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Unmasking Imposter Syndrome: Prevalence and Associations with Demographic and Academic Factors among International Students

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ABSTRACT: *Imposter syndrome is a psychological condition in which high-achieving individuals doubt their accomplishments despite objective evidence of their success. Its prevalence is becoming increasingly important among university students. Although imposter syndrome affects both domestic and international students, prior research has focused predominantly on domestic populations. Therefore, this study examined the prevalence of imposter syndrome and its associations with demographic factors and academic performance among international students (N = 221). Data were analyzed using frequency distributions, t tests, and correlations. The findings revealed that while most students (58.8%) reported low to moderate levels, a considerable proportion (41.2%) experienced frequent and intense imposter feelings. Among Asian students, imposter syndrome was significantly associated with gender, friendships with locals, and Hungarian language proficiency. For African students, it was negatively related to academic performance. These results underscore the prevalence of the imposter phenomenon among international students and highlight the need for targeted interventions and support systems.*

Keywords: academic performance, demographic factors, imposter syndrome, international students, Hungary

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INTRODUCTION

European higher education institutions are recognized as key players in the global knowledge-sharing market (Guri-Rosenblit, 2015). As a member of the European Union, Hungary has become a popular study destination for many students. Since the Hungarian government established a Stipendium Hungaricum scholarship in 2013, the number of international students in Hungary has significantly increased. As cited in (Wu & Rudnák, 2021), the Tempus Public Foundation (2020) reported that the total number of international students in Hungary increased from 11,783 in 2011 to 38,422 by the 2019/2020 academic year. Debrecen University hosts the greatest number of international students of all higher education institutions in Hungary. Although the internationalization of higher education offers a wide range of benefits for international students, it also presents numerous psychological, sociocultural, academic, and environmental challenges (Oduwaye et al., 2023; Xue & Singh, 2025). The growing prevalence of psychological problems among international students has become a matter of concern. Several studies suggest that international students are increasingly suffering from academic challenges (e.g., variations in pedagogical approaches), sociocultural adjustment difficulties (e.g., language barriers, homesickness, and communication barriers), and mental health issues (e.g., stress, anxiety, depression, isolation, and loneliness) (Gao, 2026; Gebregergis & Csukonyi, 2025a; Gebregergis & Csukonyi, 2025c; Jiang et al., 2026; Maharaj et al., 2024; Smith & Khawaja, 2011; Xu & Wang, 2025).

One additional psychological condition that significantly impacts the mental health and academic outcomes of higher education students is imposter syndrome (Yang et al., 2024). Imposter syndrome was first coined by Clance and Imes (1978), and it refers to a psychological condition in which high-achieving individuals consistently doubt their abilities and accomplishments, despite clear and objective evidence of their success (Bravata et al., 2020; Clance & Imes, 1978; El-Ashry et al., 2024; Salari et al., 2025). Students experiencing imposter syndrome are often characterized by a persistent fear of being exposed to fraud and typically attribute their achievements to external factors such as luck or

support from others rather than to their competence (Qasem et al., 2025). These feelings can contribute to a range of mental health challenges, including heightened anxiety, chronic stress, and depression (El-Ashry et al., 2024; Qasem et al., 2025). The prevalence of imposter syndrome is increasingly recognized as a major concern among both domestic and international students in higher education. However, international students may experience imposter syndrome more intensely because of the unique and often demanding process of intercultural adjustment in a new environment. This process includes navigating unfamiliar academic systems, coping with language barriers, adapting to new cultural norms, dealing with homesickness, and enduring social isolation. Such stressors can gradually erode students' self-confidence, making them feel as though they do not truly belong to or deserve their place in the academic setting. Consequently, international students may be particularly vulnerable to imposter syndrome, which can negatively affect their academic performance. Therefore, imposter syndrome not only undermines the mental health of students but also poses a threat to their academic success.

Although imposter syndrome is believed to affect the psychological well-being and academic performance of the broader student population, prior research has primarily concentrated on the experiences of domestic students. As a result, there is a significant gap in the literature regarding the prevalence of imposter syndrome and its academic impact among international student populations. To address this gap, the present study aims to investigate the prevalence of imposter syndrome and its relationship with the academic performance of international students in Hungary. Furthermore, this study aims to investigate whether the intensity of imposter syndrome varies across demographic variables such as sex, age, length of stay, educational level, language skills, and continent of origin.

