.”* This sense of having to justify oneself and one’s worth was common. Others shared the perception that they had to work hard to add value. Interestingly, PP5 noted this hesitancy was a common experience with her other female colleagues and shared that these experiences of IP were not solely attributable to South Asian identity but instead to being female.

4.5.2.3 Wellbeing impact

Wellbeing was also more broadly affected as participants shared descriptions of stress, feeling the need to be alert to complete all the necessary tasks and described instances of burnout. Participants misplaced their energy and focus, as explained by PP12; *“You spend half the time worrying about oh I’m going to get found out here... you focus on the wrong things... and that impacts your mental health.”* The negative thoughts and worry placed an additional cognitive load on employees, draining their resources and making them distracted, less ambitious and less able to focus on their work.

4.5.3 Theme 3: Hard work

Hard work was a central theme in South Asians’ experiences of IP at work. Clance and Imes’ Imposter Phenomenon Cycle (1978) posits how a new task can elicit anxiety in those suffering from IP, which can result in overpreparation or procrastination. None of the interviewees described procrastinating behaviours and instead described hard work as core to their experiences of IP in the workplace. For instance, behaviours described included overpreparing for meetings or working weekends to achieve high standards. Working hard achieved success, and as PP10 described, *“it’s worked so far, so why change it?”* Factors

which drove this strong work ethic included beliefs engrained in family upbringing and values to work hard, perceptions that success incorporated struggle, comparisons with others and failure was not an option. Participants presented with fear of failure, and high self-expectations were often a result of self-induced pressure or expectations aligned with research from Clance and Imes (1978). Other drivers of hard work included being a minority and feeling they had to work extra hard to have their value as an employee recognised.

4.5.3.1 Upbringing and values

The exceptional level of hard work individuals felt they needed to exert was a template carried from childhood and influenced by their family upbringing. For instance, PP15 acknowledged that family upbringing played into IP because *“anything you did was not good enough. If you came home and you said I’ve got an A, they’d be like why haven’t you got an A*.”* This striving for success meant for some that when achievements were present, this was not celebrated or internalised, something that they carried through to later life and in the workplace. As PP15 summarised, she never learned the *“blueprint of how to recognise success... so how do I even begin to acknowledge it?”*

Participants described how working hard was the norm in South Asian communities, and much of this was shaped by being immigrants and feeling the need to prove one’s place in society and doing this by being held to a higher standard than the non-minority population. Witnessing the level of hard work input by parents demonstrated what was needed in order to succeed. For example, PP12 summarised how she witnessed the importance of having a strong work ethic through her parents; *“I need to work extra hard, or my parents always worked extra hard... I always felt like life had to be hard. But maybe it’s because that’s how my parents are. Like, they can’t relax. They kind of live their life expecting it to be hard, probably because it was hard moving into a new country, being immigrants, not knowing the language.”* Here, PP12 illustrates how she is aware of the hardships previous generations in her family faced by immigrating to the United Kingdom but also implicitly describes a realisation of how her identity as a British born South Asian may shield her from anticipating struggles in the same form. The sense of belonging to a collectivist culture was also apparent across all participants. Interviewees discussed how they were building on the achievements of their ancestors who paved opportunities such as coming to England for them to succeed and build a life. This opportunity was not something to be wasted. In turn, a measure of success was leaving something for future generations and ensuring their children were secure.

4.5.3.2 Success is struggle

Intertwined with the view of success and working hard was the concept of struggle being a necessity. This belief was reinforced by family who shared views around what success should look like, often in the form of narratives around the hardships parents or grandparents faced, which was praised. For example, PP13 outlined how *“it’s sort of subliminal when the emphasis for them is how hard they’ve worked, how much they’ve given up to get here or where we came from to get to this point that. It feels like struggle is kind of pure or noble or kind of necessary.”* PP13 articulates how, for some, hard work was influenced by immigrating to the United Kingdom and how family members worked exceptionally hard from the bottom up to enable the life and identity of the current generation.

Underlying narratives from family members was an implicit transactional nature of pressure for the current generation to work just as hard to prove and justify how previous sacrifices were worth making. These narratives shaped beliefs which fed into IP. Specifically, representations of success included escaping life-threatening situations or immigrating for the benefit of the family. However, for most in this generation, the measure of success cannot possibly align with hardships such as these. Using this sense of struggle and what had been sacrificed to enable the quality of life the current generation had as a metric to prove worth or value was unhelpful as it was an impossible goal post, which as not fulfilled led to feelings of not succeeding. Therefore, the narrative around family work ethic was a fundamental factor in shaping how hard individuals worked. There was an implicit belief that to be successful, one had to struggle, a perception shaped by these stories. The absence of struggle and resistance left some feeling undeserving of their success. For example, PP8 described comparing her journey of success to others, illustrating that she did not feel she worked as hard as her colleagues, translating to thoughts that she was not doing as well as them; *“It feels like other people who do well in their career.... They’ve worked hard to get there and ... worked from the bottom and grinded. And I thought, like, yeah, versus my what I’ve just kind of fallen into different roles and things have just worked out.”* For some, if they did not feel they were struggling, it led to overworking behaviours to feel deserving.

4.5.3.3 Working hard due to minority status

The majority of participants shared how they believed they had to work harder than their non-minority colleagues to achieve the same results in the workplace. This belief was shaped in part due to experiences relating to South Asian identity, including historical racism and beliefs of needing to prove their worth, but also exacerbated by perceptions of organisational injustice, which were felt to be normalised. Family reinforced this narrative of the necessity to work harder compared to White colleagues. For example, PP8 described how his parents had *“been quite explicit in saying like, look, you know, we’ve come to this*

country, we live in a White man's world. We have to work harder to get what we get. It's not gonna be given to us." Instances of organisational injustice in the form of recruitment discrimination or where participants described how their work was doubted or reviewed to a greater extent than White colleagues confirmed this belief.

Implicit organisational justice was also perceived, such as when PP11 described how a White colleague was offered a job to which she was told there was no funding and wanted to apply; *"whilst I wasn't discriminated against, someone else was favouritised."* Similarly, PP7 highlighted that while he did not perceive there to be any discrimination of being overlooked for progression opportunities, he did feel he had to exert extra effort to be seen: *"I don't think because I'm brown, I'm gonna be underlooked as a result of [that]. But I just think it might need a bit an extra bit of effort to try and get there... I'd need to stand out."* This feeling of working harder than colleagues to gain the same recognition reinforced beliefs that they were not as good as their colleagues because they were a minority, driving feelings of impostorism. Specifically, the fact that *"White colleagues' work is appreciated a lot more"* reaffirmed beliefs that they were not good enough as they were and that working harder due to their minority status was simply a necessity to succeed. Additionally, despite the interviewee's hard work, if this did not result in recognition or positive outcomes, these instances fed IP, making them feel silenced and invisible.

Within the workplace, this feeling of being inferior compared to White colleagues manifested in overworking to prove one's worth. As illustrated by PP6, her South Asian identity shaped her IP experiences because *"for some reason, I always feel like I'm perceived as less"*. This feeling of inferiority resulted in feelings of having to prove one's worth and manifested in behaviours such as working extra hours and at weekends to high standards to prove her worth compared to her White colleagues. She shared, *"If I maintain high standards and I have above average output, that will make them see that maybe I can do this... I feel like I have to constantly be achieving so that people can see that I have a right to be there."* Additionally, this highlights the underlying assumption of regularly monitoring how she was perceived by others and the intangible feeling that she needed to outperform others, and by winning this, she would prove she had value to add. This sense of having to prove worth constantly was aligned with IP feelings; for example, feelings of not being enough were already present before they were in the workplace.

For some, this sense of feeling "less" than White colleagues was also expressed by others in different ways. For others, this included *"feeling like a second-class citizen"*, which for PP14 was a result of immigrating to this country and a view that *"you have to work harder, keep your head down, work really hard, don't make a fuss."* PP14 implied a transactional

relationship and feeling of having to work hard because she was lucky to be here:

“You’re lucky to be to have a job here like, you know, it’s almost like the country’s taken me in. It’s done me a favour. It’s actually work hard, give to the community, give back to the UK because they took us in. So basically, we owe them. We owe the UK.” This profound sense of transaction demonstrates how individuals felt they had to work hard to ‘be grateful’ and succeed. This sense of not wanting to stand out was echoed by PP6, who was concerned people may negatively perceive her achievements; *“People are gonna think I’m up to no good or something, [that I] somehow scammed the system that I seem to be getting so many like recognitions and awards and stuff.”* These participants hinted that being ‘grateful’ meant keeping their heads down, living quietly and downplaying their success so others could have the limelight. For South Asians, historically, standing out rarely brought about positive outcomes due to racism or discrimination; therefore, downplaying success was perhaps a protective mechanism to ensure disruption was not caused. If equity were perceived, the belief of working harder than White colleagues to achieve the same level of success could be challenged.

4.5.3.4 Comparisons with others

Interviewees described how comparisons with others were commonplace in their households, which they carried through to the workplace. PP2 explained how *“you are always compared and benchmarked against other people; for example, your parents are like Oh, look at what your cousins are doing, look at what my friends’ kids are doing.”* In the workplace, this comparison norm undoubtedly fed individuals’ beliefs around the necessity to work harder and be the best. It also increased hypervigilance to monitor other’s achievements and judge themselves against colleagues. In all cases described by participants, these comparisons drove negative self-evaluations, including feelings of inadequacy and impostorism. As summarised by PP13, this included feelings of not belonging due to not being good enough, *“feeling like I don’t belong because I’m not the same standard as them”*, when this was highly likely not the case.

Individuals also described unrealistic expectations of themselves and comparisons with colleagues, which would result in feelings of inferiority as this was against technical experts outside their specialism or field. For example, PP8, a senior leader working in training within telecommunications, described herself as feeling like she was *“the stupidest person in the room”* when working with subject matter experts. This measure of success against ever-changing goalposts across domains ignored that different occupations would lend themselves to differing skill sets. However, PP2 noted that her childhood comparisons had helped her professionally because *“I’m always in competition with someone.”*

In addition, participants described how the 'gold standard' of success for the South Asian community was linked to one's profession in the fields of law, medicine (doctor, dentist) or engineering. Deviation from these career paths or, as PP13 termed, "*going against the grain*" resulted in feelings of having to work extra hard to justify chosen career paths to their own families and demonstrate that the career they were in was still worthy and one that could lend itself to success. For example, PP6 did not follow what was deemed to be a traditional career path and explained how this added pressure and drove her to work harder; "*I have to be successful, so they (family) can see that I did it... I have to do well so they're like oh, that's why she's doing this. Because she's doing well.*" Articulating or proving success in less traditional fields of employment was described by participants as challenging as their family and wider South Asian community were unfamiliar with the occupation and unable to benchmark performance.

Gender norms also influenced the view of success within South Asian employees. Some participants described how the benchmark of success for a woman was getting married, as illustrated by PP15, "*The definition of a girl being successful is getting married before an expiry date and having children.*" Navigating both gender norms at home and work was challenging and confusing at times, as highlighted by PP6: "*South Asian women aren't really meant to do these things... just traditionally wouldn't do these things [work]. So, I think there is that constant expectation of you know you go to school, then you just get married and then you're a housewife So, I think that I was trying to live up to both the expectation of being like you know, a modern woman. This is the standard for people of my generation now... This is what we do. But then there was also a situation where I was very much like this isn't what I'm meant to do.*" These findings illustrate the differing expectations for men and women. Specifically, women are seen as homemakers in some families, which can create ceilings for one's career growth aligned to previous research on South Asian women as expected (Dale, 2002; Wigfield & Turner, 2013). Secondly, the present findings show that South Asians, particularly of this generation, are trying to navigate and pave their way to success despite comparisons and messages from others defining what this should look like. There was a sense of expectation to fulfil cultural norms of being a 'good housewife' for women, yet it was unclear how far one could push this boundary of what a South Asian woman should do when balancing home and their career.

