

## A MULTIDISCIPLINARY ANALYSIS OF THE CULTURAL AND PSYCHOLOGICAL ROOTS OF FEMALE AUTHENTICITY



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### ABSTRACT

This study investigates the impostor syndrome as a social pathology resulting from the historical-cultural context that oppresses the instinctive and intuitive nature of women. Inspired by Clarissa Pinkola Estés' ideas about the importance of nurturing the wild psyche for the manifestation of women's dreams and desires, we examine how patriarchal society devalues introspection (YIN) movements, leading to the individual's disconnection with themselves. We argue that the impostor syndrome is a consequence of this distancing from the place of feminine power and can be circumvented through the liberation of the domesticated feminine. We argue that the achievement of financial, emotional, and spiritual independence is essential for women to feel safe to express their authenticity and essence.

**Keywords:** Impostor Syndrome. Social Pathology. Authenticity. Wild Psyche. Historical-cultural.

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## INTRODUCTION

Female authenticity is often suppressed by social and cultural norms that shape women's behavior, leading to the emergence of imposter syndrome.

Imposter Syndrome is a phenomenon observed in women who often feel that they are deceiving the people around them regarding their true potential. They doubt their own intellectual capacities and have the impression that they are impostors in their achievements. Impostor Syndrome is a psychological phenomenon that is characterized by the constant presence of intense doubts about one's own abilities and competences. This syndrome also manifests itself as a difficulty in recognizing one's own success or in accepting external evidence of competence. In the scientific field, it is known as "Imposter Syndrome" or "Phenomenon Syndrome", and describes an internal sensation of falsehood.

The effort that a person dedicates to all areas of their life ends up generating the feeling that nothing is enough and that every result, no matter how positive, is achieved only by chance. In this way, the Impostor Syndrome was established in women, spreading to different social strata, levels of education, age, occupation, relationships.

The frequently mentioned signs are generalized anxiety, lack of self-esteem, sadness, resistance, disappointment, hesitation, emotional detachment, evasion of obligations, self-sabotage, difficulty trusting others, procrastination, excessive working hours, exhaustion at work, self-confidence issues, and more.

In 1978, Pauline Rose Clance and Suzanne Imes introduced the term imposter syndrome. This term is used to describe people who, even though they are skilled, intelligent, and effective, have a sense of not being good enough and a fear of being unmasked. For them, the success achieved is not a merit of their own abilities, but rather luck or other external factors. This topic has been widely discussed due to the negative impact it has on the lives of these individuals. Those who deal with the imposter phenomenon often place more importance on negative reviews, ignoring positive praise and concluding that their deeds aren't really deserved or as good as they seem.

The self-saboteur condition awakens memories of mistakes when things don't go as expected. The person finds it difficult to accept the process of change and advancement, being led to the search for perfection, which is related to several psychological problems, such as anxiety, sadness, social withdrawal, and difficulty in dealing with difficult situations. Undoubtedly, the mental vulnerability caused by the self-saboteur condition can lead people away from happiness. Those who trust themselves and their actions are more likely

to achieve well-being and joy. The phenomenon of self-punishment has a significant impact on quality of life. In addition, the fear of failure ends up limiting the potential for growth and satisfaction, hindering performance.

The phenomenon of self-sabotaging can have a great impact on mental health in several ways, since people who suffer from it usually experience a decrease in their quality of life and well-being. They deal with worries, insecurities, anxiety, and depression more intensely than those who don't have this problem.

The fear of failure ends up limiting opportunities for growth and happiness at work and in social life, generating conflicts and impairing performance. Studies show that self-sabotaging is negatively associated with self-esteem and adaptive perfectionism, factors that have an impact on mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual health.

The way people deal with the balance of their integral health can vary according to several aspects, such as age, gender and educational level, with culture being an important element to consider. The importance of research on this topic in contexts not yet explored is highlighted.

There is a lack of studies that comprehensively analyze these phenomena, especially with regard to self-esteem as a possible mediator of the impact of perfectionism on the self-saboteur syndrome, especially in the Brazilian context.

It is necessary to highlight that the term "impostor syndrome" is not recognized by the WHO because there is still no data to prove its signs and symptoms, and there may be different causes and characteristics similar to different diseases. Therefore, the most coherent term is "impostor phenomenon".