Research Questions

To guide this research, the following questions were developed:

1. What is the prevalence of imposter syndrome among international students studying in Hungary?
2. Do demographic variables such as sex, age, and continent of origin influence the experience of imposter syndrome?
3. How is imposter syndrome related to the academic performance of international students?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Prevalence of Imposter Syndrome

While a limited body of literature exists on the prevalence of imposter syndrome, specifically among international student populations, a significant number of studies focusing on general higher education students have consistently indicated that this feeling is widespread. These findings suggest a strong need for more research, but they also provide a clear starting point for understanding the phenomenon within academic settings. For instance, a comprehensive study

conducted with 1,120 university students in Jordan revealed that a substantial majority experienced imposter syndrome at varying levels of intensity. Specifically, the findings revealed that 47.5% reported moderate feelings, 34.7% experienced them frequently, and 7% felt them intensely (Qasem et al., 2025). Similarly, a cross-sectional study in Egypt reported comparable results, with 46.3% of university students experiencing moderate, 33% frequent, and 6.2% intense feelings of imposter syndrome (El-Ashry et al., 2024).

Furthermore, another study in Saudi Arabia also documented notable levels of imposter syndrome among undergraduate students, with 44% reporting moderate feelings, 35% reporting frequent feelings, and 13% reporting intense feelings (Siraj et al., 2024). A recent study in Tukiye also revealed that 39% of postgraduate students experienced intense imposter syndrome (Ok et al., 2025). The pervasiveness of this issue is further supported by a systematic review of 37 different studies, which concluded that imposter syndrome is a prevalent concern across the higher education landscape (Yang et al., 2024). This conclusion is reinforced by numerous other recent publications (e.g., Alzufari et al., 2024; De et al., 2024; Naser et al., 2022; Wang & Li, 2023) that collectively confirm that a significant portion of university students experience imposter syndrome at moderate to frequent levels. Interestingly, a study of international students at an international medical school in Bahrain revealed that 45.2% experienced imposter syndrome, with the prevalence being higher among those with low self-esteem (Naser et al., 2022). These collective findings underscore that imposter syndrome is a common and impactful phenomenon for many students in higher education, regardless of their specific background or location.

Imposter Syndrome and Demographic Factors

Numerous studies have explored the link between imposter syndrome and various sociodemographic variables, such as sex, age, educational level, and marital status. The findings from this body of research, however, are often contradictory, highlighting the complex and nuanced nature of this phenomenon. On the one hand, some studies suggest no significant relationship between imposter syndrome and key demographic factors. For instance, several investigations (e.g., Kuppusamy et al., 2022; Naser et al., 2022; Ok et al., 2025; Qasem et al., 2025) have reported no statistically significant association between imposter syndrome and variables such as sex, age, marital status, or even an individual's specific study program. In a study specifically focused on international students, Naser et al. (2022) further elaborated that the geographic region of the students had no bearing on their feelings of being an imposter. Similar findings were reported in Nigeria by Egwurugwu et al. (2018), who reported that the intensity of imposter syndrome did not differ significantly between male and female students. On the other hand, some studies have reported significant associations. The same study by Egwurugwu et al. (2018) in Nigeria, for example, revealed that age and marital status were significant predictors of imposter syndrome. Specifically, they reported that younger students and those who were unmarried tended to experience more imposter feelings.

In another study conducted among doctoral candidates in Tunisia, Slimi et al. (2024) reported that compared with their male and unmarried counterparts, females and married students reported significantly higher levels of imposter syndrome. Similarly, according to reports by Sankar and Krishnan (2023) and Diaconescu et al. (2024), a statistically significant difference in imposter syndrome scores was observed between genders. More importantly, a recent meta-analytic review revealed that imposter syndrome is significantly more prevalent among females than among males (Price et al., 2024). The reports indicated that females were more likely to suffer from the condition, reporting higher imposter syndrome scores than males were. However, a systematic review by Bravata et al. (2020) indicated that imposter syndrome is prevalent among both females and males. These mixed findings suggest that the relationship between imposter syndrome and sociodemographic variables is not straightforward and may be influenced by a range of contextual and cultural factors.

