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Imposter Phenomenon and Research Experiences Among Counselor Educators

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Abstract

Content analysis was employed to explore research experiences and imposter phenomenon (IP) among 25 counselor educators. Six overarching categories emerged including inconsistent areas of efficacy in the research process, supports in conducting research, barriers in conducting research, experiences of IP across roles, triggers of IP, and factors that quiet IP, with implications for counselor educators.

Keywords

Imposter phenomenon, research, counselor education

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Scholarly activity within academia is an integral component of success, as the number and quality of scholarly products are related to promotion and tenure decisions, salary merit increases, and overall achievements across both research and non-research focused universities (Eagan & Carvey, 2015; Leslie, 2002; Pfleegor et al., 2019). Therefore, it is important to understand factors that relate to scholarly productivity of counselor educators. Given the concerns that have been noted regarding the need for additional research training in doctoral programs to strengthen research knowledge and skills among counseling faculty (Wester et al., 2019), there is a prominent need to understand the factors that may impact scholarly productivity, and thus overall success, for faculty in counselor education.

Achievement goal theory highlights how individuals will either engage in behaviors that approach or avoid movement towards their goals (such as scholarly activity) due to their perceived efficacy and fear of failure (Dweck, 1986; Kumar & Jagacinski, 2006; Urdan & Kaplan, 2020). In other words, the confidence that individuals have in their ability to accomplish a task or goal influences their behaviors in working towards that goal. It is therefore unsurprising that research self-efficacy (i.e., belief in one's ability to engage in research) is positively associated with scholarly productivity in counselor educators (Wester et al., 2019). Although it is known that research self- efficacy is related to scholarly productivity, less is known regarding the influence of one's fear of failure, which also relates to whether an individual pursues or avoids their goals (Dweck, 1986; Urdan & Kaplan, 2020). Imposter phenomenon (IP) is an important construct to consider in relation to the fear of failure as it is defined as a collection of feelings including the fear of failing, being a fraud, and discrediting one's competence (Clance & Imes, 1978). In Clance and Imes' (1978) seminal work, they introduced the concept of IP in relation to individuals who

are unable to internalize success or positive feedback and display perfectionistic tendencies to compensate for insecurities (Clance & Imes, 1978).

While there are very few studies examining IP among counselor educators, the limited research available investigating IP among faculty in higher education provides valuable insight about the experience and influence of IP in academia. Although IP can have positive impacts on faculty (e.g., increased motivation), individuals who experience IP may have higher anxiety, lower job performance ratings, and lower student evaluations compared to their counterparts (Hutchins, 2015). In a critical incident study, Hutchins and Rainbolt (2017) examined triggers and coping mechanisms of IP in a small sample of academic faculty (N = 16). They identified several triggers of IP including questions of one's expertise by colleagues, self, and/or students, difficulty internalizing success, comparison with colleagues, and factors related to scholarly productivity or performance such as receiving negative feedback for grant proposals or research. Conversely, coping responses to IP included seeking social support, positive self-talk, engaging in maladaptive behaviors (e.g., alcohol consumption), and validating one's successes. Similarly, Hutchins (2015) identified that emotional exhaustion is associated with IP, whereas mentorship can help mitigate imposter feelings. Overall, common pressures of the academic culture such as aggressive competitiveness, scholarly isolation, lack of mentoring, and the value of the product over the process, may contribute to IP among faculty in higher education settings (Zorn, 2005).

Despite the extant research on IP among faculty, relatively little research has examined IP specifically among faculty in counselor education. Counselor educators are unique faculty members who serve many complex roles on a daily basis such as acting as an instructor, researcher, mentor, clinical supervisor, advocate, and leader (Wester, 2019; Woo et al., 2016).

As such, counselor education is a specialized field where IP may manifest in distinct ways in any of these roles.

Wester et al. (2020) conducted a quantitative exploration of research self-efficacy and IP among counselor educators in relation to scholarly productivity. This quantitative study was the first phase of a mixed methods study. Among counselor educators, IP interacted with research self-efficacy to influence scholarly productivity (Wester et al., 2020). Though it is known that research self-efficacy positively relates to scholarly productivity (Wester et al., 2019), Wester and colleagues (2020) revealed that research self-efficacy can serve as a buffer to IP. While in most cases feeling like an imposter decreased scholarly productivity, particularly when research self-efficacy was lower, the combination of a low to moderate amount of IP with high levels of research self-efficacy actually increased scholarly productivity (Wester et al., 2020). Yet, even when research self-efficacy was high, frequent to intense feelings of imposter phenomenon had a similar effect of decreasing scholarly productivity for counselor educators as it did for faculty with lower research self-efficacy. Because of the rich nuances of this interaction and the lack of empirical research examining the experience of IP among counselor educators in regards to research as well as other roles, the aim of the current study is to further elucidate why these relationships found in Wester et al. (2020) may exist within counselor education.

