

The Role of the Impostor Phenomenon on Anxiety With Youth Religiosity as a Moderator for Adolescents During the COVID-19 Pandemic

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Abstract

This research aims to see the influence of the impostor phenomenon on anxiety and youth religiosity in adolescents during the pandemic. The research method uses a quantitative approach with regression techniques. A total of 63 participants selected using the accidental sampling method with an age range of 18–21 years who entered college in 2020 filled out the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS), State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), and Central Religiosity Scale (CRS) questionnaires. The research results show that the simultaneous interaction of independent variables on state anxiety is 43.3%, while on trait anxiety, it is 58.9%.

Abstrak

Tujuan penelitian ini adalah untuk melihat pengaruh impostor phenomenon terhadap kecemasan dengan *youth religiosity* pada remaja di masa pandemi. Metode penelitian menggunakan pendekatan kuantitatif dengan teknik regresi. Sebanyak 63 partisipan yang dipilih menggunakan metode *accidental sampling* dengan rentang usia 18–21 tahun yang masuk perguruan tinggi tahun 2020 mengisi kuesioner Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS), State Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), dan Central Religiosity Scale (CRS). Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa interaksi simultan variabel bebas terhadap *state anxiety* sebesar 43.3%, sedangkan terhadap *trait anxiety* sebesar 58,9%.



INTRODUCTION

Adolescence is described as a transition period from childhood to adulthood, during which there are numerous physical, psychological, and social changes, as well as desires to attain social connections, accomplishments, and vocations (Santrock, 2015). This attainment can be seen

through adolescents' successes, such as completing assigned school assignments, being accepted at university, and getting a job. This attainment has a positive impact that can increase self-confidence (Nurhikma & Nuqul, 2020).

The freedom to achieve and be successful in the academic field that adolescents usually have has become limited since the emergence of the pandemic. Many crucial activities are limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic, such as building friendships and learning from the environment, making important moments for growth and development less accessible and must be fulfilled in different ways. COVID-19 has made the whole world, including Indonesia, take various actions to stop the disease from spreading, such as implementing lockdowns (Dzulfaroh, 2020; *Kasus Corona di Indonesia Bertambah, Sejumlah Daerah Pilih "Lockdown" Mandiri*, 2020), social distancing and large-scale social restrictions (Indonesian: *pembatasan sosial berskala besar* or PSBB) in most regions (Fikri, 2020; Mashabi, 2020), as well as online or distance learning regulations (Kamil, 2020), where it is not clear when they will end. A pandemic situation that is precisely unknown when it will end can cause discomfort, leading to anxiety.

Anxiety is described as a response to things perceived as threats and, to a certain degree, cannot be controlled by the individual (Vibriyanti, 2020). According to Spielberger and Reheiser (2009), anxiety that has an unpleasant nature can be triggered by pressure and fear in the environment. Spielberger (Hersen, 2004) states that there are two dimensions of anxiety: state anxiety and trait anxiety. State anxiety emphasizes anxiety that occurs at certain times (Vitasari et al., 2011), such as adolescents' anxiety during presentations in front of the class. Trait anxiety is anxiety that is permanent or is explained as an individual's anxious character about things that are felt to be threatening and can be seen through the resulting state of anxiety (Mayangsari & Ranakusuma, 2014), such as always thinking about small things that make them anxious. Trait anxiety develops in individuals who experience repeated worrying situations along with the individual's experience (Gidron, 2013).