Imposter Syndrome and Academic Performance

It has been assumed that imposter syndrome is negatively correlated with academic performance and other learning outcomes. The prevailing assumption is that students who experience heightened feelings of imposter syndrome may not perform as well in their studies. However, the empirical evidence on this relationship is contradictory, with mixed results across various studies. For example, Alzufari et al. (2024) reported that students with lower academic grades tended to report higher levels of imposter syndrome, suggesting a potential inverse relationship. Conversely, other studies have produced findings that challenge this notion. El-Setouhy et al. (2024) reported the opposite, observing that students with higher grade point averages (GPAs) had stronger feelings of imposter syndrome. To add to the complexity, other investigations have found no statistically significant link between the two variables. For instance, some studies concluded that there was no measurable association between imposter syndrome and academic performance (Kuppusamy et al., 2022; Qasem et al., 2025). This inconsistency is further supported by a systematic review conducted by Menard and Chittle (2023), which also found that the available literature reports conflicting results on the relationship between imposter syndrome and academic performance. These inconsistent findings highlight that the connection between imposter syndrome and academic performance is not yet well established in the literature. Given the mixed empirical evidence, further research is necessary to fully understand the nature and direction of the relationships between the variables.

Theoretical frameworks of the study

Prior research suggests that motivational theories, particularly self-determination theory (SDT) and attribution theory, provide useful frameworks for studying imposter syndrome (Taasoobshirazi et al., 2023). Accordingly, the present study adopts these theories as guiding conceptual models. According to

SDT, autonomy (a sense of choice and self-direction), competence (a feeling of mastery and confidence), and relatedness (a sense of social connection and belonging) are fundamental psychological needs that promote academic excellence and optimal functioning (Ryan & Deci, 2017). When these needs are unmet, individuals may experience lower academic efficacy, reduced engagement, and diminished motivation, which can contribute to the development or intensification of imposter syndrome. In contrast, the fulfillment of these needs fosters confidence in one's abilities and positive academic outcomes, reducing the likelihood of self-doubt and perceived intellectual fraud (Dao et al., 2025). Empirical evidence indicates that individuals with high levels of imposter syndrome often report social disconnection, lower confidence, reduced well-being, and heightened self-doubt (Pákozdy et al., 2024). Thus, SDT provides a theoretical basis for understanding how psychological need satisfaction may influence the prevalence and impact of imposter syndrome on students' academic experiences.

Attribution theory complements this perspective by focusing on how individuals interpret the causes of their successes and failures. Attributions can be internal (e.g., effort, ability) or external (e.g., task difficulty, luck) and may vary in stability and controllability (Schrader & Helmke, 2015). These attributional patterns shape individuals' motivation, emotional responses, and academic outcomes. For instance, attributing failure to controllable factors such as effort is generally adaptive, whereas attributing failure to stable, uncontrollable factors such as ability is often maladaptive, a pattern commonly observed among individuals with high imposter syndrome. Additionally, individuals with imposter syndrome tend to attribute success to external factors such as luck, while they internalize failure as evidence of inadequate ability (Brauer & Proyer, 2022; Qasem et al., 2025). From this perspective, attributional styles are central to understanding both the occurrence of imposter syndrome and its influence on academic performance in higher education. Together, SDT and Attribution Theory provide a coherent framework for examining the mechanisms underlying imposter syndrome and its associations with demographic and academic factors among international students.

METHODS

Sample and Sample Size

The study sample consisted of 221 international students at the University of Debrecen, Hungary. Of these, 103 (46.60%) were male, and 118 (53.40%) were female. The mean age of the participants was 24 years, and their average length of stay in Hungary was 20 months. With respect to marital status, the majority of the participants were unmarried ($n = 196$; 88.70%). The remaining students were married ($n = 16$; 7.20%), in a relationship ($n = 8$; 3.60%), or divorced ($n = 1$; 0.50%). The students' continents of origin were Africa ($n = 120$; 54.30%) and Asia ($n = 101$; 45.70%). Their educational levels included bachelor's ($n = 143$; 64.70%), master's ($n = 39$; 17.60%), and doctorate degrees ($n = 39$; 17.60%). With

respect to financial support, 112 (50.70%) were scholarship holders, while 109 (49.30%) were self-supported. Convenience sampling was used to select the sample from the target population.