In this study, the cultural and psychological roots of this syndrome are being analyzed, using a multidisciplinary approach that integrates concepts from social, Jungian and transpersonal psychology. It will be investigated how the liberation of the domesticated feminine can promote financial and emotional independence by bringing light to the presence of the Impostor Syndrome as a social phenomenon in women from different situations and realities.

The method adopted for this research will be qualitative, which will have as an instrument a questionnaire and interviews with women.

The question that will permeate will be how to identify women with Impostor Syndrome and how to do a work of rescuing self-esteem and personal power? It is believed that we must promote female authenticity through self-knowledge based on socio-

historical knowledge of a society that oppresses the female body and psyche, as well as understanding the relationships established between family and friends.

This research will have the theoretical support of Clance (1978), a pioneer in the subject and precursor of the concept, her method will be adapted to possible interventions from the Brazilian historical-social context; Estés (1992), together with Jungian archetypal psychology. Through stories and myths that lead women to liberation from the domesticated feminine by recognizing their instinctive and creative nature. Her work will be the main approach to rescuing female authenticity. Guzzo & Varella (2015) will be the basis for justifying the need to adapt to the multidisciplinary culture of female identity within a Brazilian perspective; DIAS (2017) with her important analysis of the feminist movement in psychology, demonstrating perspectives and challenges for the promotion of female authenticity in the Brazilian context.

The objective of the research is to analyze the cultural and psychological roots of the Impostor Syndrome in women as a social phenomenon through the survey of this syndrome and discuss how to identify women with the Impostor Phenomenon and the work to be done with them, recognizing the reason for the existence of this syndrome, seeking to release the woman from the responsibility of this feeling, defending the possible hypothesis that it is actually a social pathology, a consequence of the patriarchal model that marginalizes, in the sense of leaving the female body and psyche on the sidelines, without recognition, as a potential for self-regulation for the manifestation of a lighter and more creative life. The lack of knowledge and self-knowledge of women and the disconnection with their own instinctive nature will be phenomena highlighted in this article. The study delves into different social strata to identify whether the feeling of imposition and self-sabotage occurs only in successful women, with professional and academic prominence, or if it is also part of the repertoire of dissatisfaction and imbalance in women from disadvantaged classes, even if the term is not recognized by them.

## **FEMALE EMPOWERMENT**

The word empowerment does not yet exist in the dictionary, but it is widely spread in today's society and can be summarized as giving power to the individual, praising him.

The name female empowerment, so widely disseminated these days, aims to empower women aiming at gender equality in society. It can be said that it is an evolution of feminism that began in the last century since it proposes that women have the same

rights and the same opportunities as men, but differs when it adds terms such as sorority (a kind of alliance between women), representativeness and collaboration. In addition to including individuals who feel like women, regardless of their physical characteristics.

In 2010, the UN launched the "Women's Empowerment Principles", which is "a set of considerations that help the business community to incorporate values and practices aimed at gender equality and women's empowerment into their businesses".

The considerations are as follows: 1. Establish corporate leadership sensitive to gender equality, at the highest level. 2. Treat all women and men fairly at work, respecting and supporting human rights and non-discrimination. 3. Ensure the health, safety and well-being of all women and men who work in the company. 4. Promote education, training and professional development for women. 5. Support women's entrepreneurship and promote women's empowerment policies through supply chains and marketing. 6. Promote gender equality through community-driven initiatives and social activism. 7. Measure, document, and publish the company's progress in promoting gender equality.

From a civic and regimental point of view, this was and continues to be the way. From the point of view of the individual, as a unique being and belonging to the whole, this struggle for equality caused a loss of identity of the feminine being.

By seeing themselves as a minority in the labor market, women understood that they needed to resemble men and, for example, changed the way they dressed. Coco Chanel introduced pants into women's clothing when skirts ceased to be practical for working women. Shoulder pads appeared in the 80s, as they created a more masculine silhouette, which gave them strength and power.

Fashion is just one example of a representation of society. That is, in order to compete with men in the labor market, women had to resemble them on several levels, including psychically.

Essentially masculine characteristics began to predominate and to be valued. Productivity, objectivity and inexpressiveness of emotions began to take over society. In this way, although women have conquered the right to vote, to go out alone and financial independence, some predominantly feminine characteristics, such as intuition, have dissipated.