For adolescents, activities at home, such as online learning, which create uncertainty and

helplessness during the pandemic, make adolescents feel afraid of what is to come, causing discomfort and leading to anxiety. Seeing this uncertain pandemic makes adolescents face anxiety at certain times or state anxiety through news related to the pandemic, worries about being unable to participate in learning, and giving assignments or presentations online, which require different preparation time than in the classroom. Recurring state anxiety gives repeated physical responses along with the adolescent's experiences, so it remains part of a trait that includes general anxiety (Gidron, 2013). This results in adolescents experiencing a decline in health. UNICEF records that the health of Indonesian adolescents aged 18 years old and over who were disturbed by depression and anxiety increased during the pandemic to 9.8% compared to 6% in 2013 (*Perhatikan Kesehatan Mental Remaja Saat Pandemi COVID-19*, 2021). Many studies highlighting adolescents during the pandemic show an increase in anxiety, which has impacts such as decreased mental health, depression, and sadness (Fitria & Ifdil, 2020; Guessoum et al., 2020; Kılınçel et al., 2021).

Anxiety can arise from a variety of sources around adolescents. One source can come from adaptation and changes in lifestyle during the pandemic. As they adjust academically, adolescents must participate in online learning and get grades as a mark of passing or complete work with specific targets from home. For adolescents who do schoolwork online or from home, adjusting to this new habit can cause stress. This pressure can lead to feelings of anxiety and questions to themselves, such as, "Compared to my friends, am I good enough at following everything online?", "Do I deserve good grades even though I feel like I'm not participating in learning activities well?", "Do I deserve the success of this job even though I'm just at home?", and "Compared to my friends, I don't feel like I'm doing my job optimally." This constant questioning of self-doubt, unworthiness, and not be-

ing good enough can trigger the impostor phenomenon.

Clance (Bravata et al., 2020) introduced the term impostor phenomenon in 1978, which refers to individuals with difficulty internalizing their achievements, persistent self-doubt, fear of being considered a fraud, and thus difficulty demonstrating competence. The impostor phenomenon can cause anxiety and depression (Weir, 2013), make individuals feel constant fear, which makes them refrain from showing their abilities, avoid tasks that require specific targets (Leonard, 2020), and waste their energy because they are busy valuing themselves lowly (Kirnandita, 2017).

It was also explained by Clance (Sakulku, 2011) that the impostor phenomenon has a cycle where individuals who are given a task can become anxious and then carry out excessive preparation or procrastination behaviour followed by preparation the day before and consider completed tasks and achievements as the result of hard work or luck alone. Research in 1983 conducted by Topping (Langford & Clance, 1993) found that there was a positive correlation between the impostor phenomenon and anxiety, especially trait anxiety, thus giving the impression that people who have the impostor phenomenon are people who tend to have anxiety in many life-long or general situations. Other research also sees a contribution of the impostor phenomenon to the anxiety of 17.5% (Ali et al., 2015), a link between worries about mistakes and social perfectionism (Pannhausen et al., 2022), and the higher the impostor phenomenon, the higher the anxiety (Rohmadani, 2020). In a study by Nabila et al. (2022), the impostor phenomenon resulted from the tendency of individuals to doubt their abilities, undervalue themselves, and view praise as a burden, which increased concern over their accomplishments. If positive reinforcement is not given to reduce the impostor phenomenon, prolonged anxiety will occur (Nurhikma & Nuqul, 2020).

This impostor phenomenon has increased in accordance with the implementation of social restrictions during the pandemic, which has thrown individuals into new situations, making them feel not competent enough, so they do excessive work and worry about a productivity crisis (DiGiulio, 2022; Simpkin, 2020). The pandemic that forced online learning caused an increase in anxiety and depression due to the inability to adapt to virtual learning (Anderson-Zorn, 2022).

In an effort to reduce anxiety, adolescents are faced with various ways to reduce anxiety. One method that is often recommended is religiosity. Religiosity departs from the concept of religion, which refers to practical activities or carrying out religious activities; it makes the person religious on the basis of belief and spirituality (Newman, 2004).

Youth religiosity is a religious practice carried out by young people and developed as a result of parental upbringing (Petts, 2015). Huber and Huber (2012) adopted Glock and Stark's five dimensions of religiosity: intellectual, ideology, general practice, personal practice, and religious experience, to see individual religious life in general and as a whole. Research has resulted in a negative relationship between religiosity and academic anxiety in students (Fitria & Ifdil, 2020; Maisaroh & Falah, 2023; Rohmadani, 2020; Ukhtia et al., 2016).