Instruments

Demographic Information: We gathered demographic information through a self-developed questionnaire. The questions covered students' sex, age, length of stay in Hungary, continent and country of origin, educational level, financial support source, and marital status.

Academic performance: The cumulative grade point average (CGPA) was used as a measure of the participants' academic performance. Students were asked to self-report their CGPA as part of the demographic questions.

Imposter Syndrome: To assess imposter syndrome, we used the abbreviated Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale, as validated by Wang et al. (2024). This 10-item Likert scale asks students to rate statements from 1 (never) to 7 (always). Total scores can range from 10 to 70, with a higher score indicating a greater degree of imposter syndrome. The scale's validity and reliability have been established in prior research, and the reliability coefficient in the current study was found to be high ($\alpha = 0.93$).

Data collection procedure and ethical considerations

The study received approval from the United Ethical Review Committee for Research in Psychology, and the data were collected in February 2025. This took place during the second semester of the 2024/25 academic year. The questionnaires were printed and distributed to students at various campus locations, including dormitories, libraries, and shops. The first and second authors of this paper collected the data. While 300 questionnaires were initially distributed, only 221 were correctly completed and used for the final analysis. The research focused on international students from Africa and Asia because they form the largest international student body at the University of Debrecen. To ensure ethical standards, all the questionnaires were anonymous, and participation was voluntary. Participants were presented with an informed consent statement on the first page of the survey, where they had to actively select “yes” to agree to participate.

Data Analyses

The data analyses were conducted using SPSS version 26. Frequency distribution was employed to determine the levels of imposter syndrome. Although this study utilized the short version of the Clance Imposter Phenomenon Scale (CIPS-10), the scores were divided into four levels—fewer, moderate, frequent, and intense imposter experiences—based on the established longer

version (CIPS-20). The frequency distribution of the levels of imposter syndrome was computed for the overall sample and was based on several demographic variables. Furthermore, an independent samples t test was used to assess the association between imposter syndrome and categorical variables such as sex, source of financial support, educational level, and continent of origin for African, Asian, and whole samples. Furthermore, a Pearson product-moment correlation was employed to explore the relationships between imposter syndrome and continuous variables, including age, length of stay in Hungary, and academic performance (cumulative grade point average), across all sample groups.

RESULTS

Levels of Imposter Syndrome by Gender, Continent of Origin, and Overall Sample

Figure 1 presents a detailed distribution of the overall prevalence of imposter syndrome, as well as distributions by gender and continent of origin among students. The findings reveal a high prevalence of impostor syndrome among the student population, with a combined total of 41.20% ($n = 91$) reporting frequent-to-intense levels. Specifically, a significant portion of the students experienced frequent imposter syndrome ($n = 59$; 26.70%), while some reported intense feelings of the phenomenon ($n = 32$; 14.50%). In contrast, 34.40% ($n = 76$) of the students experienced moderate imposter syndrome characteristics, and 24.40% ($n = 54$) reported intense levels of imposter syndrome. These results indicate that a significant number of international students grappled with significant self-doubt and feelings of fraud.

The frequency distribution of imposter syndrome levels by gender revealed (see Figure 1) that a significant number of female students reported more frequent ($n = 36$; 30.50%) and intense ($n = 19$; 16.10%) levels of imposter syndrome. In contrast, 20.30% ($n = 24$) of the female students reported fewer levels, and 33.10% ($n = 39$) reported moderate levels of the phenomenon. Among male students, approximately one-third reported frequent ($n = 23$; 22.40%) and intense ($n = 13$; 12.60%) levels of imposter syndrome. The remaining two-thirds of the male students reported fewer ($n = 30$; 29.10%) and moderate ($n = 37$; 35.90%) levels of the psychological condition.