Children began to be educated to achieve professional success and the concern with being empathetic, conscientious and good-character individuals was left in the background. The independent male role, provider and fun to compensate for hard work

became much more attractive when it became a possibility. Girls then began to aspire to resemble the male figure more.

In a society that was and continues to be patriarchal, women still have to deal with the shame of their bodies, for example, hiding their periods. Denying her true origins, the woman disconnected from her truth and the wisdom of a sacred feminine of strength, power, instinct and creation.

Thus, there was an imbalance in the appreciation of only male attributes. Women started to want to look like men and with that they distanced themselves from their true essence.

It is important to emphasize that feminism was not the cause of this imbalance and that the work presented here does not advocate a setback in this sense. On the contrary: it is recognized that feminism has brought fundamental achievements for gender equality, a basic and fundamental item for a more just and harmonious society; However, society, which was already patriarchal and therefore already restricted the female being even before feminist movements existed, became even more unbalanced when faced with the new role of women.

The rescue of the feminine can and should coexist with the civil conquests already consolidated. Still, equal rights praise the feminine being and it is from this point of view that female empowerment will be addressed in this work: to praise women as female beings. It is necessary to rescue essentially feminine characteristics in a masculinized society to help women understand their power as a female individual in a sphere that is not only psychic, but also physical and energetic.

## **THE REDISCOVERY OF BEING A WOMAN – TRANSPERSONAL FEMALE EMPOWERMENT**

Several masters such as Osho, Dalai Lama, Amma, Yogi Bhajan said in their satsangs that the healing of the world would come from the woman, from the rescue of the feminine and from love. ! Women are the strength and the very basis of our existence. When a woman loses contact with her true Self, there is no longer harmony in the world and destruction begins." Dalai Lama also adds: ! The world will be healed by Western women."

In female empowerment from the point of view of transpersonal psychology, women connect with their womb (physical or energetic) and revere all the sacredness of being a

woman in its wildest and most visceral manifesto, reconnecting the current needs of modern women with the rescue of an ancient wisdom, which for a long time was neglected by patriarchy and the industrial and capitalist model of economy.

The goal of empowerment is the search for knowledge of oneself and of the feminine being through one's body – the experience of one's cycles and one's inner nature connected in a sustainable way with outer nature.

Many women are getting to know themselves and multiplying the healings they experience, stimulated by the awareness that they are responsible for the health of their physical, mental, emotional and spiritual bodies, as well as the health of their descendants, planet Earth and all beings that inhabit her.

It is in this state of resilience that empowered women are looking for tools capable of rescuing the feminine and it is about these tools that we will talk in the next chapters.

## **THE DIFFERENCE OF BEING A WOMAN**

! No one is born a woman: she becomes a woman!. (BEAUVOIR, 1967, p. 9). Simone Beauvoir's phrase in the book *The Second Sex* (1949) shows that women need to know their inner universe to awaken their unique and necessary characteristics to find their balance. With transpersonal therapy, she is able to connect with her truth and break paradigms imposed by society on what it is to be a woman. In this sense, the woman empowers herself with her life and stops wanting to achieve the expected and imposed model of woman, thus ending the dictatorship over her body.

Questioning the place of biological destiny as the foundation for the affirmation of the existence of a feminine nature, gender is never an essence but a story. The historical process is linked to the body that comes into the world, like this: ! There is no biological destiny that will ensure a woman's place in a society." (BEAUVOIR, 1967, p. 9).

Females and males are made up of different physical and chemical equipment. An example is the result of research carried out by the University of California, managed by psychologists Laura Cousin Klein and Shelley Taylor, in which it was found that women tend to be more supportive than men and that women have an easier time making friends.

These two characteristics are due to the greater release of oxytocin in the female body. According to Maria Fernanda Garcia (2017) in an article about the research, oxytocin is a substance released in men and women as a reaction to stress. The point is that the amount varies according to gender, which makes women usually more supportive in



stressful situations, while men are more focused on themselves. The substance is also responsible for the contractions of the uterus during labor and stimulates the production of breast milk. In addition, it stimulates the emergence of pleasant feelings, that is, it helps in the creation of the bond between mother and child. This same hormone, therefore, helps women to be more sociable. (GARCIA, 2017)

Proof of this more supportive behavior is the queues of women in men's penitentiaries compared to those of men in women's penitentiaries. Kemila Pellin (2016), in a special report on this subject, provides us with the following account:

She was arrested for a crime he committed, and was incarcerated for a long time until she was tried and acquitted. And today? Today is Sunday, it's visiting day and nothing else matters. She has simply been there since dawn, with the two-year-old girl on her lap and looking attentively at the other two. Today she came to bring her children to visit their father, because after all, she has no right to deprive them of family conviction. Today she came to visit her husband, the same one who put her in prison one day. (PELLIN, 2016).