In adolescents who experience the impostor phenomenon, anxiety is one of the results of continuous thoughts about self-doubt and a sense of unworthiness in achievements. One way to adapt or cope with this impostor experience is through religious methods that have emerged over time through various media. The article about the impostor phenomenon explains self-doubt and feelings of unworthiness, which is then connected to several verses of scripture which show that God recognizes feelings of doubt and feelings of unworthiness (Miller, n.d.). Videos circulating on online media are starting to provide ways to deal with impostor feelings, such as through prayer

services, verses from God, invitations to realize that they are valuable, and the presence of God who participates and accompanies them to reduce anxiety (City Image, 2017; Dr. De'Andrea Matthews, 2020; Piper, 2020). This proves that adolescents who have the impostor phenomenon can use religiosity according to the high or low level of their meaning to reduce the anxiety that occurs.

Adolescents who experience the impostor phenomenon can use religiosity in the hope of reducing anxiety. Considering that youth religiosity is the result of the internalization of religious values, which depend on the instillation of family values in individuals, youth religiosity, to a certain degree (high or low), can influence the anxiety produced by the impostor phenomenon. This research aims to examine the role of the impostor phenomenon on anxiety with youth religiosity as a moderator in adolescents during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The major hypothesis in this research is that there is a role for the impostor phenomenon in anxiety with youth religiosity as a moderator, more specifically, state anxiety and trait anxiety.

METHODS

The research design uses a quantitative approach involving specific numbers and using statistical procedures (Creswell, 2019). This research measures the role of the impostor phenomenon on anxiety with youth religiosity as a moderator. More specifically, the research will look at anxiety variables through two dimensions, namely state anxiety and trait anxiety and then compare them.

The participants in this research were specifically late adolescents aged 18–21 (Monks et al., 1991) and included in the class of 2020 at the tertiary level. This criterion was chosen considering that in 2020, the pandemic occurred, and it was a significant change in the adaptation of activities for adolescents in this generation, causing discomfort and uncertainty. Based on Roscoe (Latipah, 2014), a general sample reference of more than 30 and less than 500 is con-

sidered appropriate for most research. This research will collect data for two weeks (February 4, 2021 to February 17, 2021). Due to time constraints, this research used all participants collected and then processed with the help of a statistical program.

Data was collected using non-probability sampling techniques. This technique determines the sample based on specific criteria (Sugiyono, 2015). This research determined the sample using several necessary criteria: adolescents aged 18–21 and the class of 2020 at the tertiary level. This technique has advantages such as being easy to implement and subjects that are easy to search for but has shortcomings in representation and generalization (Hidayat, 2017). This research determines the sample criteria first and then collects data through the open announcement stage to look for interested participants through digital media. Interested participants were then contacted directly by the researcher and sent an email that attached a link to a Google Form containing informed consent and the questionnaire used to measure each variable.

The three measuring instruments used are the Indonesian version of the Clance Impostor Phenomenon Scale (CIPS), the Indonesian version of the State-Trait Anxiety Inventory (STAI), and the Central Religiosity Scale (CRS). The instrument used to measure the impostor phenomenon was CIPS, which consisted of 20 Likert scale items with five answer choices: (1) not at all true; (2) rare; (3) sometimes; (4) often; and (5) very true. This measuring tool looks at stable factors in the impostor phenomenon: fake, discount, and luck (Chrisman et al., 1995). Examples of items in the form of statements include, "It is difficult for me to accept flattery or compliments about my intelligence or achievements" and "Often, I feel that my success is due to some kind of luck." Each answer has a value range from 1 to 5.