4.5.3.5 Fear of failure and negative evaluation

Fear of failure and avoidance of negative judgement were also motivators of hard work, which contributed to experiences of IP. Clance and Imes (1978) identified that women held themselves to high standards and wanted to avoid failure, including making mistakes, which this research identified was also present within South Asians. If participants made a mistake,

this resulted in further self-criticism, withdrawal or extra work. PP5 described how she was hesitant to speak up in meetings because she was worried she was wrong; *“If there was something I wanted to say I’d probably spend 5-10 minutes beforehand thinking, shall I say it. Shall I not say it? I think it’s just a fear of like it’s no, that’s completely wrong.”* For PP2, the thought of not knowing the answer if asked a question by seniors was unacceptable, and she believed this would tarnish her reputation: *“It just doesn’t look very professional... And when you’re in front of senior stakeholders, you come across as incompetent and sometimes I do feel like there will be a black mark put against your name.”* She described how her identity as a South Asian fed into this; a Bengali woman, the eldest daughter in the family, had to be perfect.

Similarly, PP1, as the only female South Asian in her team, felt she *“had to add value otherwise, why would someone want to hear from me?”*. This quote illustrates the pressure PP1 felt that she had to perform due to feelings of low self-worth and concerns that she needed to fulfil others’ expectations. To mitigate concerns of low self-worth and being caught out as an imposter, participants described overworking behaviours to prove belonging and their value. These findings illustrate how closely wedded the beliefs around high intelligence and self-worth were. If mistakes were made, it would increase the risk of being caught as a fraud, heightening anxiety and restarting the IP cycle. PP6 summarised, *“The constant need to do well, which I felt from quite a young age... I’m like, if you’re not performing, if you’re not showing people that you are intelligent, then what is your worth? And so, I think that’s why I’m very much like, well don’t let them think that you’re dumb Then they’ll catch you out and realize that you’re not meant to be here.”*

4.5.4 Theme 4: Lack of belonging

A lack of belonging in the workplace was a third theme identified within the data. This has been split into the following two subthemes: a) absence of similar others and b) being othered.

4.5.4.1 Absence of similar others

Interviewees described how being the only minority or South Asian impacted the extent to which they felt they belonged in their organisations. Additionally, some participants described a lack of shared interests with the majority group, which resulted in transactional conversations and exerting effort to fit in with others at work.

Where there were other South Asians in the team or area, participants described being more relaxed at work. For example, PP1 likened a previous organisation she had worked for to “home,” describing the ease and comfort working with similar others brought; *“There’s so many people just like me and ethnic minorities and it just felt instantly like home. I think I*

settled in a lot quicker there, almost just feeling a bit more comfortable.” Participants struggled to articulate and explain why this significant feeling of comfort with similar others existed. It was both intangible and implicit; however, it was woven into daily interactions such as being able to discuss weekend plans and, as PP7 described, being *“able to speak more freely”*. Individuals likely felt more relaxed due to a shared understanding of being a minority, commonalities of being able to discuss their lives with no filter and reduced hypervigilance.

The lack of other minorities led to feelings of impostorism because it implicitly signalled that they did not belong and were, therefore, an imposter. Additionally, some participants felt the lack of South Asian role models or role models who had collectivist values curtailed their career aspirations and limited positive perceptions towards professional growth within the organisation. PP1 described how she felt the importance of family life, a collectivist cultural norm, was incompatible with behaviours she witnessed in leadership positions. *“As an example, my manager last week questioned if I was actually ambitious or not. I don’t want this working continuously, not spending time with my children. Let me get a nanny. I don’t want that.”*

Similarly, PP12 shared that the absence of senior South Asian role models resulted in thoughts including *“it kind of makes me feel like ohh I’ve probably reached my capacity.”* However, the sense of similar others extended beyond skin colour. PP1 described how a senior manager who was also South Asian had very different views, and instead, it mattered if people were *“like-minded and everyone appreciated the diversity”*. For some, the absence of similar others did not elicit adverse reactions or present an issue in the workplace but instead was just something they noticed. PP5 highlighted that being the only minority *“was never an issue, never presented as like a barrier or something that divided us... but sometimes you just notice it like I’m the only Indian in the room or I’m the only female in the room.”*

Some participants noted how the majority group could easily converse and connect with others, a necessary behaviour for progression. Instead, for minorities, the inability to connect to the same degree with their manager that a White colleague might have resulted in one of two behaviours. Firstly, participants felt they had to overcompensate and work much harder to get noticed. PP9 summarised, *“The reality of the situation is that you have to [work hard] ... that’s how I’m gonna get ahead. It’s not gonna be my relationship with [manager] ... You know, because we had a few beers on Friday.”* Alternatively, PP12 described how being the only minority heightened concerns of being caught out as an imposter and, as a result, avoided interactions with others because they would notice she was not one of them and

that she did not belong. Therefore, the lack of similar others and the implications of shared interests resulted in the heightened risk of being caught out, exacerbating feelings of IP.

4.5.4.2 Being othered through microaggressions and positive discrimination

Findings illustrated that for participants microaggressions took one of two forms: being mistaken for a more junior staff member or another South Asian. For example, PP2 and PP9, senior employees in different organisations, described situations where others mistook them for more junior members and assumed they were present to take meeting minutes rather than lead. This misidentification exacerbated thoughts that they were incompetent, e.g., *“reinforces that... they don’t trust me or think more of me than how they’re treating me (PP9).”*

Individuals were also commonly mixed up with other South Asians, and participants described regular occurrences where their names were used interchangeably with the only other South Asian in the team. This misidentification had detrimental effects on an individual’s sense of feeling valued, as summarised by PP3; *“if you valued me, you’d respect me enough to know my name.”* This compounded feelings that they were not good enough or not doing well enough, feeding into IP as PP3 explains, *“It’s easy to internalise that as you... If I was amazing, more people would remember my name.”*

Positive discrimination, or as others may term it, being a “diversity hire”, also reinforced feelings of the inability to get a job on merit and was another factor success was attributed to. Some participants perceived they were the diversity hire as they were the only minority in their team or wider workplace, so they felt like the token, whereas others were told explicitly. For example, PP6, a senior analyst, shared, *“When I joined, they specifically said oh, we went for reasons of diversity... I’d been picked because I was different, made me feel as though I didn’t have the actual qualifications to do the role.”* This message resulted in feelings of not belonging. It instigated self-doubt whether they could perform the role as they were chosen for physical characteristics, *“being brown and female”* rather than merit. She further explained how this made her feel deficient, doubting whether she was *“physically capable of doing this role.”* Naturally, this then fed into feelings that one had to prove they were worthy of the position rather than feeling deserving. Additionally, some participants attributed success to being the diversity hire, rather than being deserving of their role, demonstrating another attribution of success to an external factor rather than their competence or intelligence. However, in contrast, PP2 was less impacted by being a diversity hire, acknowledging the benefits of this positive discrimination: *“why should I feel offended? I mean, I know they’ve recruited me on my skin colour, but maybe they saw something else. And the work that I was doing, you know, I would get praise for it.”*

4.5.5 Theme 5: Inauthenticity

A final theme identified by the researcher was inauthenticity which incorporated the range of behaviours interviewees adopted due to feeling like an imposter. This included acting, assimilating to the White majority, masking and self-monitoring behaviours. This can be split into two subthemes of a) acting and b) managing others' perceptions.

4.5.5.1 Acting

To fit into the workplace as a minority, individuals felt they had to display an external façade concealing their true selves. As explained by PP8, *"I find myself being somebody else to ensure that I get along at work or do the things that are required at work to succeed."* Participants also described how they would change how they spoke in meetings such as through using a different lexicon than usual; at times they did not recognise themselves, highlighting the level of incongruence they were experiencing. PP6 described how she did not feel able to be her *"authentic self at work because I think I am sort of worried that I will further be perceived as other or different in a bad way."* Acting extended to conforming to dominant workplace social norms such as going to the pub as it was acknowledged how informal networks were essential for career progression. PP11, who does not drink, described how she felt she had to laugh with drunk colleagues at the pub despite just wanting to go home. Therefore, as a result, participants had to expend significant energy to display these daily behaviours to fit in with the majority group and the hard work that went into feeling part of the group was described as exhausting. The feeling that participants explained around the necessity to 'act' demonstrates the extent to which they feel they do not belong in their workplace. If they were authentic, they risked being marginalised.

4.5.5.2 Managing other's perceptions

Interviewees described high levels of awareness and monitored how others perceived them in the workplace. These included thoughts shared by PP11: *"When I'm speaking at lot in meetings... I'm almost telling myself, am I waffling? Am I saying too much? Am I saying too little?"* This demonstrates the comparison of oneself to a standard or a 'correct' manner, fuelling individuals' beliefs that they are an imposter if they do not conform to behavioural norms. This hypervigilance with regard to others' perceptions extended to disproving potential negative beliefs others may have about them, but also disproving any negative beliefs of their minority group. For instance, PP10 shared a specific experience where seeing another Indian person in a training course raise his hand *"at every chance he got"* resulted in PP10 having *"avoided asking like unnecessary questions. Or like putting my hand up a bit less than I probably would have normally."* PP10 described how he felt the other

Indian training attendee *“was almost setting a bad expectation of Indian guys to ask questions of all the time.”* He felt others also shared this belief, *“If I was thinking it, I’m sure other people in the room were as well.”* As a result of what he thought others perceived, he did not want to call extra, potentially negative attention to their ethnicity if the only two people were those to ask questions were Indian. Additionally, he did not want to bolster or reaffirm others’ views or stereotypes of Indians being keen if he too asked questions.

Similarly, PP1 worked in an organisation where ethnic minorities were more likely to be in junior customer-facing positions. She believed others might assume she was also less educated due to her identity, driving her to exert more effort to disprove this misconception. *“I sometimes think that before you even open your mouth, people have already got their preconceived image of you saying ohh she’s just come from India. She’s come from there and that means that she’s got nothing to add.”*

Participants described how they were weary or sometimes changed their appearance to fit in with the majority perception of what a leader should look like. PP2 described, *“I feel like people must look at me, you know, and think, yeah, this person isn’t gonna fit”*. She described being conscious of Islamophobia and deliberating whether to change her appearance to protect against the audience’s perceptions. She described, *“Sometimes before interviews, I do ask myself, shall I take my scarf off and just do the interview without my scarf?”* Or when going into the offices to meet the team, she described, *“I do think maybe I shouldn’t wear my scarf all the way forward.”* By wearing her scarf all the way forward, PP2 implies others may perceive her as an outgroup whereas by altering this may mitigate some biases, enabling her to fit in with the majority group to a greater degree.

4.5.6 The dynamic nature of IP

The five themes illustrate IP's varied and dynamic nature in the workplace. Whilst IP was driven by internal factors relating to South Asian identity, including associated cultural norms such as upbringing and values, the influence of the organisational context was evident as contributing to IP's development and exacerbating IP-related thoughts. Individuals raised with high standards of success and who are consistent high achievers will inherently carry these templates and associated beliefs into the workplace. These in turn may manifest in feelings of impostorism, activated when others outperform them or when no similar others exist in the workplace, signalling that others who look like them do not belong. These feelings of impostorism were found to result in hard work, anxiety and burnout. This pathway may be compounded by self-perceptions if minorities feel they need to work harder just because of their minority status. Organisations or teams which normalise perceived injustice

will feed feelings of not being good enough, resulting in adverse personal and professional impacts.

