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Defined as *the psychological inability to internalize one's achievements* (also characterized as a tendency to internalize negative events & externalize positive events), Imposter Syndrome is *not* a form of mental illness; rather it can be described as a set of faulty beliefs.

Originally researched as a women's issue (women were thought to be the only ones who experienced it) by Clance and Imes (1978), Imposter Syndrome was thought to be correlated with high achievement (or the drive for high achievement). It does seem to be more prevalent in women in leadership positions.

However, in Law School genders show up pretty equally in terms of representation among students (and some sources claim also faculty!).

It's both:

Adults who have experienced betrayal, abandonment, or abuse in their childhoods are particularly vulnerable. Also law students who are "first generation" – are the first to attend HE in their family – are sometimes more vulnerable. Also, law students have to have demonstrated high achievement and academic success in the past in order to get in to Law School. You are now part of a small, very smart pool of learners. You are learning material you've never worked with before. Competition and independence are built into the fabric of the profession and the discipline.

: Attributing success to "luck", fear of being found out (it was a mistake...) constant anxiety that you are not good enough or smart enough to be here.

Overwork, isolation, dropping out/withdrawal, increase in anxiety, depression.

Environments do affect psychological well-being.

Law School is the perfect incubator...

You are working very hard, but you have no "job" and you are comparing yourself to other very smart people who want the same job. (Identity in our culture is very connected to our "work").

If you also have a paid job, you may not be perceived as "serious" about your academic work.