Anxiety in this research was measured using the STAI created by Spielberger and translated into Indonesian (Ginting et al., 2015). This mea-

suring tool has 40 Likert scale questions (20 state anxiety items to see current anxiety and 20 trait anxiety items to measure general anxiety) with four response options: (1) not at all; (2) rare; (3) sometimes; and (4) often. Items include statements in the sentences “I feel safe” and “I feel nervous and anxious”.

Youth religiosity in this research was measured using the CRS by Huber and Huber (2012) to see overall religiosity. Items took the form of statements such as, “How often do you take part in religious activities?” and “How important is personal prayer/meditation to you?”. This measuring tool uses the dimensions of religiosity from Glock and Stark, which were later revised to adjust social perspectives. The measuring instrument consists of 15 Likert scale questions, each with five response options, namely 1 for low to 5 for high.

The three measuring instruments underwent a first test to see whether there was a change in validity and reliability. Construct validity examines whether the questionnaire can reveal the trait or theoretical construct to be measured (Azwar, 1987). Lisa Friedenberg (Sembiring, 2017) proposed a validity value that can be used for psychological measuring instruments with a value equal to or greater than 0.3. Construct validity in this research used 33 participants with the same criteria with an *r* table of 0.344. Reliability uses Cronbach’s alpha technique, which is then determined by referring to Guilford’s coefficient criteria within a certain range as follows.

Table 1.

Guilford’s Reliability Coefficient Criteria

Value	Interpretation
< 0.20	Very Low
0.20 – 0.40	Low
0.41 – 0.70	Medium
0.71 – 0.90	High
0.91 – 1.0	Very High
<i>Source: Sembiring (2017)</i>	

The validity and reliability results of each measuring instrument are presented in Table 2.

Table 2.

Validity and Reliability of Measuring Instruments

Measuring Instruments	Initial Number of Items	Final Number of Items	Reliability
CIPS	20	11	0.842
STAI–State Anxiety	20	20	0.913
STAI–Trait Anxiety	20	19	0.918
CRS	15	12	0.854
<i>Note: N = 33; r table = 0.344</i>			

Based on Table 2, the items of the three measuring instruments experienced changes because several items were declared invalid. Each measuring instrument was tested for construct validity to see the suitability of the measuring instrument to the conditions of research conducted via electronic media and amid a pandemic. Data analysis was done using moderated regression processed via IBM SPSS version 26. The analysis begins with a classic regression assumption test, which is then continued with data processing using a multiple regression model with moderation (moderation analysis with Hayes’ PROCESS in SPSS) to see the impostor phenomenon’s role on anxiety from the state and trait anxiety dimensions. Moderation includes the youth religiosity variable and looks at simultaneous and partial contributions.

RESULTS

The participants in this research were 63 people with an age range of 18–21 (mean = 19.16; SD = 0.919) with the following details: (1) 25 people were male and 38 female; (2) 15 people aged 18 years old, 30 people aged 19 years old, 11 people aged 20 years old, and seven people aged 21 years old; (3) 38 people are Muslim, 13 people are Christian, ten people are Catholic, two people are Hindu, and 0 people are Buddhist.

Table 3 shows the moderation test on state anxiety, which produces a value of *R* = 0.6579,

indicating that the variables impostor phenomenon (IP), youth religiosity (YR), IP*YR, and variables outside the research have a correlation of 0.6579 to state anxiety together. R square shows a value of 0.4328, which indicates that the variables studied have a joint contribution of 43.3%, while other variables influence 66.7%. There was a significant simultaneous contribution of IP, YR, and IP*YR to the variation of state anxiety ($p < 0.001$).

Table 4 shows the moderation test on trait anxiety, which produces a value of $R = 0.7672$,

indicating that the variables impostor phenomenon (IP), youth religiosity (YR), IP*YR, and variables outside the research have a correlation of 0.7672 to trait anxiety together. R square shows a value of 0.5886, which indicates that the variables studied have a joint contribution of 58.9%, while 41.1% comes from external variables or factors. A significant simultaneous contribution of IP, YR, and IP*YR to the variation of trait anxiety ($p < 0.001$) occurred.