4.6 Discussion

4.6.1 Empirical contribution

As the first qualitative study to exclusively investigate experiences of impostorism among South Asian employees, it uniquely contributes to our understanding of the factors relating to one's identity and within the organisation which influence IP. This study has uncovered the influence of sociocultural factors in developing IP within South Asian employees, including hard work ethic, perceptions of what success looks like and the necessity to prove self-worth. Findings illuminate the organisational influence in IP development through specific workplace factors illustrated by the conceptual model.

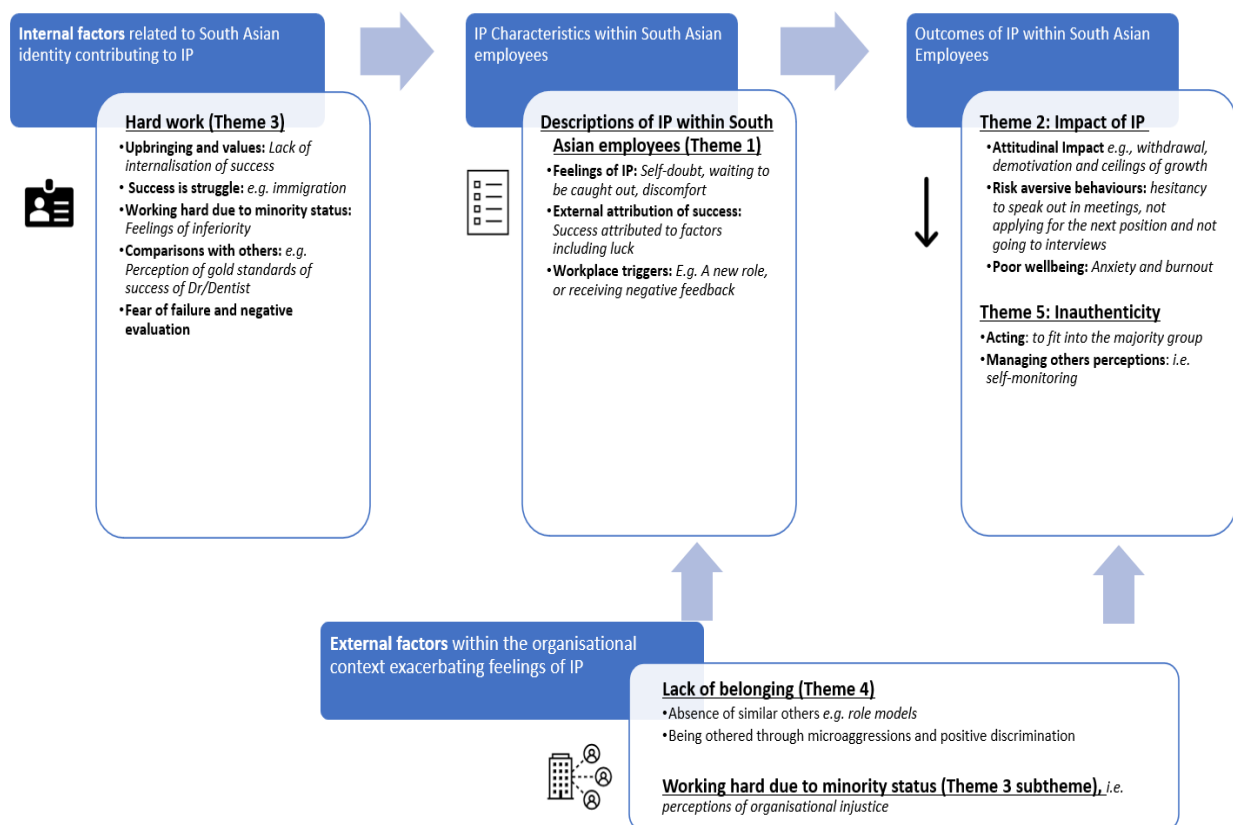
Findings demonstrate commonalities with previous research, such as how IP presents itself in self-doubt and waiting to be caught out (Clance & Imes, 1978, SLR in Chapter 2). The impact of IP on career attitudes echoes previous research that found employees failed to apply for job opportunities due to a fear of failure and were less motivated to take on leadership positions (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016; Rivera et al., 2020). This research uniquely extends our understanding of how IP presents as a career progression barrier by providing clear examples of how thoughts of impostorism result in risk aversion and overworking, contributing to poor well-being.

4.6.2 Theoretical contribution

Through reflexive thematic analysis, the findings of this study present a conceptual model (Figure 2) that demonstrates both internal factors relating to one's identity and external factors within the organisational context which influence experiences of IP in the workplace within South Asian employees. Themes 1 and 2 described how IP felt and manifested for South Asian employees, demonstrating the personal and professional impact. The impact of IP includes risk-averse behaviours due to not wanting to be caught out as a fraud. These behaviours included hesitancy to speak out in meetings, opting to blend in with the majority group (or fear of standing out), not going to interviews or not applying for promotions due to feelings of incompetence, shattered confidence, fear of failure and concerns of being caught out. These self-handicapping behaviours are barriers to career progression and negatively impact employee wellbeing. Theme 5 of inauthenticity also illustrated a byproduct and outcome of IP. Theme 3 of hard work highlighted the socio-cultural influences of IP, a factor not accounted for in Clance and Imes's (1978) original research. Theme 4 of a lack of belonging demonstrates the organisational influence of developing feelings of being out of

place and an imposter. This empirical study demonstrates evidence that both internal factors and external factors co-exist, yet further research is needed to understand whether, if racism were not to exist, as McGee (2022) suggested, IP might not be activated.

Figure 2: Conceptual model of internal and external factors influencing IP among South Asian employees.



4.6.2.1 Internal factors shaping IP

Internal factors shaping experiences of IP were those relating to participants' South Asian identity. These factors are highlighted within Theme 3 of hard work and associated subthemes of a) upbringing and values, b) success equates to struggle, b) working hard because of one's minority status c) comparisons with others) and d) fear of failure and negative evaluation. These factors layered on one another and had a cumulative effect on one's experience of impostorism. The processes of how these factors feed into IP and outcomes have been discussed below.

How factors relating to South Asian identity influence IP

Centrally, participants worked hard for reasons relating to their identity. Reasons included hard work from previous generations, aiming for gold standards of success relating to South Asian culture, and proving their worth due to their minority status. These factors all fed into feelings of not being good enough, a heightened fear of failure and outcomes of risk aversion and burnout. This finding is consistent with research sampling Black employees, which found common descriptions of overpreparation for meetings and overworking, resulting in poor well-being outcomes, including burnout (Fields & Cunningham-Williams, 2021). Further research is necessary to confirm, but it is possible that minority individuals feel they have to work harder to prove a sense of self-worth to themselves and those around them, particularly as they were working hard due to their minority status and feelings of inferiority. In contrast, procrastinating upon receiving an achievement related task (an alternative behaviour to overpreparation posited in Clance and Imes's original research, 1978) would not be aligned with their values, upbringing, and fear of failure set by family expectations.

Hard Work

The cultural norm of hard work ethic fed into IP in two ways. Firstly, participants attributed success to luck or chance when they felt their achievements required little effort or challenge rather than rationalising this ease because they had the skills or intelligence for it not to feel difficult. This external attribution of success was likely because the formula of hard work + struggle = success was not abided by and, therefore, could not feel like a success or be internalised. As a result of not internalising success, individuals felt their luck would eventually run out and experienced fear of being caught out as a fraud.

Secondly, it is possible that collectivist values also influenced IP through how individuals perceived themselves. These self-perceptions may be influenced by the narratives from family members, which described the hard work ethic of previous generations. Underpinning these narratives told to participants were implicit sentiments that they, too, had to work hard to repay the hard work that enabled the life they were currently living. This induced pressure and a fear of failure, as without building on success, previous generations' work would be wasted. Participants also described high family standards of success (e.g., careers in medicine), which were unrealistic for some. These high standards contributed to IP as they reaffirmed beliefs of not feeling good enough or intelligent enough to pursue these paths but also not good enough or intelligent enough in the eyes of family and the broader South Asian community. For some, feelings of inadequacy drove them to work harder to demonstrate success in their chosen careers to the detriment of their well-being. It was less

clear from the findings whether poor well-being elicited feelings of IP or whether IP elicited poor well-being. One potential explanation is that due to overworking and burnout, individuals experience greater negative self-evaluations (Alter & Forgas, 2007), which can exacerbate feelings of impostorism and negatively skew one's perception of their ability. Interestingly, the feeling participants described of how success had to incorporate struggle success aligns with research findings conducted with lottery winners, which suggests that this concept is not unique to South Asians or ethnic minorities more broadly. A longitudinal study conducted in Germany (Oswald & Winkelmann, 2008) found that in a sample of lottery winners, there was no statistically significant effect on life satisfaction until three years after their win. Oswald and Winkelmann (2008) describe how income one earns is viewed as money one deserves; however, lottery income is not viewed like this as one does not have to work for it and, therefore, does not feel deserving of this money. It is possible, however, that over time, the lottery winner persuades themselves that they are deserving of the lottery money, resulting in eventual increased satisfaction. Applying this same rationale to the research sample of South Asian employees, individuals may not feel deserving of their success because they believe they have not had to work for it themselves. This belief would be due to narratives perpetuated by family and wider community members around the sacrifices other people have made for South Asian employees' achievements to be possible, including emigration and/or working long hours to fund the support necessary to succeed.

External attribution of success

Interestingly, despite descriptions of unsuccessful job applications, no participant described explicitly failing at something at work. Where they struggled with anything, they worked harder to overcome the challenge, including investing more hours at weekends. As a result, participants attributed success to the external factor of hard work and resilience rather than their intelligence, reaffirming beliefs that they had to overwork to achieve success again. Working hard throughout education and employment led to success and good results. However, individuals may not have developed the coping mechanisms necessary to deal with setbacks due to consistent high achievement. This lack of exposure to failure offers an explanation of why negative feedback at work was internalised by participants and triggered thoughts of not being good enough compared to their peers. This reaction to negative feedback also demonstrates the close link between professional identity and self-worth. As a result of a lack of exposure to failure, the subsequent lack of learning how to cope with setbacks and feedback received in the workplace, individuals feared failure. This fear of failure resulted in participants demonstrating risk averse behaviours including not speaking up in meetings, having preferences to stay in their comfort zones and being less likely to

apply for new positions or go to interviews, as this posed a risk of failure and the chance of being caught out as a fraud.

Participants described having an external locus of control, which fed IP beliefs that success was due to external factors. Attributing success to external factors was a common characteristic of feelings of impostorism (Bravata et al., 2020; Clance & Imes, 1975). As a result of this attribution, success was not internalised, eliciting feelings of low self-worth because participants failed to recognise the value of their contributions. When success did occur, individuals did not feel deserving, and it reaffirmed beliefs that individuals held that they were a fraud and reliant on those external factors for success. This belief that external factors are central to one's success was exacerbated by families attributing success and positive outcomes to luck or a higher power such as God.

4.6.1.2 External factors influencing IP

Feelings of IP and their outcomes were exacerbated by factors external to oneself and within the organisational context, including microaggressions, positive discrimination, perceptions of organisational injustice and an absence of similar others. These factors are all centred on a sense of South Asian employees feeling othered. The influence of organisational factors within the construction of IP aligns with McGee's argument (2022), which posited that the label of IP ignores institutional factors and causes minorities to carry responsibilities to cope in environments which do not accommodate them. How these external factors within the organisation relate to IP are detailed below.