This ability to transform and heal (her and everyone around her) is a feminine principle and as such can and should be directed consciously. To deny this characteristic is to deny your truth and with it your self-love and self-esteem.

Aline Rodrigues in *Feminine Ancestral Knowledge: Feminine Sacred Wisdom* (2017) states that she was imprisoned, deprived of family life and lost the right to breastfeed her daughter, who at the time was no more than three months old. She lost almost two years of the growth and development of the little one and the other two, who are now 8 and 10 years old. All this because her husband trafficked drugs and used the family home as a hiding place.

Women have a uterus, ovary (endocrine glands), hormones and hormonal rates (different from men) that are the manifestations of energy (power) at a more subtle level (which is also different from men).

This energy-power is like a wisdom of its own, essential, present (but "forgotten#") in women. Such energy-power-force exists only in latency and is very unconscious in man. Such energy-wisdom was hidden and repressed with the advent of this current civilization, which had the need to work on rationality and concrete intelligence, that is, the masculine. The reasons for this concealment are related to the end of the civilization prior to ours. However, now, with the blossoming of a new cycle, where the abstract or synthesis mind must be the focus in collective development, several of these knowledges are being opened and reoriented to accelerate this process of self-awareness both of women and so



that they can also activate the appropriate frequency or vibration and anchor the wisdom necessary for this evolutionary moment throughout the Earth. (RODRIGUES, 2017)

It is important to highlight that in this study the feminine refers to the principle of introspection defined by the Tao philosophy: Yin (feminine) and Yang (masculine), that is, it does not refer to the woman or the man specifically, but to the polarities that inhabit the duality of the Being. It is also worth noting that the term feminine has nothing to do with femininity, which is a socio-historical construction that does not fit into this deepening.

## **OBJECTIVE**

The objective of the research is to analyze the cultural and psychological roots of the Impostor Syndrome in women as a social phenomenon through the survey of this syndrome in the cities of Niterói - RJ, Barueri - SP and Santana de Parnaíba - SP. This analysis aims to recognize why the syndrome exists and to release women from the responsibility of feeling this way, defending the possible hypothesis that it is actually a social pathology, a consequence of the patriarchal model that marginalizes, in the sense of leaving the female body and psyche on the margins, without recognition, as a potential for self-regulation for the manifestation of a lighter and more creative life. The lack of knowledge and self-knowledge of women and the disconnection with their own instinctive nature will be phenomena highlighted in this article. The study delves into different social strata to identify whether the feeling of imposition and self-sabotage occurs only in successful women, with professional and academic prominence, or if it is also part of the repertoire of dissatisfaction and imbalance in lower-class women, even if the term is not recognized by them.

## **METHODOLOGY**

This study will use a qualitative approach, using a questionnaire and interviews with women as an instrument of analysis. The sample will be composed of women of different age groups, education levels and social situations. Standardized research instruments such as questionnaires on authenticity, emotional well-being, and symptoms of imposter syndrome will be used. The procedures will include data collection through a questionnaire, observations and analysis of responses.

## DEVELOPMENT

The discussion will address the contributions of the study to the understanding of female authenticity and impostor syndrome, as well as its implications for clinical practice and therapeutic interventions. Recommendations for future research and interventions in the field of female psychology will be suggested.

The Impostor Syndrome, according to Clance and Imes, reveals an internal experience of self-perception as an "intellectual farce", more common among women with high academic and professional performance. Despite objective evidence of success, these women believe that their achievements are the result of luck or deception, rather than their abilities. This study devotes its attention to analyzing the origin of the phenomenon in family dynamics and internalized gender stereotypes, in which girls are conditioned to minimize their capabilities or adhere to unrealistic standards of perfection.

The research will also be guided by the work "Women who run with the wolves" by Clarissa Pinkola Estés to offer a symbolic counterpoint to the phenomenon of the impostor described by Clance and Imes, who disregard the influence of the social environment that devalues instinctive attributes of women, such as cyclicity, sexuality and ancestry. The desire to be perfect to meet social expectations is sometimes extremely stressful and discouraging, causing many women to not recognize themselves and become trapped in a pattern of self-sabotage, out of fear, guilt, or shame.