Table 3.
Simultaneous Regression Test on State Anxiety

R	R-square	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.6579	.4328	93.3394	15.0064	3.0000	59.0000	.0000

Table 4.
Simultaneous Regression Test on Trait Anxiety

R	R-square	MSE	F	df1	df2	p
.7672	.5886	50.9958	28.1433	3.0000	59.0000	.0000

DISCUSSION

Clance introduced the impostor phenomenon as a person's inability to internalize achievements and praise received, tends to doubt intellectual abilities, and considers achievements to be the result of hard work or luck alone (Sakulku, 2011). This research tries to see the influence of the impostor phenomenon on anxiety in adolescents during the pandemic, with youth religiosity as a moderator. This research data found that the simultaneous contribution of independent variables to specific anxiety into two dimensions, namely state anxiety and trait anxiety, was 43.3% and 58.9%, respectively. These results indicate that the impostor phenomenon, youth religiosity, and the interaction of the two variables can play a role in strengthening the anxiety that adolescents experience, especially during the pandemic, when they have to do various activities while fulfilling developmental tasks at home.

If seen in the context of research, the pandemic period made adolescents experience anx-

ity at that very moment, namely since the start of the pandemic and drastic lifestyle changes. In state anxiety, which occurs at a certain time (Vitasari et al., 2011), the pandemic situation means that adolescents must be at home while completing their studies, which can provide pressure. The pressure of adapting to online learning and fulfilling assignments at home can make adolescents doubt themselves and question their success, so they worry about whether their achievements are truly appropriate (Nabila et al., 2022).

Repetition of anxiety in certain conditions, or in this case during a pandemic, can affect them in general anxiety so that it becomes trait anxiety. This is in accordance with the statement by Gidron (2013), which states that the constant repetition of worries can foster general anxiety, characterized by bodily symptoms and perceptions of things threatening or uncomfortable in life. The long pandemic has made adolescents anxious about their achievements and the praise they receive and has created a tendency to under-

estimate themselves. This situation occurs because online learning from home makes adolescents think, "I'm only from home, do I deserve this success?"

The results of this research align with a study that found that the impostor phenomenon effectively contributed to anxiety, especially academic anxiety, at 17.5% (Ali et al., 2015). Other research shows that impostor syndrome and anxiety produce a figure of 0.814, which means that the higher the impostor syndrome, the higher the anxiety experienced (Rohmadani, 2020). The contribution of the impostor phenomenon variable to state anxiety was 0.433, and trait anxiety was 0.589, which is also in line with a study by Topping in 1983, which also found a positive correlation between the impostor phenomenon and anxiety, especially trait anxiety (Langford & Clance, 1993). This shows that adolescents have general anxiety throughout their lives, which becomes higher due to the influence of the impostor phenomenon in the pandemic.

Youth religiosity is a variable taught by parents as a guide for behavior. One of the teachings in religiosity is humility, which adolescents with impostor experiences can interpret as a feeling of inferiority resulting in self-comparison and feelings of inadequacy or unworthiness (Kauati, 2015). This difference increases anxiety in adolescents who experience impostors, especially in the context of learning during the pandemic, when they complete assignments and receive praise that they consider undeserved and are afraid of the responsibilities they will receive later.

CONCLUSION

There is a simultaneous interaction between the impostor phenomenon on both state and trait anxiety in adolescents during the pandemic, moderated by youth religiosity. Considering that youth religiosity in young people develops from family upbringing, parents need to be present to provide understanding regarding religiosity so as not to cause differences in interpretation that can give rise to feelings of inferiority. The limita-

tions of this research are the small number of samples and limited time, which means the results cannot be used for generalization on a large scale. It is hoped that future research will use a larger sample size to achieve generalization.

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