How factors relating to the organisational context influence IP

Feelings of inferiority

South Asian employees perceived themselves as subordinate to White colleagues based on historical racism and internalising environmental cues such as microaggressions and organisational injustice to affirm these beliefs. These feelings of inferiority drove feelings of the necessity to work harder than non-minority colleagues due to their minority status (Theme 3). Findings demonstrated how participants normalised their place in society as inferior and being 'second class citizens', demonstrating how IP can reflect societal norms, as it did in Clance and Imes' original research on White women.

Some participants implied they felt like a guest in the United Kingdom as they were not part of the majority group and were therefore indebted to their organisation for the opportunities they received. A possible explanation of how one's identity could manifest in feelings of impostorism is because stereotypes of being subordinate are internalised, leading to self-doubt (Pyke, 2010). Specifically, it is possible individuals felt they had inferior intelligence and competence due to being a minority, and this belief was internalised, meaning they

perceived it was necessary to work twice as hard to achieve the same result as their White colleagues because they were not as good. Additionally, an outcome of IP that participants experienced was inauthenticity whereby individuals were concerned with perceptions others had of them such as being uneducated or being a junior member of staff. To manage these negative perceptions, they overworked to prove competence or deliberately engaged in inauthenticity to assimilate into the majority group, resulting in feeling like a fraud from acting.

Perceptions of Organisational injustice

Perceptions of organisational injustice reaffirmed this subordinate positionality. Interestingly, this sense of injustice was normalised. For instance, due to not having access to the same social networks as their White colleagues, participants believed they had to rely on their hard work instead of who they knew to get noticed. This belief led to feelings of having to work harder because, again, being their true selves was not enough. If it were, organisational justice would exist. Because it did not, individuals had to be inauthentic to fit in and be seen. This finding aligns with previous research sampling other minority groups (Rodríguez et al., 2015). As West et al. (2021) described, Black women have to face the “paradox of feeling devalued” and subordinate yet engage in uncompensated labour (West et al., 2021. p.153). This highlights the commonality with other minority groups of perceptions that minorities must work harder than the majority group for recognition and demonstrates the organisation's instrumental role in affirming some of these beliefs. For others they felt silenced and demotivated due to incivilities such as being spoken over, reinforcing IP beliefs that they were not enough. Over time, participants grew tired of working hard due to little avail and withdrew from efforts to be recognised as valuable employees.

Managing others' perceptions

Relatedly, participants described being conscious of how the majority group perceived them and engaged in self-monitoring, hypervigilance, and risk-averse behaviours such as hesitancy in meetings or not speaking out to avoid negative evaluations. As a result of being very aware of how others perceived them, some participants described pressure to work hard to counter stereotypes that they were uneducated due to their ethnic minority status. Participants deliberated altering their physical appearance or avoiding certain behaviours, such as asking too many questions so they were not ‘othered’ with other South Asians. These behaviours demonstrate social identity's importance and critical influence in constructing IP in the workplace. Additionally, a possible explanation of how feeling othered relates to IP is that individuals felt unequal and downplayed their success because they did not want to feel othered after investing so much effort in blending in. By succeeding at work,

they would be standing in the spotlight, marking themselves as outsiders from the majority group. Individuals may prefer to be accepted by the majority group than risk disrupting the system, which they should be 'thankful' for, as historically, standing out for minorities did not elicit positive outcomes. This belief was one shaped by historical racism to families and descriptions of previous organisational injustices they had witnessed or experienced themselves. Avoiding success drove IP and self-sabotaging behaviours, such as not accepting awards or celebrating success.

Being othered

Furthermore, signals from the organisation triggered self-doubt over participants' competence. These signals were in the form of microaggressions of misidentification with more junior staff or other South Asian employees, leaving individuals feeling undervalued and an outsider, separate from the majority group. Participants interpreted this misidentification as though they needed to perform better as if they were good enough, colleagues would know their name and seniority. These thoughts were internalised and created self-doubt or affirmed existing beliefs that they were incompetent. Another organisational signal eliciting self-doubt was perceived positive discrimination (explicitly being told they were a diversity hire or implied through being the only minority) to mean that they were hired only for their visible characteristics rather than because of their competence or intelligence. This narrative implicitly reaffirmed the belief that participants were deficient and unable to succeed without help like their non-minority colleagues were. It is possible that minorities felt they had to work harder to prove they were just as competent and were not recognised due to perceptions of organisational injustice.

Lack of similar others

The lack of racial representation also triggered self-doubt that South Asian employees belonged in their workplaces. If they belonged and were welcomed by the organisation, there would be greater diversity rather than just one or two individuals. As a result, individuals felt they had to act or wear a metaphorical cloak to fit in with colleagues as they did not belong. Individuals hid a range of things, including their weekend plans and visits to sites of religious worship; participants also changed the words they used and how they behaved in the workplace. This acting made participants feel like they were impostors to themselves, and some participants even described IP as a feeling of being performative and acting. It was evident that individuals lacked a sense of belonging and social identity, particularly if, as participants described, they could not have meaningful conversations with their colleagues. This lack of social connection can damage the quality of one's social relationships essential for well-being (Haslam et al., 2018; Holt-Lunstad et al., 2010).

The lack of senior minority role models reinforced beliefs around the incongruence of collectivist values such as having a family and being a leader. Participants described deliberating whether or not to strive for these positions if senior leaders expected them to prioritise work or career over family. Interestingly, this finding highlights the range of factors involved in IP, and in this case, the power was in the individuals shaping the life they wanted. Some actively recognised that they would not want a role which did not enable them to have the work-life balance they wanted, and rather than strive in an organisation which did not enable this, they wanted to find somewhere which did.

This research has highlighted the potential influence of whether individuals were first-generation migrants to the UK or second-generation on experiences of IP. For example, PP8 described how his first-generation parents viewed themselves as living in a White man's world, whereas his view, as a second generation British Asian Indian was that it was just as much his world to shape. However, at the time of this empirical study, previous research had yet to highlight migration and generational status as influential factors concerning IP. Therefore, the present study did not capture this variable within the demographic information. Further research is necessary to confirm how migration and minority status relate to feelings of IP.

4.7 Practical Implications

The conceptual model offers an opportunity to target interventions at an employee and organisational level.

4.7.1 *Implications for Employees*

As discussed in Chapter 3 (Section 3.9), employees can engage in a range of coping strategies to manage experiences of impostorism. Specifically, South Asian employees could manage their IP experiences in four ways. Firstly, internally reflecting on the origin of perceived fraudulence and incompetence would enable the identification of assumptions or irrational beliefs. This includes exploring internal beliefs around inferiority and their own biases. Probing one's views would be beneficial with a trusted individual, such as a coach. Research has found coaching to be an effective mindset intervention for IP via reducing one's fear of negative self-evaluation and improving self-efficacy (Zanchetta et al., 2020). Secondly, identifying where these feelings are at their highest will offer the opportunity to anticipate feelings of impostorism in one's career and seek necessary and preventative support to minimise adverse impacts to one's career, such as risk aversion or overworking resulting in burnout. Thirdly, where limited role models exist within the organisation, networking among other teams, sectors, employee resource networks, or within professional memberships may foster a sense of belonging and alleviate feelings of being the only

minority. Lastly, research has demonstrated the benefits of mindfulness in supporting the wellbeing of ethnic minorities (Sun et al., 2022). Mindfulness enhances the ability to interrupt thought processes ethnic minorities may have around perceived discrimination, which can be classified as a social stressor and result in emotional exhaustion (Pascoe et al., 2009; Thoroughgood et al., 2020).

4.7.2 Implications for Organisations

Organisations can support employees with IP in three ways. Firstly, through development conversations: if employees discuss feelings of impostorism, defining what success looks like would be beneficial to setting an achievable and objective goal. By defining success objectively, employees have parameters to strive for. Following achievements, building in evaluation to review the processes preceding achievements may encourage employees to recognise their involvement. Reviewing successes at mid-year and end-of-year review points and gathering objective evidence will enable the individual to develop a list of successes and their involvement, enabling them to refer back to when IP is heightened. Thirdly, managers should ensure perceptions of fairness within the team are present to reduce feelings of organisational injustice which may trigger overworking to compensate for minority status. Lastly, senior leaders can start by examining their culture at a team level and seeking to ensure psychological and identity safety as discussed in Chapter 1. This includes leaders' use of identity safety cues to signal to minority individuals that they belong, such as implementing and drawing attention to non-discrimination policies, and ensuring the environment signals inclusivity through language and imagery reflective of diversity. This is particularly important in predominantly white institutions, where individuals are less likely to feel like they belong. Additionally, it is essential to implement basic inclusion practices such as learning team members names and addressing microaggressions to ensure these do not build to have an additive effect on minority employees (Lee et al., 2021; Moldogaziev & Silvia, 2015).

4.8 Strengths, limitations and further research

This study has extended the empirical evidence by sampling employees and South Asians, two groups previously underrepresented in the literature, and thereby offers a unique contribution to the limited evidence base. As demonstrated by Chapter 2, research on ethnic minorities' experiences of IP has predominantly taken place in the higher education sector with either university employees or students sampled. This is the first study known to the researcher that samples South Asian employees across a range of occupations to understand their IP experiences within the United Kingdom. Research sampling students (Chapter 2) found factors associated with IP experiences included feelings of not belonging,

microaggressions and perceptions of stereotypes around minority groups. Outcomes included success being attributed to minority status rather than competence, negative well-being and overworking. This empirical research study found all these factors also present within South Asian employees' experiences of IP yet highlighted additional influential factors relating to identity that were instrumental in shaping IP. This research addressed two gaps within the literature; a lack of empirical evidence sampling the working population and also a lack of empirical evidence sampling South Asian employees.

Firstly, this study extended research beyond students and universities, demonstrating the impact of IP as a barrier to progression. This study identified how individuals opt to self-select out of not applying for promotions or showcasing their talent through taking more risk-averse behaviours due to feelings of IP, including self-doubt and not feeling good enough. Secondly, most existing research exploring IP experiences within ethnic minorities samples Black populations (Chapter 2). Similarities between South Asian employees and Black populations were found with this research, including experiences of fitting into predominantly White workplaces and how IP equated to feelings of not belonging and having to work hard to compensate for one's minority status. However, in addition to these, there were specific factors relating to one's South Asian identity highlighted within this study as contributing to one's IP experience. This included socio-cultural factors of the influence of collectivism, views of success and a strong work ethic from previous generations. Additionally, the influence of family in shaping thoughts around an external locus of control prohibits success from being internalised. This research has demonstrated that while minority groups likely share experiences of IP, there are differences and sociocultural influences on how IP is constructed and experienced between and within minority groups. The participants implied specific differences in views of success, such as differences between British Asian Bangladeshi and British Asian Indian employees; however, further research is needed with a larger sample size to understand these intricacies further. Insights from this research offer an initial starting point to develop and tailor evidence-based interventions to alleviate experiences of IP for employees.

The study has four key limitations that should be acknowledged when interpreting findings. Firstly, the sample is not without limitations. This was self-selecting and may have been influenced by sampling bias. People who did not volunteer for the study may not have encountered the term "imposter syndrome or imposter phenomenon" but may still experience it. All participants were employed, and IP may affect unemployed people differently, including posing a barrier to applying for roles. Additionally, socio economic status was not captured and this additional characteristic may offer further insights into how IP is experienced in the workplace. A larger proportion of interviewees were female, and

while existing research into IP has found no gender differences in experiences (Bravata et al., 2020), this may not be the case within South Asian employees as this research has illustrated varying standards of success for men and women. The researcher, being part of the 'ingroup' as a British Asian Indian, may have elicited greater rapport with interviewees; however, assumptions that the researcher was knowledgeable about certain concepts may have led participants not to explain themselves clearly.