It is important to bring awareness to women that it is possible to live in harmony and that there are several therapeutic tools for this. First in harmony with yourself, accepting the cycles and conditions of each phase. Then harmony with society, occupying her role as a woman without giving up the civil rights conquered. Maintain these rights so that the power that exists within each woman is not compromised. Let the differences be accepted. To then obtain harmony with nature, caring for and preserving sustainability.

The importance of millennial therapies that survive throughout different societies and that can collaborate to free women from self-sabotage is notorious. Throughout this document, some of them will be exemplified. If the labor market follows the Cartesian mold, women and men will lose the chance to express their truth, their best, and everyone loses with it. In a healthy, balanced society, people are satisfied with their work, with the way they produce and generate wealth for themselves and for the whole. They feel responsible for something greater and feel enormous satisfaction when they realize that they are doing something truly meaningful.

But by mirroring the current model, women have begun to identify more with masculine activities and attributes, which are considered much more stimulating and challenging. This does not mean that every woman is feminine and should exalt this personal characteristic, in this case it may even be that she needs to raise her masculine potential (Yang) to find balance, for example, if she has difficulties focusing, accomplishing or even making money.

The proposal is to awaken self-love and personal power by inhabiting a female body, regardless of her gender identification, she must honor her uterus (if she has one), her cycle, her sexuality (vital energy) and her origins.

The comparison and competition that exists among women is also a reflection of this imbalance and self-sabotage, but by bringing together women willing to heal, they transform together, as well as transform their surroundings. And this is the expression of feminine authenticity: it is to rescue the feminine potential, it is to revere the love and complicity that women carry in themselves.

Just as the imposter phenomenon causes women to doubt their innate capabilities, Estés describes how women drift away from their natural instincts and gifts due to social and family repression. The search for external validation often stifles your authenticity.

In the book "Women Who Run with the Wolves", Estés suggests that women have been conditioned over time to disconnect from their instinctive strength and their authenticity due to cultural and social impositions that promote conformity and submission. This echoes the impact of gender stereotypes and the lack of validation faced by women on the imposter phenomenon.

It is in this sense that the study in question promotes the awakening of this dormant consciousness in the female collective unconscious. Inspiring women to occupy themselves is a deep and subtle way for women to reconnect with their essence and feel authentic again, free to be themselves, accepting themselves and validating their own experiences and capabilities.

## **FINAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The research aims to verify the feelings of women in different situations, therefore, it is in progress. We will present the results obtained so far, with one year of research.

When delving into the human psyche, recognizing the Being as a social individual, it is notorious that it is practically impossible to be 100% authentic even in an environment

prepared and organized for it, such as a therapeutic circle of women, for example. Social filters reveal the adequacy to the environment necessary for survival, so they are indispensable. In this sense, what really matters is to find the balance between what represents the Self and what is associated with the expectations of the other.

Being born as an object of social desire should not condition us, but rather be the path we seek to cross in order to find ourselves in a true way.

Therefore, based on Transpersonal psychology, feminine authenticity is made in the encounter with Ancestry, Cyclicity and Sexuality, which should be explored as a singular point that each woman can go through to access the balance between her single and multiple truth and her social role.

Being authentic does not mean breaking with society, but finding oneself in balance in relation to social filters and the submission that they impose on them. Liberation from self-sabotage begins from the moment a woman connects with self-knowledge and finds internal and external resources to appropriate herself and then love herself.

Regardless of how science reveals the constitution of the human psyche, it is necessary to recognize which paths to the Self make sense and should remain. What can be seen in this analysis is that there is no pattern to be explored with regard to the encounter with the Self, each woman will recognize through the expansion of consciousness the fertile soil that will sow her truth to feel happy and fulfilled.

In this sense, research on the Cultural and Psychological Roots of Female Authenticity is necessary because it sheds light on behaviors shaped by social and cultural norms and how excessive submission can disrupt women's lives, bringing patterns of self-sabotage and disconnection with their own identity.

Even if Authenticity is not something to be achieved accurately, the search for freeing oneself and then feeling comfortable to express oneself must be stimulated and deepened in therapeutic processes, taking into account the culture of submission and the devaluation of being a woman in our society.

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