With respect to the levels of imposter syndrome by continent of origin of the participants, the results demonstrated (see Figure 1) that nearly one-third of the African students experienced frequent ($n = 32$; 26.70%) and intense ($n = 12$; 10%) levels of imposter syndrome. In contrast, approximately two-thirds of the African students reported experiencing fewer ($n = 33$; 25.80%) and moderate ($n = 33$; 27.50%) levels. Among Asian international students, a combined total of 46.5% ($n = 47$) reported frequent ($n = 27$; 26.70%) and intense ($n = 20$; 19.80%) levels of imposter syndrome. Conversely, more than half of these students were found to experience fewer ($n = 21$; 25.80%) and moderate ($n = 33$; 32.70%) levels of psychological syndrome.

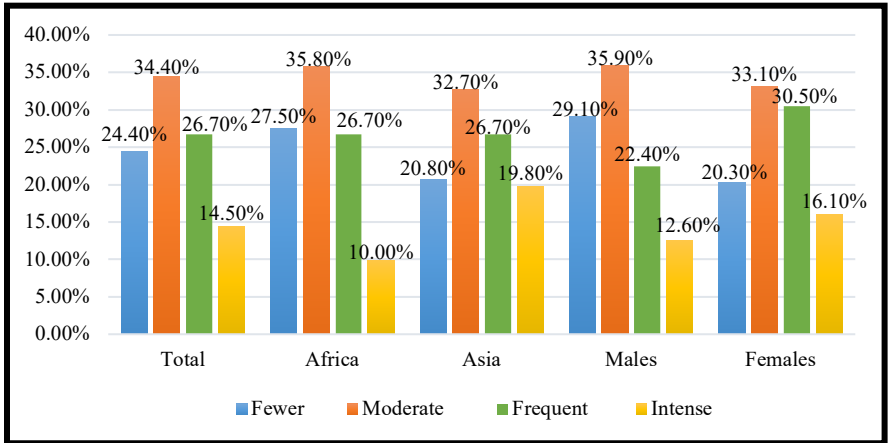


Figure 1. Levels of imposter syndrome by gender, origin of continent, and total sample

Levels of Imposter Syndrome by Educational Level, Source of Financial Support, and Friendship with Locals

The frequency distribution of imposter syndrome levels by educational level, source of funds, and friendship with locals is presented in Figure 2. With respect to educational level, the study revealed that a significant portion of postgraduate students ($n = 15$; 19.2%) reported frequent ($n = 15$; 19.2%) and intense ($n = 18$; 23.1%) levels of imposter syndrome, accounting for more than one-third of this group. The remaining 57.70% of postgraduate students experienced fewer (30.85%) and moderate (26.90%) levels of the syndrome. Similarly, more than one-third of undergraduate students reported frequent ($n = 44$; 30.8%) and intense ($n = 14$; 9.8%) levels of the phenomenon. In contrast, the majority of undergraduate students, 59.4% ($n = 85$), experienced fewer and moderate levels of imposter syndrome. The frequency distribution of imposter syndrome levels among students on the basis of their source of financial support indicated that nearly half of the self-support students (46.8%) experienced frequent and intense levels of imposter syndrome. In contrast, the remaining 53.2% of this group reported lower or moderate levels.

Similarly, more than one-third of the scholarship holders (35.7%) reported frequent and intense levels of imposter syndrome. The majority of scholarship students (64.3%) experienced fewer and moderate levels of the syndrome. The study also explored the levels of imposter syndrome on the basis of the participants' friendships with local people (see Figure 2). For international students without Hungarian friends, the frequency distribution revealed that 44.60% reported frequent and intense levels of imposter syndrome. Within the same group, 55.40% of the students experienced fewer and moderate levels of the syndrome. Among students who did have Hungarian friends, the majority (66%)

reported fewer and moderate levels of imposter syndrome. Specifically, 35% of this group reported lower levels, whereas 31% reported moderate levels.