This study uncovered the influence of whether participants were first- or second-generation Britons as findings. As discussed, this variable of whether participants were UK-born or foreign-born was not apparent in previous research; hence, this variable was not captured consistently in the study, presenting a second limitation. It is possible that some of these findings, such as feeling inferior to White colleagues, also relate to generational status in addition to one's South Asian identity. Further research should seek to explore the impact of generational status as broader literature suggests differing experiences of acculturation on first and second-generations' well-being (Abouguendia & Noels, 2001). Additionally having a South Asian Prime Minister may change further generations views of belonging within the United Kingdom and their place within organisations. Thirdly, the extent to which one related to their religious and ethnic identity was not captured, but initial research has demonstrated that it has the potential to be an influential factor (Edwards, 2021; Peteet et al., 2015;) and should be considered in further research. Relatedly, whilst the South Asian employees within this sample all described elements of belonging to a collectivist culture (e.g. through descriptions of family values or living within multi-generational households), given the study's methodological limitations (small sample size, absence of a measure of collectivism and whether participants were British born), it is not possible to specifically draw comparisons around how strongly the South Asians sampled identified with these values or be able to compare their beliefs with their parents' generation. Similar experiences of navigating collectivist values and individualistic views have been found in British-born second-generation South Asian women who make decisions about marriage or staying single (Brar, 2012). Women described a 'culture conflict' when negotiating between Western and South Asian cultures in their decisions. While Western values enabled women to experience an element of individuality, women felt they still lacked an individual choice as their decisions still considered the impact of others, such as family and society, demonstrating the influence of collectivism. Exploring participants' identification with collectivist cultures would be necessary for future research as British-born South Asians, including third and fourth generations, may be more likely to be influenced by the individualism of Western culture, which may result in varying beliefs compared to previous generations. Lastly, but centrally, one cannot assume homogeneity within all South Asian employees. This study has

demonstrated a continuum of experiences and a spectrum of beliefs. While themes exist, it would be reductionist to assume homogeneity and not account for individual differences that have shaped one's life story, including their own beliefs, family and values.

4.9 Conclusion

This study extends previous research into ethnic minorities and IP, demonstrating the intricacies and variables involved in experiences of IP. This includes organisations' central role in activating feelings of inadequacy, such as microaggressions exacerbating individuals' perceptions that they do not belong. South Asian employees share similarities with other minority groups in their experiences at work but also have distinct behavioural drivers, which result in feelings of IP, including perceptions of what success should look and feel like. To minimise these experiences, individuals can explore reasons why they feel inferior, challenging beliefs which lack evidence, whilst organisations should recognise the importance that basic behaviours (such as calling people by the correct name) can have on an employee's sense of inclusion in the workplace. By addressing IP from both an individual and organisational level, feelings of IP at work may be minimised, offering individuals greater opportunities to fulfil their potential and progress within organisations of their choice.

Chapter 5: Implications for theory, research and practice

This final chapter draws together the systematic literature review and the empirical study.

This chapter aims to summarise the objectives of the thesis and collate the findings of both studies, review the limitations and future directions, reflect on practical implications and contribution of knowledge to the evidence base and provide conclusions. Tables 8, 9 and 10 summarise the aims and findings of both studies.

5.1 Aims and overall findings

This thesis aimed to understand the IP experiences of ethnic minority individuals within the workplace. By understanding these experiences of minority groups at work, barriers to career advancement can be identified, and evidence-based targeted interventions can be developed to support minority group experiences in the workplace, including personal and professional growth. Building on the findings of the SLR, the empirical study described in this thesis addressed gaps in the research: sampling South Asian employees who were unrepresented in the final SLR literature, providing a UK study where previous studies sampled US populations and sampling employees rather than students to understand how IP was experienced in the workplace specifically. Both studies found similar findings of influential factors contributing to IP experiences at work, which indicates how IP may reflect one's minority status and poor diversity and inclusion practices within organisations. Nuances between the two studies were also found and discussed below. The empirical study extends knowledge of IP at work by demonstrating the importance of identity and socio-cultural norms in developing IP-related thoughts and beliefs carried into the workplace. A summary of the findings of this thesis, collating the results of the SLR and empirical study, can be found in Table 8 below.

Table 8: A summary of the thesis findings

	Systematic Literature Review	Empirical Study
Research questions	<p>What is known about The Imposter Phenomenon (IP) in ethnic minority working populations?</p> <p>Sub questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ What is the experience of IP in minority groups? ▪ What outcomes are experienced from IP within ethnic minority groups? 	<p>What are South Asian employees' experiences of the Imposter Phenomenon?</p> <p>Sub questions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Does one's identity as a South Asian employee shape experiences of IP (e.g., faith, culture or traditions)? ▪ How do South Asian employees with IP explain their career successes? ▪ What, if any, stereotypes do South Asian employees contend with in the workplace? ▪ What are the perceptions of how IP affects career progression within South Asian employees?
Method	<p>A systematic literature review was conducted across six databases, yielding 1,529 papers. These were sifted with a final 15 studies included in the review. These were assessed against a quality framework with findings thematically analysed.</p>	<p>Semi-structured interviews with 15 South Asian employees took place on MS Teams and lasted 1 hour. Reflexive thematic analysis was used to analyse the findings.</p>
Sample	<p>15 studies met the inclusion criteria and had the following characteristics</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 13 studies sampled Black students ▪ 2 studies sampled Latino students ▪ 6 used qualitative approaches 	<p>15 individuals were interviewed and had the following characteristics:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All identified as South Asian, 4 men, 11 women ▪ 9 identified as Asian British Indian ▪ Averages ranged from 27-60

	Systematic Literature Review	Empirical Study
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 9 used quantitative approaches ▪ All studies took place in the US ▪ 4 studies sampled graduate students ▪ 6 studies sampled undergraduate students ▪ 5 studies sampled employees 3 sample 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ All were in full-time employment ▪ Organisational tenure ranged from 3 weeks to 14 years
Results	<p>There was promising evidence to indicate a range of factors to be influential in ethnic minorities' experiences of IP:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feelings of not belonging ▪ Racism and discrimination, including microaggressions ▪ Perceptions around one's minority group <p>There was initial evidence to suggest the following factors also contributed to IP</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Feeling supported reduced IP ▪ Cultural differences ▪ Racial identity (the extent to which people identify with their race) <p>Outcomes of IP included</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There was promising evidence to suggest feelings of success were attributed to being a minority, not talent. ▪ There was initial evidence to suggest that IP in ethnic minorities led to poor mental well-being and feelings of having to work twice as hard. 	<p>Five themes were present in the research:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Descriptions of IP 2. The impact of IP 3. The significance of hard work 4. Lack of belonging 5. Inauthenticity <p>Within this research, specific factors (internal and external) contributed to the experience of IP.</p> <p>Internal factors related to one's South Asian identity as evidence in Theme 3 (Hard Work)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Upbringing and Values ▪ Beliefs success incorporates struggle ▪ Working hard due to minority status ▪ Comparisons with others ▪ Fear of failure and negative self evaluation

	Systematic Literature Review	Empirical Study
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ There was unclear evidence of unhealthy behaviours such as overworking, negative attitudes towards one's career and feelings of not wanting to stand out. 	<p>Factors activating or exacerbating IP within the workplace included subthemes identified within Theme 4, (a lack of belonging), and a subtheme of Theme 3, (Hard Work):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Absence of similar others such as role models ▪ Being othered through microaggressions and positive discrimination ▪ Working hard due to one's minority status e.g., Perceptions of organizational justice <p>Outcomes of IP (identified within Themes 2, Impact of IP, and Theme 5, Inauthenticity) included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Attitudinal impact, e.g., withdrawal ▪ Risk-averse behaviours, e.g., hesitancy to speak up in meetings ▪ Poor well-being, e.g., anxiety/burnout ▪ Acting e.g., to fit into the majority group ▪ Managing others' perceptions, e.g., self-monitoring

5.1.1 Findings from Study 1: The Systematic Literature Review

A systematic literature review (SLR) was conducted using six databases; fifteen studies met the inclusion criteria. There is promising evidence to suggest the following factors influence ethnic minority experiences of IP in the workplace: feelings of not belonging, racism and discrimination, and the perceptions of one's minority group. Additionally, as a result of IP, there is promising evidence to suggest that minorities attribute success to their minority status rather than their competence. There is only initial evidence to suggest IP led to outcomes of poor well-being, overworking, and feelings of having to work twice as hard. There was unclear evidence that IP in ethnic minorities negatively influences attitudes to one's career.

However, the conclusions of this SLR are limited due to the sample population of each of the fifteen studies. Additionally, the quality assessment found most of the studies to be of low quality. All fifteen studies took place in the US and the majority were conducted in a higher education setting. Two-thirds of the studies (ten out of fifteen) sampled undergraduate or postgraduate students, with only five out of fifteen of the final studies sampling working professionals. The majority of the research (thirteen out of fifteen) sampled Black participants. Previous research has demonstrated how IP is experienced differently across ethnic minority groups (McGee et al., 2018). As South Asians were not represented in any of these final studies and British Asians make up the most significant proportion of minorities in professional jobs in the UK (GOV.UK, 2022), a greater understanding of how IP presents as a barrier to career progression would enable evidence-based employee support.

5.1.2 Findings from Study 2: The Empirical study

For the second study, fifteen South Asian employees participated in semi-structured interviews via MS Teams. This took a qualitative approach using reflexive thematic analysis to understand IP experiences of South Asian employees. The study identified five themes: Descriptions of how IP felt, impact of IP, hard work, the lack of belonging, and inauthenticity. A conceptual model is presented in Chapter 3, which demonstrates internal factors relating to one's identity and external factors that influence IP experiences at work.

5.2 Similarities and differences between the SLR and Empirical study

The following table illustrates similarities and differences between the SLR and empirical study. Parallels have been highlighted. The SLR findings have been split into student samples and working populations to demonstrate how the empirical research has advanced our understanding of IP yet has still found overlaps between student experiences and the working population.

5.2.1 Influential factors of IP and outcomes of IP

Three factors identified as influential in IP experiences within the SLR were also identified as influential in IP experiences 1) feelings of not belonging within the majority group, 2) microaggressions, and 3) others' perceptions of one's minority group. The similarity of findings strengthens the evidence that these factors influence IP experiences at work. Interestingly, the first two factors of not belonging and microaggressions are external factors primarily activated by the organisational context. The third factor of perceptions of one's minority group is likely shaped by both the organisational context and one's view of being a minority, which may result in anticipating negative views from others, including in the form of discrimination. As a result of concerns about how others perceived them, participants in both the SLR and empirical study sought to avoid negative evaluations. A common outcome identified across this thesis is individuals' poor well-being due to IP. This negative impact of IP demonstrates the criticality of addressing IP at the employee and employer levels to create positive working environments.

Table 9 below illustrates that these three key factors (highlighted in blue) are also found in research which sampled students, research which sampled working populations (Black working professionals) and South Asian employees. The consistency of these factors indicates that much of the experiences of IP can be attributed to individuals' minority status in the context in which they are working or studying. However, it is fundamental to note the individuality in how these IP thoughts are shaped. This includes considering one's identity and associated socio-cultural norms. Whilst similarities of factors exist, there are some nuances in how these factors manifest into feelings of impostorism. These factors are discussed below in Table 9 and Table 10.

Table 9: Comparison between influential factors identified within the SLR and empirical study with highlighted text indicating common themes

Influential factors within IP experiences				
	SLR FINDINGS (Promising evidence only)		EMPIRICAL STUDY	Notes on comparison between the SLR and empirical study findings
	<u>Student samples (10)</u>	<u>Working populations (5)</u>	<u>Working population (South Asian Employees)</u>	
Factors identified as contributing to IP at work	Feelings of not belonging	Feelings of not belonging	Lack of belonging (Theme 4)	Alignment between both studies indicates feelings of not belonging are prevalent within IP experiences of underrepresented ethnic minority populations.
	Racism, discrimination and microaggressions	Racism, discrimination or microaggressions	Being othered through microaggressions (a subtheme of Theme 4: lack of belonging)	Alignment between both studies indicates racism, discrimination and microaggressions are prevalent within IP experiences of underrepresented ethnic minority populations. Within the empirical study, microaggressions were identified as a mechanism by which South Asian employees felt othered.

<p>Perceptions of stereotypes around one's minority group</p>	<p>Perceptions of stereotypes around one's minority group</p>	<p>The empirical study identified 'Managing others' perceptions of their minority group' (a subtheme of Theme 2 Impact of IP) as an Outcome of IP (Table 9).</p>	<p>The SLR identified perceptions of stereotypes around one's minority group to be an influential factor in IP experiences. The empirical study also identified concerns for others' perceptions of one's minority group as an impact of IP (Theme 2). As a result of feeling like a fraud, individuals engaged in a range of behaviours, such as monitoring how they were perceived. While the SLR identified perceptions of stereotypes around one's minority groups as a factor influencing IP, the empirical study identified others' perceptions of their minority group as an outcome of IP. This difference in conceptualising what influences IP and IP outcomes demonstrates the subjectivity in interpretation and participant experiences.</p>
<p>The SLR identified 'success being attributed to being a minority, not talent' as an outcome of IP (Table 9)</p>		<p>Being othered through positive discrimination (Theme 4, subtheme) (akin to outcome identified in SLR: success being attributed to minority status, not talent).</p>	<p>There were similarities between how the SLR and empirical study identified how positive discrimination can make employees feel deficient. The SLR identified that instead of success being attributed to oneself, it was attributed to the fact they were a minority, such as only receiving a prestigious place at a university because they were a minority. Similarities</p>

				exist as both instances describe how minorities do not feel their internal competence is driving success.
		The SLR identified initial evidence that ethnic minorities felt they had to work twice as hard than their non-minority colleagues (minority tax). This was identified as an outcome of IP within the SLR (Table 9).	Hard work (Theme 3); working hard due to minority status (Theme 3, subtheme).	There were similarities between how the SLR identified employees felt they had to work twice as hard as their White colleagues and instances in the empirical study where South Asian employees described how they had to work twice as much to stand out or feel noticed compared to their White colleagues. However, the empirical study noted additional instances of organisational injustice, such as favouritism, rather than just one's perception of working twice as hard. In addition, hard work was influenced by socio-cultural norms for South Asian employees, not just minority status.
		See Table 9 below. The SLR identified initial evidence identified unhealthy working behaviors	Socio-cultural influences of identity: - Hard work ethic - Success is struggle - Working hard due to minority status e.g. feelings of inferiority	The empirical study identified the influence of one's identity and socio-cultural norms within experiences of IP at work. This included how socio-cultural norms shaped South Asian employees' beliefs around the necessity to work hard to prove one's worth. These findings demonstrate the unique contribution as

		as an outcome of IP.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Comparison with others - Fear of failure and negative self-evaluation - External locus of control 	<p>previous research did not sample minority employees. Initial evidence within student populations in the SLR indicated cultural differences and racial identity to be influential in IP development; however, these were related to belonging.</p> <p>Comparatively the empirical study has identified socio-cultural influences and norms as a distinct factor in the development of IP.</p>
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Alignment between themes of the SLR and Empirical Study

Novel finding

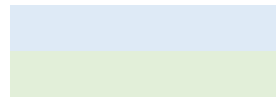


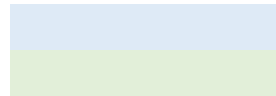
Table 10: Comparison between outcomes identified within the SLR and empirical study

Outcomes of IP				
	SLR FINDINGS		EMPIRICAL STUDY	Notes on comparison between the SLR and empirical study findings
	Student samples (10)	Working populations (5)	Working population (South Asian Employees)	
Outcomes of IP	Success is attributed to being a minority, not talent		The empirical study identified how being othered through positive discrimination (Theme 4, subtheme) was an influential factor in IP experiences (Table 9), rather than an outcome.	The SLR indicated that an outcome of IP was success being attributed to being a minority rather than individual competence. Relatedly the empirical study identified that South Asian employees felt othered through positive discrimination. This suggests that the narrative around positive discrimination and potential associated tokenism may contribute to feelings of IP at work.
	Poor mental wellbeing (initial evidence)	Poor mental wellbeing (initial evidence)	Poor mental wellbeing (Anxiety and burnout)	Alignment between both studies regarding poor well-being an outcome of IP strengthens the evidence base for IP's negative impact on employee wellbeing.

			Risk-averse behaviours, e.g., not applying for the next promotion, hesitancy in meetings.	The empirical study identified how IP resulted in risk-averse behaviours. This was not explicitly identified within the SLR, likely because of the large proportion of student samples.
	Not wanting to stand out (unclear evidence)		Attitudinal impact- Withdrawal, i.e., demotivation and perceptions of ceilings of growth.	The empirical study identified how IP influenced employee attitudes at work. There may be a link between how individuals do not want to stand out and the negative career attitudes the SLR identified in student samples. Parallels can be drawn between the initial evidence found when sampling students (Edwards, 2021), which saw an association between IP and negative career attitudes. The empirical study advanced understanding by identifying participants' negative career attitudes of being demotivated and believing they could not progress in their careers.
	Negative career attitudes (unclear evidence)			
	Perceptions of stereotypes around one's minority group were	Perceptions of stereotypes around one's minority group were identified as an	Managing others' perceptions of their minority group (Subtheme	The SLR identified one's perceptions of stereotypes around their minority group to influence IP. The empirical study identified concerns regarding others' perceptions of one's minority

	identified as an influential factor in IP experiences, rather than an outcome	influential factor in IP experiences, rather than an outcome	of Theme 5, Inauthenticity subtheme)	group as an impact of IP related to subtheme of Theme 5, Inauthenticity. The commonality of this factor in IP experiences across both studies strengthens the evidence base for the influence of others' perceptions in experiences of IP.
		Unhealthy behaviours, e.g., overworking/ working twice as hard (unclear evidence)	Hard work was identified as an influencing factor of IP within the empirical study	There were similarities between how the SLR identified employees felt they had to work twice as hard as their White colleagues and instances in the empirical study where South Asian employees described how they had to work twice as much to stand out or feel noticed compared to their White colleagues.

Alignment between themes of the SLR and Empirical Study
 Novel finding



As illustrated in Table 9, feeling a lack of belonging was a common factor for minoritized individuals in the SLR and empirical study (Theme 4). This lack of belonging contributed to IP experiences by shaping beliefs that individuals were impostors because they were not part of the majority group. Perceptions of not belonging resulted in feelings of self-doubt and behaviours such as overworking to prove self-worth and behaviours to assimilate into the majority group, such as changing the way one spoke or self-monitoring to avoid being othered. While the SLR identified minority groups who felt they were impostors for not belonging, the empirical study illustrated how this shaped workplace perceptions.

Specifically, the absence of similar others or ethnic minority role models shaped perceptions around incompatibility with senior positions if those in these positions had poor work-life balance because, for South Asian employees, family was a critical construct within one's culture and identity. The lack of other ethnic minorities in the workplace and in senior positions contributed to feelings of misalignment with oneself and the organisation, influencing perceptions that this organisation was not one in which they could progress. Interestingly, this finding suggests that if there were role models within the organisation with similar values, employees with IP may still be encouraged to progress because they can see how their collectivist cultures are still congruent with leadership positions.

The lack of belonging described by minorities was exacerbated by feeling othered through experiences of racism, discrimination and microaggressions at work, a factor identified in both the SLR and empirical study. Participants in both studies described instances of misidentification for other minorities or junior staff members. The empirical qualitative research enhanced an understanding of how these microaggressions were internalised and subsequently shaped IP at work; if they were good enough, people would remember their names. These microaggressions fed into IP by reaffirming beliefs around a lack of competence and drove further overworking and self-doubt. As Suavansri (2016) explains, the gradual exposure to societal stereotypes for minority groups can become internalised and turn into negative self-beliefs such as the self-doubt described in this thesis. This internalised racism was apparent within the empirical study and has been drawn out in Table 9 as a specific influential factor (self-perceptions of being a minority) in IP development. South Asian employees described being 'second-class' and feeling inferior, often shaped by repetitive and cumulative experiences of historical racism within families alongside instances of organisational injustice whereby they had to work harder to gain recognition. Both studies found that these behaviours of engaging in additional work or overachieving to prove one's worth were normalised, with the SLR utilising the term 'minority tax' to describe this concept. This overworking can become expected and unappreciated. As highlighted by Mehta and

Buckley (2022), attitudes of 'servitude' can perpetuate internalised racism and illustrate how ethnic minorities have accepted racialised hierarchies.

Perceptions of how others perceived their minority group was also a consistent factor identified within the SLR in samples of Black populations and the empirical study's sample of South Asians (Theme 5, Inauthenticity subtheme), suggesting this may relate to being an ethnic minority in the workplace rather than belonging to a specific ethnic minority group. Both studies found instances whereby these concerns around others' negative perceptions were reaffirmed in the workplace, such as participants being told they were a diversity hire or student. While the SLR identified concerns participants had over confirming stereotypes of, for instance, inferior intelligence to White peers, the empirical study did not find one theme or stereotype that individuals felt they had to prove or disprove to others in the workplace. Instead, individuals' concerns varied and were activated by the organisational context. Concerns included how others may be Islamophobic and how this would influence recruitment decisions or if asking too many questions in a group setting would result in being othered. Therefore, while minorities are concerned with how others view them, these concerns will likely differ depending on ethnic minority individuals' beliefs, past experiences, and views of being a minority.

Both studies demonstrated how perceptions of negative evaluations can result in inauthentic behaviours, such as changing one's physical appearance or lexicon to fit in with the majority norms. One's group identity plays a significant role in one's self-concept, and perceived ethnic discrimination is likely a workplace stressor (Pascoe & Smart Richman, 2009). Being regarded as part of a minority group with lower status may threaten one's social standing, and therefore, individuals may engage in suppressing their own identity to avoid negative expectations. However, while this may provide relief, it can undermine well-being and performance, demonstrating the organisational importance of inclusion (Ellemers et al., 2002; Ellemers & Barreto, 2006; Tajfel & Turner, 1979).

5.3 Unique contributions

The empirical study has made five unique contributions to the literature. Firstly, the sampling of South Asian employees addresses a methodological gap in existing research, expanding our understanding of IP in other minority groups and IP in the workplace. The only previous SLR known to the researcher reviewed IP in student minority groups and the working population, but not minority working populations (Bravata et al., 2020). Findings from research sampling students can only be extrapolated with caution, given the differences between higher education settings and workplace contexts. Bravata et al. (2020) found correlations between IP and negative psychological well-being in minority students.

Explanations for these correlations included experiences of discrimination, lack of financial aid, and negative stereotypes. This thesis had similar findings to the original research conducted by Clance and Imes (1978) which indicated IP may reflect societal norms of female inferiority at the time. This thesis provides evidence of how IP reflects societal norms of racism. As McGee (2020) suggested, without racism, it is possible that feelings of IP would not be present. If one feels inferior due to societal norms, one's susceptibility to IP and its adverse outcomes may increase.