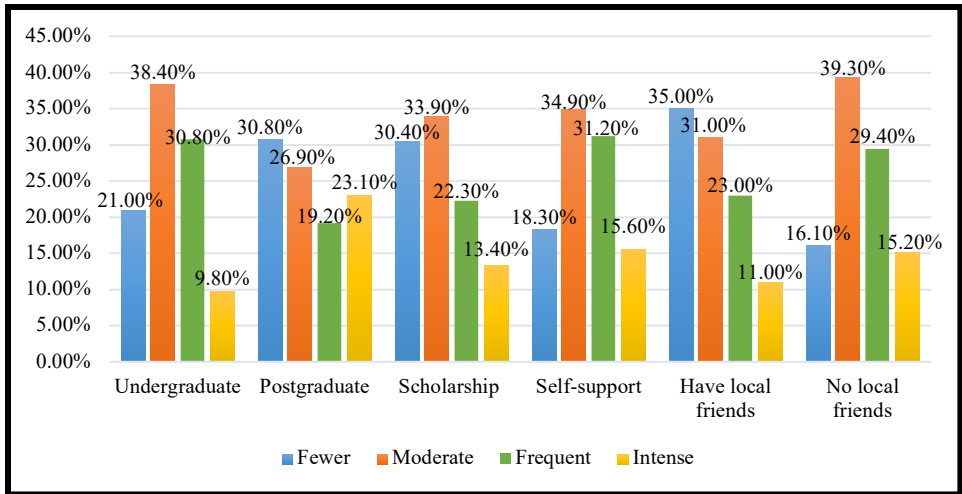


Figure 2. Levels of imposter syndrome by educational level, source of funds, and friendship with locals

Associations between Imposter Syndrome and Demographic Variables

Independent sample t tests were used to determine whether imposter syndrome scores differed across various categorical demographic variables, including gender, educational level, source of financial support, and friendships with Hungarians, for the African, Asian, and total student samples. The results revealed that gender was significantly associated with imposter syndrome among Asian students, with females reporting higher scores than their male counterparts did ($p < .05$). However, this association was not significant in the African or total sample. A statistically significant relationship was also observed between the source of funding and imposter syndrome among the African sample, where compared with scholarship holders, self-supporting students reported higher levels ($p < .05$), but this relationship was not significant for the Asian or total samples. Imposter syndrome scores also significantly differed among Asian international students on the basis of their friendships with Hungarians. Specifically, compared with those who had local friends, Asian students who did not have Hungarian friends reported higher levels of imposter syndrome ($p < .05$). However, this association was not statistically significant in the African or total sample. Finally, a statistically significant difference in imposter syndrome scores was not found between undergraduate and postgraduate international students across all three samples.

Table 1. *Independent sample t test results for imposter syndrome and demographics*

Variables	Subgroups	Sample					
		Africans		Asians		Total sample	
		<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>t</i>	<i>p</i>
Gender	Male	0.20	.845	2.48*	.015	1.71	.088
	Female						
Educational level	Undergraduate	1.48	.140	0.51	.613	.31	.754
	Postgraduate						
Source of funds	Scholarship	2.56*	.011	1.60	.117	2.99	.003
	Self-support						
Friendship with locals	Yes	1.26	.212	2.95*	.004	2.55	.012
	No						

Table 2. *Correlation coefficients for imposter syndrome and demographics*

Variables	Sample					
	Africans		Asians		Total sample	
	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Age	0.04	.700	-.02	.843	.02	.803
Length of stay	0.08	.397	-.09	.061	-.01	.897
English language skills	2.12	.205	.06	.531	.05	.430
Host language skills	.06	.486	-.20*	.048	-.06	.390
Academic performance	-.22*	.042	-.05	.675	-.11	0.137

Correlation between Imposter Syndrome and Academic Performance

Pearson product–moment correlation analyses were conducted to examine the relationships between imposter syndrome and several continuous demographic and academic variables, including age, length of stay in Hungary, English and Hungarian language proficiency, and academic performance (cumulative GPA). The findings revealed that Hungarian language proficiency was significantly and negatively correlated with imposter syndrome among Asian international students ($r = -.20, p < .05$). These findings indicated that Asian students with stronger Hungarian language skills tended to report lower levels of imposter syndrome. However, this association was not significant in the African or total student samples. Academic performance was also inversely correlated with imposter syndrome among the African sample ($r = -.22, p < .05$), suggesting that African students with higher academic performance reported lower levels of imposter syndrome, although this relationship was not statistically significant for Asian or total samples. Finally, age, length of stay, and English language

proficiency were not significantly related to imposter syndrome across any of the samples.