Secondly, in addition to minority experiences with IP reflecting societal norms, this thesis has provided evidence to demonstrate the importance of the organisational context in shaping beliefs of impostorism, such as perceptions of organisational injustice and narratives around positive discrimination. Identifying common factors between the SLR and empirical study (a lack of belonging, racism and discrimination, managing others' perceptions) demonstrates promising evidence of the strong organisational influence in IP development. Additionally, the outcomes of IP from both studies demonstrate the employee and employer impact of IP, including poor well-being and perceptions around stunted career growth. Therefore, this thesis has demonstrated that IP is fundamentally not a problem that originates solely within employees. Instead, this thesis has identified the critical external factors within the organisational context which have a part to play in shaping IP. As McGee (2022) highlights, suggestions to those suffering with IP is often to simply seek out mentors or recite positive affirmations. These suggestions do not account for the organisation's role in IP, and instead, employers should work to build inclusive organisations which enable minorities to thrive.

The third unique contribution of this thesis is identifying the novel internal factors in shaping IP beliefs relating to one's identity and relevant socio-cultural norms and beliefs. This includes reasons why minority employees feel they have to work harder due to their minority status, including due to feelings of inferiority. Whilst societal norms may exist as discussed, the extent to which individuals relate to and internalise these societal norms and feelings of inferiority influences IP experiences. Additionally, beliefs specific to South Asian cultural norms influence employees' IP experiences. Whilst it is characteristic of IP to attribute success to external factors rather than oneself, the empirical study demonstrated that an external locus of control was influential in shaping IP as it prohibited internalising success. These beliefs were developed for some participants through narratives from family members attributing success to God or other external factors, reaffirming assumptions that success was not due to participants' efforts.

Fourthly, the empirical study makes a novel contribution to the literature by demonstrating the risk-averse behaviours associated with IP in the workplace among ethnic minority

employees. Whilst caution should be taken before extrapolating this research to other minority groups, this study offers evidence to indicate that minoritized individuals with IP will take a more risk-averse approach to their careers and may self-select out of career progression. Before this study, there was insufficient evidence to indicate the career impact of IP on minority employees, given the majority of studies within the SLR sampled students. The SLR also did not explicitly identify risk aversion as an outcome of IP. This may have been because risk aversion manifests differently within a student context. In the workplace, the empirical study demonstrates that in addition to hesitancy to speak up in meetings, individuals are risk averse when thinking about their careers. Specifically, South Asian employees described how they actively choose not to apply for promotions due to IP. Commonalities regarding risk aversion exist between this thesis and wider research sampling non-minority employees, demonstrating that the impact of IP on one's career may not be exclusive to minority groups. Quantitative research in Germany sampling airport employees found that the more imposter feelings were reported, the less career planning was engaged in and the less career striving and motivation to lead were experienced (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). Greater comparisons between minority and non-minority groups presenting with IP are necessary to understand commonalities behind attitudes toward not progressing in the workplace. Despite similarities in these outcomes, the original research presented in this thesis has demonstrated that how IP is constructed and shaped will likely differ between minority and non-minority groups because of the significant influence one's identity has in IP development.

Lastly, the empirical study provides a conceptual model of influential psychological factors within IP in the workplace. This model delineates between internal psychological factors and influential external factors that also shape and can fuel feelings of IP. This model offers an initial evidence base from which interventions can be developed to support minority groups.

5.4 Strengths and limitations

Notwithstanding the unique contributions this thesis has made, limitations must be acknowledged. Firstly, limitations can be found with the sampling across both studies. The SLR found that most published studies sampled Black populations, and the empirical study was the first to sample South Asians in the UK. It would be inappropriate to extrapolate these findings to other minority groups due to the variation of social norms among them. Other ethnic minority groups or sub-groups are not represented within either the SLR or the empirical study, such as Chinese employees, or those of mixed or multiple ethnic groups. There are also variables such as migration and first or subsequent generation migration status to consider in future research.

Similarly, within the empirical study, sampling limitations must be noted. A strength of this thesis is the contribution of the conceptual model (Chapter 4); however, it is not possible to generalise this model beyond minoritised South Asian employees in the UK without assuming homogeneity with other minority groups. Additionally, the sample size of South Asian employees was insufficient to draw differences between subgroups such as Bangladeshi and Pakistani individuals. A sample size comprising a greater diversity of South Asian subgroups may have provided more evidence of sub-group specific socio-cultural norms. Despite these differences, there were many shared experiences among the participants and utilising RTA within the empirical research enabled summarising commonalities across the dataset. The model has been conceptualised based on the findings of the RTA and the researcher's interpretation of how IP is developed. Whilst the researcher regularly reflected on their interpretation of the data through reflexive practice and questioned their worldview, particularly as the researcher's own identity was British South Asian, the model should be tested for reliability, validity and generalisability. Instead of extrapolating these findings to other groups, the model offers an opportunity to explore employees' beliefs through an internal and external lens.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

Whilst this thesis has made significant contributions to the literature, there is a necessity for further research within employee populations to understand how employees can overcome IP, what specific interventions can support them, and how career progression occurs despite feelings of impostorism. Both studies found that the necessity to work harder was normalised among minoritized groups and microaggressions were commonplace. These findings reflect the key tenets of Critical Race Theory, which posits that racism holds a normal place in society (Lynn & Dixson, 2013). Wider research grounded within Critical Race Theory examining minority experiences at work and in higher education institutions demonstrates similarities of experiences to those described by participants within this thesis, including regular microaggressions and heightened awareness of one's race (Yosso et al., 2009). Further UK-based research is necessary to understand how Critical Race theory underpins IP, particularly with regard to how ethnicity shapes experiences in the workplace and whether similar outcomes are experienced by minoritised employees who do not report feelings of impostorism. This will provide an understanding of whether feelings of IP simply reflect being a minority.

Internalised racism may explain the finding within the empirical study of the belief that it was necessary for ethnic minorities to work harder than White colleagues. Internalised racism has also been associated with poorer mental health (Gale et al., 2020), which, in addition to

overworking, may explain why poor wellbeing in the form of anxiety and burnout was a consistent outcome in both studies. Further research should explore the relationship between IP, internalised racism and well-being to understand how individuals construct these beliefs.

Potential triggers of IP are achievement-related tasks (Ferrari & Thompson, 2006), and the empirical study identified new tasks or roles that may result in heightened IP. However, much of the research within this thesis sampled early career entrants or students, and therefore, findings may reflect transitions into the workplace. There are mixed findings concerning how age correlates with IP feelings (Bravata et al., 2020). Therefore, further research across different career and life stages is necessary to understand contexts in which IP does and does not exist.

A critical incident approach or longitudinal study would enable an understanding of whether internal or external factors exert a more substantial influence at specific career points or at certain decision points, such as attending a job interview. A diary study would allow individuals to document their thoughts and beliefs during these incidents, informing our understanding of how IP beliefs are specifically constructed. Existing research has found that those with IP experience a fear of success due to fear of rejection from work colleagues, which explains why they are less likely to strive for advancement (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). With this in mind, and given the thesis findings that demonstrate concerns around negative evaluation, further research could explore the relationship between IP, the fear of success and whether positive evaluations are favoured over career striving in minority employees.

The empirical research has indicated differing gender norms within South Asian culture around standards of success. Specifically, for some South Asian women, a benchmark for success was getting married compared to men where a professional career had greater importance. This finding prompts further research to take an intersectional approach to consider multiple views of marginalisation rather than only ethnicity. An intersectional approach will enable a greater understanding of how one's identity and demographic characteristics, such as religion or migration status, can shape IP. First-generation migrants are at an increased risk of experiencing poor well-being and difficulties in feeling a sense of belonging and experiencing discrimination (Aragona et al., 2012), which may develop into feelings of IP. Other internal factors which research has found influential include perfectionism, anxiety, neuroticism, and narcissism, which research has found to be correlated with IP (Bernard et al., 2002; Gibson-Beverly & Schwartz, 2008; Lane, 2014). A

variety of traits may make individuals more susceptible to IP at work, and by understanding an individual's internal beliefs, support can be tailored to them.

Lastly, this thesis sought to understand the experiences of IP within those employed. The findings highlight that risk-averse behaviours and negative attitudes toward one's career are an impact of IP. IP may present a significant barrier for those seeking work. Exploring feelings of IP in those who are unemployed and the effects of IP on job-seeking behaviours may provide evidence to tailor interventions to support this population accordingly.

5.7 Concluding remarks

Overall, this thesis enhances knowledge regarding IP in ethnic minorities. It advances the understanding of the range of factors influential in shaping IP experiences for minority employees. Fundamentally, it identifies the organisation's instrumental role in creating ethnic minority employees' experiences of IP and their potentially damaging consequences, including self-selecting out of career progression and poor well-being.

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Annex

Annex A: Research poster



Research Project: To understand South Asian employees' experiences with Imposter Syndrome

We would love to hear from you if you answer yes to the following:

- Are you employed?
- Are you 18 years +?
- Do you identify as South Asian? (This includes: Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, or any other Asian background)
- Do you feel your success has been due to some kind of luck?
- Do you worry others will find out you may not be as capable as they think?



What do I have to do?

- If you volunteer to take part you will be invited to:
 - Answer some **demographic questions** (age, gender, ethnicity, what organisational sector you work in and how long you've worked there)
 - Complete a **5 minute survey** relating to Imposter Syndrome

If you meet the threshold, you will be invited to take part in a **60 minute virtual interview** on MS Teams. This aims to understand your experience of Imposter Syndrome at work, how this has been shaped and what has helped you.

Participation is **voluntary** and your data will be confidential and anonymous.

Interested?: Your responses are confidential and anonymous. Participation is entirely voluntary.

- If you have any questions or would like to take part in this research please contact me – Harki Ranautta on hranau01@student.bbk.ac.uk

Annex B: Demographic Questionnaire

Demographic questionnaire

Understanding experiences of Imposter Syndrome (IS) within South Asian Employees

	Please type response
Name	
Age (18+ to 65)	
Ethnicity	Please delete as appropriate: Asian or Asian British: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Indian - Pakistani - Bangladeshi - Any other Asian background – Please self describe
Gender	

Email address	
Employment status (full-time, part-time, contract etc)	
Occupational sector	
Job Title	
Grade (early mid-late career)	
How long have you been in your current organisation?	
Are you currently experiencing Imposter Syndrome? If not, when did you last experience this?	
Are you a Birkbeck student?	Yes No

Annex C: CIPS Scale

Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS)

For each question, please highlight the number that best indicates how true the statement is of you. It is best to give the first response that enters your mind rather than dwelling on each statement and thinking about it over and over.

1. I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I undertook the task.

1

2

3

4

5

Not At all True Rarely Sometimes Often Very True

2. I can give the impression that I'm more competent than I really am.

1 2 3 4 5

Not At all True Rarely Sometimes Often Very True

3. I avoid evaluations if possible and have a dread of others evaluating me.

1 2 3 4 5

Not At all True Rarely Sometimes Often Very True

4. When people praise me for something I've accomplished, I'm afraid I won't be able to live up to their expectations of me in the future.

1 2 3 4 5

Not At all True Rarely Sometimes Often Very True

5. I sometimes think I obtained my present position or gained my present success because I happened to be in the right place at the right time or knew the right people.