DISCUSSION

The primary purpose of this study was to explore the prevalence of imposter syndrome and its relationships with demographic variables and academic performance among African and Asian international students in Hungary. The results generally suggested that imposter syndrome is a prevalent issue among many international students, who reported experiencing it at frequent and intense levels, although a high proportion also experienced it at fewer and more moderate levels. The relationships of imposter syndrome with demographic variables and academic performance differed between the African and Asian samples. Guided by the research questions, the discussion section of the study addresses three key issues: the prevalence of imposter syndrome, its association with demographic variables, and its correlation with academic performance.

The first research goal of this study was to determine the prevalence of imposter syndrome among international students. The findings indicate that while a significant number of international students experienced imposter syndrome at frequent and intense levels, more than half of the participants reported experiencing it at fewer and more moderate levels. This suggests that a notable portion of the international student population grapples with feelings of self-doubt and fraudulence, believing that they are not as capable as their accomplishments would suggest, even when they are presented with objective evidence of their success. Despite the scarcity of specific literature on the prevalence of imposter syndrome among the international student population, the results of this study generally align with most prior research conducted on students in higher education (e.g., Alzufari et al., 2024; De et al., 2024; Naser et al., 2022; Qasem et al., 2025; Siraj et al., 2024; Wang & Li, 2023). These previous studies have consistently reported that imposter syndrome is a common psychological phenomenon among students, and the current findings reinforce this conclusion within the context of international students. This consistency suggests that the pressures leading to imposter syndrome may not be unique to any specific group but are a widespread issue within the academic environment.

In its second research inquiry, our study reveals that the relationships between imposter syndrome and demographic variables differ significantly between African and Asian student samples. Compared with their male counterparts, Asian female international students reported a greater prevalence of imposter syndrome, a finding that may be linked to social expectations and gender stereotypes that may lead females to have low self-confidence and attribute their success to external factors rather than their abilities. Pressure from sociocultural expectations and rigid gender stereotypes is widely believed to exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and self-doubt among females (Clance & Imes, 1978; Dixit & Ashutosh, 2024). These results are consistent with broader literature showing that female students tend to have a higher incidence of imposter syndrome (Diaconescu et al., 2024; Pákozdy et al., 2024; Price et al., 2024; Sankar &

Krishnan, 2023; Slimi et al., 2024; Vilchez-Cornejo et al., 2023). However, our study also suggested that imposter syndrome is significantly associated with imposter syndrome in Africa and in the total sample. These findings align with those of numerous empirical studies that have challenged the notion of a sex difference in the prevalence of imposter syndrome, which has shown no significant difference in prevalence between men and women (e.g., Kuppusamy et al., 2022; Naser et al., 2022; Ok et al., 2025; Qasem et al., 2025).

Furthermore, we reported that Asian students with better Hungarian language skills and stronger social connections with local Hungarians reported lower levels of imposter syndrome. These findings suggest that host language proficiency and social integration are negatively associated with students' feelings of anxiety, self-doubt, and fraudulence. Prior studies have also suggested that international students' meaningful friendships with local people play an important role in fostering adaptation to the host society by reducing adjustment difficulties, such as anxiety (Gebregergis & Csukonyi, 2025b). However, this association was not evident in the African or overall sample, indicating potential cultural variation in how these social and linguistic factors are related to the impostor phenomenon. Finally, the results of this study revealed that imposter syndrome is prevalent among students regardless of their age, educational level, duration of stay, or English language skills, indicating that these variables are not significantly correlated with imposter syndrome.

Finally, our third research question explored the correlation between imposter syndrome and academic performance. The results indicate that a significant relationship between these variables is evident only among the African student sample and not among the Asian students or the total sample. Specifically, African international students with higher levels of academic achievement reported lower levels of imposter syndrome, whereas those with poorer academic performance were found to suffer more from feelings of self-doubt and fraudulence. The difference in this relationship between the African and Asian samples may be attributed to their distinct cultural backgrounds and the specific pressures they face. While the findings for African students align with those of prior research that has reported a negative correlation between imposter syndrome and academic performance (Alzufari et al., 2024; Yang et al., 2024), it is also important to note that several studies have reported a nonsignificant relationship (Kuppusamy et al., 2022; Qasem et al., 2025). As such, the exact nature of the relationship between imposter syndrome and academic performance remains inconsistent and mixed in the broader academic literature (Menard & Chittle, 2023).

Implications of the Study

The findings of the current study are expected to have both theoretical and practical implications. Theoretically, considering the limited literature on imposter syndrome among international students, the present study contributes to the scientific understanding of its prevalence within this population. In addition, it offers insights into the associations between imposter syndrome, demographic

factors, and academic performance. More importantly, the findings may inform host institutions about the levels of imposter syndrome experienced by international students. Furthermore, the study can inform international students about the extent of their feelings toward imposters and how these feelings may affect their academic outcomes. Moreover, the comparative analysis between African and Asian international students, within the context of demographic and academic factors, enhances the understanding of differences in the prevalence of imposter syndrome across specific groups. In addition to these theoretical implications, the negative relationship between imposter syndrome and academic performance observed in this study supports the assumptions of self-determination theory and attribution theory. Specifically, unmet psychological needs (i.e., autonomy, competence, and relatedness) combined with maladaptive attributions, such as attributing success to external factors and failure to internal causes, may intensify imposter feelings and contribute to poorer academic outcomes.

Practically, the study can offer guidance to the host university and other stakeholders on how to address students' experiences of impostor syndrome. Given that a significant proportion of international students experienced frequent and intense feelings of self-doubt and fraudulence, host universities should design intervention strategies and support systems to address these challenges. For instance, workshops, seminars, and short training programs could be implemented to strengthen students' academic confidence and positive self-image. University teachers can also adopt pedagogical approaches that incorporate reflective educational activities, enabling students to acknowledge and value their achievements. Furthermore, international students could be supported in developing positive attributional styles, recognizing their success as stemming from their abilities rather than external factors such as luck, which has been linked to higher susceptibility to imposter syndrome. The observed associations between imposter syndrome, friendship with local students, and proficiency in the Hungarian language suggest that universities can mitigate imposter feelings by fostering stronger interpersonal connections between international and local students, as well as by offering host-language classes. Additionally, the finding that African international students with higher levels of imposter syndrome performed poorly in their academic studies highlights the need for targeted academic support for these students to improve performance, enhance confidence, and reduce feelings of inadequacy.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite these implications, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the sample size was relatively small and limited to international students from Africa and Asia, which restricts the generalizability of the findings. Future research should therefore consider larger and more diverse samples drawn from different regions to strengthen the external validity of the results. Second, the sample was selected from a single institution, and the results may not be

generalizable to students at other universities. Consequently, examining the prevalence of imposter syndrome among international students studying at multiple higher education institutions would be more comprehensive and could increase the generalizability of the findings. Third, this study focused only on the prevalence of imposter syndrome and its relationship with demographic and academic factors. Future research could extend this scope by examining personal and situational correlates to better identify predictors of imposter syndrome. Finally, the study relied on self-report questionnaires to assess both imposter syndrome and academic performance, which may have been influenced by social desirability bias. Employing mixed-method approaches in future research could help overcome the limitations of self-reported data and yield richer, more reliable insights.

CONCLUSION

The prevalence of imposter syndrome has become an increasing concern among higher education students. Although this phenomenon affects both domestic and international populations, prior research has focused predominantly on domestic students, leaving the experiences of international students underexplored. To address this gap, the present study examined the prevalence of imposter syndrome among African and Asian international students studying in Hungary. The findings reveal that while the majority of students reported experiencing low to moderate levels of imposter syndrome (approximately two-thirds), a considerable proportion (over one-third) experienced frequent and intense symptoms. This study further highlights that imposter syndrome was more prevalent among Asian female students. Additionally, friendship with local peers and host-language proficiency were significantly correlated with imposter syndrome among Asian students but not among African students or the total sample. Additionally, the study revealed a negative correlation between imposter syndrome and academic performance among African students but not among Asian students. Overall, the study underscores that imposter syndrome is a pressing issue among international student populations. Accordingly, host institutions should implement intervention programs and support systems to help students overcome feelings of self-doubt and inadequacy, thereby fostering greater academic confidence and psychological well-being.

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