1 2 3 4 5

Not At all True Rarely Sometimes Often Very True

6. I'm afraid people important to me may find out that I'm not as capable as they think I am.

1 2 3 4 5

Not At all True Rarely Sometimes Often Very True

7. I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those times I have done my best.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

8. I rarely do a project or task as well as I'd like to do it.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

9. Sometimes I feel or believe that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of error.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

10. It's hard for me to accept compliments or praise about my intelligence or accomplishments.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

11. At times, I feel my success has been due to some kind of luck.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

12. I'm disappointed at times in my present accomplishments and think I should have accomplished much more.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

13. Sometimes I'm afraid others will discover how much knowledge or ability I really lack.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

14. I'm often afraid that I may fail at a new assignment or undertaking even though I generally do well at what I attempt.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

15. When I've succeeded at something and received recognition for my accomplishments, I have doubts that I can keep repeating that success.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

16. If I receive a great deal of praise and recognition for something I've accomplished, I tend to discount the importance of what I've done.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

17. I often compare my ability to those around me and think they may be more intelligent than I am.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

18. I often worry about not succeeding with a project or examination, even though others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

19. If I'm going to receive a promotion or gain recognition of some kind, I hesitate to tell others until it is an accomplished fact.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

20. I feel bad and discouraged if I'm not "the best" or at least "very special" in situations that involve achievement.

1	2	3	4	5
Not At all True	Rarely	Sometimes	Often	Very True

Source: <https://www.paulineroeclance.com/pdf/IPTestandscoring.pdf>

Annex D: Topic guide

	Follow on Questions/Prompts
<p>Introduction (approx. 5 mins)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Welcome • Briefing: revisit content on information sheet • Consent to participate and record • Reiterate that researcher is interested in the participants unique lived experience • Questions before we start? <p>Notes: Proceed if satisfied that participant fully understands the requirements/ contents of the information sheet and voluntarily participates</p> <p>Build rapport and put participant at ease</p>
<p><u>Workplace factors:</u> It would be useful to understand a bit more about your workplace before we begin</p> <p>How diverse is a) your workplace b) your team?</p> <p>Do you work regularly with others in your team?</p>	<p>Are there other south Asians in your team?</p> <p>What is the balance of team work to independent work?</p>
<p>Imposter syndrome can mean different things to different people and describes a phenomenon where individuals imposter syndrome can feel like a fake or waiting to be caught out or</p>	<p>What were some of the events that made you feel like an imposter?</p> <p>Can you tell me about your experiences of Imposter syndrome at work?</p>

<p>feel like their success is down to luck. It can mean different things to different people</p> <p>Can you describe what IS feels like for you?</p>	<p>Can you talk me through some of the beliefs you had that were behind this feeling of Imposter Syndrome?</p> <p>How does it feel to feel like an imposter like this?</p>
<p>Can you give me a recent example of a recent achievement?</p>	<p>How did you explain this achievement or success to yourself?</p> <p>What factors did you attribute success to if not yourself?</p> <p>What beliefs underpinned this?</p> <p>How do you explain any career success you have?</p>
<p>One's identity can extend to their faith, culture or traditions, family – How does your identity as a South Asian shape your imposter experiences?</p>	<p>Are there any personal factors like religion or family that make you feel like an imposter at work?</p> <p>Are there any personal factors like culture or family that make you feel like an imposter at work?</p> <p>Can you remember when you first started feeling this way?</p> <p>What are some of the beliefs underpinning this?</p> <p>How does this influence you at work now?</p>
<p>What are some of the situational or environmental factors at work that might trigger imposter feelings?</p>	<p>As a minority at work do you feel you have any stereotypes or expectations you have to contend with?</p> <p>What are these stereotypes or expectations?</p> <p>What are some of the situational or environmental factors at work that might trigger imposter feelings?</p>

Annex F: Example Quotes per theme and subtheme

THEME	SUBTHEME	EXAMPLE QUOTES
Descriptions of IP	Feelings of IP	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think scary, probably fear is the main emotion that happens – PP8 • Ohh don't know it goes from zero to 100 and like I'm not good enough. Umm, why am I here? This is why my opinion, opinions don't matter, because I'm actually not good I will eventually get caught out. And then I'm gonna go fired, and then I'll lose my job. – PP15 • it's that feeling of being intensely overwhelmed – PP15 • it's just where you kind of feel like. .. how did I end up here? – PP5
	External attribution of success	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I got lucky that I knew someone that was in the job that could help me with my application. When I did get the job. I was lucky that the interviewer was in a good mood or I got a good interviewer, so I do tend to put it down to lots of other factors – PP3 • I think definitely like faith and trust in something higher that we came out of Uganda safely. We we we're in safety now – PP14
	Workplace triggers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • If there are more senior people I go more within myself, because I fear judgement, maybe it's because I think that they've got the authority to do something. I don't know if they were to find out, like I couldn't do my job if I sounded so stupid. -PP1 • It wanes away as you kind of build your own credibility and kind of build rapport with the team. But I think its worst at the start [of a new job] – PP10 • I look at the feedback and I am I sort of internal dialogue as my God, how was I so wrong? How did I get so much wrong? How is it so bad? This really isn't good enough. I should have worked at a better standard” – PP3
Impact of IP	Attitudinal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I was hindering myself and not presenting myself in a positive light – PP12 • I feel like it has absolutely shattered my confidence in the workplace – PP6

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I just have this intense amount of weight on me and feeling extremely demotivated. – PP15
	Risk aversion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm terrified to apply to [the next level] because I don't feel confident that I'd be able to handle it when I probably could. – PP12 • Whatever you say is not gonna be, you know, poignant. It's not gonna be impactful. No one really wants to hear it. And then I feel like in that moment where I could have just spoken up and said, oh, what about this? I overanalyze it so much in my head that I just said that quietly and then I don't contribute. –PP6 • It's not a nice feeling and I think it almost before taking this job it always hampered me in the sense of I've always taking a job which I deserve to be paid way more than I was..., but it's at level of its always the anxiety which I get which is then stops me. – PP1 • Feeling too nervous to go for a purely management role.... Going to more passive, yeah, coaching roles – PP8 • It means that I'm more reluctant to go for promotions. I'm more reluctant to move to other jobs – PP3
	Poor wellbeing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You spend half the time worrying about oh I'm going to get found out here... you focus on the wrong things... and that impacts your mental health – PP9 • I was just so worn out because I think I was so anxious that work for so long – PP12 • I've experienced burnout quite a bit.. ... Having to take a leave or I just quit and go to another place.... I've struggled to stay and build a career in one place – PP8
Hard work	Upbringing and Values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You know, like in a Bengali culture, like, there'll be instances. And I guess being a girl as well. And being the eldest, you know, there's a particular image you need to uphold. So you know, well spoken, you can sit, eat, talk properly, you know, everything needs to be perfect. You know, you need to be able to clean and cook and the rest of it and need to be educated and have a good job. And everything has to be perfect. – PP2 • I've never been brought up with the view of like ohh yeah. Like you'll just get everything handed to you on a plate... It's a very like hard work, hard work ethic mentality and you know having to just really put in the hard work if you wanna get anything if you wanna achieve anything - PP5 • Anything you did was not good enough. If you came home and you said I've got an A, they'd be like why haven't you got an A" – PP15 • We couldn't sit around claiming benefits, it was just not done, you had to be working. - PP14

Success is struggle	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I think that is very much that that's, you know, parents will bring up We arrive at 2 suitcases, look at what we're giving you. Look what we have now ... So yeah, it's benchmark myself against parents or grandparents who grew up, you know, in real sort of barefoot in India and real. And quite literally, you know, struggling from the ground up – PP13 • We really do owe it to them [grandparents and parents] not fail in that sense because of how much they've had to sacrifice. And I think the fact that we've, we've, we've all watched our parents or grandparents or we've all heard the stories of how hard it was for them. – PP3
Working hard due to minority status	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You have to work harder. I .. It was always, you know, keep your head down, work really hard, don't make a fuss even though you might be facing racism or discrimination. So for me where I am today is, sort of ingrained, ... and I think a lot was it family background really because they they worked really, really hard – PP14 • White colleagues' work is appreciated a lot more” and “as an ethnic minority, you have to kind of break through that,you know, invisible barrier, a little bit and kind of prove myself as someone who's also worthy for a seat at the table.” – PP9
Comparison with others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You are always compared and benchmarked against other people, for example your parents are like oh look at what your cousins are doing, look at what my friends' kids are doing -PP2 • I feel like the stupidest person in the room – PP8 • Feeling like I don't belong because I'm not the same standard as them. – PP13
Fear of failure and negative evaluation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And I think it ultimately is a fear of failure because, you know, there have been times where I've made mistakes at work and I've got things wrong and I really beat myself up about it. – PP5 • Everyone would say, well, look how hard they study look how smart they are. Don't you wanna be like them? They're going off to uni or you know, they're going to get a place at uni and things like that that I felt like I had to maintain that image of myself. Otherwise, like I'd be letting people down. – PP6

Lack of belonging	Absence of similar others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • [being the only minority] was never an issue, never presented as like a barrier or something that divided us... but sometimes you just notice it like I'm the only Indian in the room or I'm the only female in the room. – pp5 • You're able to just be more comfortable with people of almost the same ethnicity compared to someone else – PP7 • I think I've had to try quite hard to fit in to White spaces...that's been a theme in my life, but that's yeah, always been the case where I've studied or where I've worked... fitting into White space – PP8 • I find it hard to have conversations with people because it feels like they'll see that you are not one of them, that I don't belong there. – PP12 • "The reality of the situation is that you have to [work hard] ... that's how I'm gonna get ahead. It's not gonna be my relationship with [manager] ... You know, because we had a few beers on Friday." – PP9 • "Yet to get noticed 100% as a woman, you already at a disadvantage. But once you're South Asian, you're almost having to work that hard because I can't go to the pub and make friends. Because I don't want to stand there for hours like watching someone else drink and standing with an orange juice in my hand. So that means I now have to just work off my own merit." – PP11
	Being othered through microaggressions and positive discrimination	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • And my manager said something like ohh so who else did you train? And I instantly thought that I didn't train anyone – I didn't mention that my interview at all by instantly thought that ohh hang on a second. You're talking about someone who looks like me. I had to work harder because I automatically thought he thought I was someone else – PP1 • I've kind of gone on to meetings and they've thought automatically that I'm one of the junior members of staff like, you know, you couldn't be at that stage because you know in their defense there is no one of my colour my ethnicity in this grade across you know our people team. So I do sometimes understand why they could assume that but they shouldn't what they do. - PP2 • People would use our names interchangeably. People would if we were sat at desks, people would assume I was her just from the back of our heads because obviously we've all got, like, dark brown colored hair. I'm my own person. And I feel like we were often just mixed up because of the way we looked. - PP6

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I always get asked to write the minutes. Like my whole career, no matter what seniority or role, that's who was simply annoying and yeah. I would say that probably reinforces that I guess that they don't.. Trust me or think more of me than how they're treating me. - PP8
Inauthenticity	Acting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I'm looking at myself on these calls and like who is that person... the things I'll come out with I won't even understand some of the words I'm saying, but they'll understand it. – PP2 • I'm putting on that I'm more like them but that's not really me... so then I feel like an imposter as well."- PP8 • We always say when we are in a bar or a pub setting, you're almost laughing along really hard, because when someone's tipsy or they've drank a little bit too much, everything is almost funny. But when you're in that environment, you almost have to feel like you have to act the same way. But then after a while, you're like your face is plastered, hurting. Like actually, I just wanna go home. I just wanna go home."- PP11 • I don't feel like I'm fully able to be my authentic self at work because I think I am sort of worried that I will further be perceived as other or different in a bad way – pp6
	Managing perceptions of others	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • I feel like people must look at me, you know, and think, yeah, this person isn't gonna fit"- sometimes before interviews, I do ask myself, shall I take my scarf off and just do the interview without my scarf?" – PP2 • Feeling like people have made assumptions about me, or maybe that are I'm not good enough. I think perhaps there's an assumption from my background that I'm not because I'm not like them I won't be as good as them – PP9