Furthermore, the findings from Wester et al. (2020) suggested the need for further research to identify areas in the research process where counselor educators feel most efficacious and areas where IP may be most impactful. Although it is known that research self-efficacy is an important component directly related to counselor educators' scholarship, there are limited empirical studies examining specific areas of the research process in which counselor educators

feel more or less efficacious. Rigorous research includes engaging in all stages of a study including the literature review, research questions, research design, analysis, results, and dissemination (Wester et al., 2013). Since different skills are needed for each stage of the research process, the current study sought to gain an understanding of counselor educators' experiences within the research process that may enhance or mitigate IP including areas of strengths, challenges, and sources of supports.

This qualitative study is the second phase of an explanatory mixed methods research design that included two distinct phases. We used an explanatory sequential design with a follow-up explanation model (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018) by initially conducting a quantitative research phase (Phase I; see Wester et al., 2020) followed by a qualitative study (Phase II) to provide more in depth understanding of our quantitative results. In Phase I, Wester et al. (2020) identified that counselor educators reported moderate levels of IP in their role as faculty. As noted above, through additional analysis, Wester and colleagues found that research self-efficacy can serve as a buffer to IP and when research self-efficacy is low, scholarly productivity becomes inversely related to IP. While this is important information, what is less known is how IP is experienced among counselor educators in relation to research efficacy and scholarly productivity, if IP is experienced in specific phases of research, and the factors that lead to IP. Additionally, it is unclear if IP exists solely in relation to the researcher role or if IP spans across other roles held by counselor educators. Therefore, the goal for this second qualitative phase of the study was to enhance our understanding of IP in relation to research and the breadth of IP across the counselor education faculty role, including faculty experiences of the research process and triggers of and supports to minimizing IP. We investigated the following research questions:

1. How do counselor educators describe IP and efficacy specifically in relation to the

research process?

2. What, generally, is the experience of IP among counselor educators?

Method

Content analysis was used in the present study to address the research questions. Content analysis was chosen because we sought to use a systematic approach to identify and document counselor educators' views and experiences (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). Data for the current study was collected as part of a two-phase mixed methods design and research was approved by the university Institutional Review Board. In Phase I, the researchers sent recruitment emails to publicly listed faculty from all CACREP accredited master's and doctoral programs (N = 2,885). Inclusion criteria included being an active faculty member in a CACREP accredited counselor education program. In total, 247 counselor educators completed an online questionnaire and participated in the large-scale survey exploring the relationship between IP, research self-efficacy, and scholarly productivity among counselor educators; additional information for Phase I can be found in Wester et al. (2020). At the end of the survey in Phase I, all participants were asked if they would be interested in completing a series of open-ended questions as part of a follow up study (Phase II) to gain more depth and experiential information regarding IP; 95 counselor educators from Phase I volunteered for Phase II. Interested participants provided their contact information. Seventeen open ended follow up questions were sent to all of the 95 counselor educators who volunteered during Phase I.

Participants

A total of 26 counselor educators participated in the online open ended follow up questions (response rate of 27.3% of the 95 volunteers from Phase I). One participant did not complete the majority of the questions and was removed from further analysis. Of the 25 useable

responses, eighteen (72%) identified as female and seven (28%) identified as male. Most participants identified their race/ethnicity as Caucasian/White (*n* = 22; 88%), with one (4%) identifying as Hispanic/Latino, one (4%) identifying as multiracial, and one (4%) identifying as African American or Black. Fifteen participants (60%) were tenure track assistant professors, four (16%) were tenured/tenure track associate professors, four (16%) were full professors, one (4%) was clinical/teaching faculty, and one (4%) was currently department chair.

Procedures and Data Analysis

Participants were sent an online survey that contained a series of 17 open-ended questions through email. The email provided an informed consent document, identifying how this phase was connected to Phase I, and a link to an online survey document with the open-ended questions. Open ended questions were developed in combination from findings from Phase I, a thorough review of the literature on IP and scholarship among faculty in higher education, and the researchers' experiences as counselor educators. Questions were developed to better discern where and when confidence versus imposter feelings were felt during the research process and to gain an understanding of participants' roles and expectations as faculty, general feelings of IP across faculty roles, and events that may trigger or quiet imposter feelings. An example of a few of the interview questions included: *What areas of the research process do you feel confident in?; Where have these feeling of being an imposter, or questioning your abilities been loudest for you in your role as a faculty member?; What tends to trigger your sense of feeling like an imposter?*

The research team consisted of two coders (first and second authors), who utilized an emergent inductive coding approach to analyze data from participants' recorded text responses to the open-ended questions. A codebook was developed to operationalize definitions and create

an initial list of categories through emergent coding (Neuendorf, 2002). Coders engaged in two rounds of pilot coding using random samples of two and three cases, respectively, until we reached strong agreement. We used SPSS (version 26) to calculate inter-rater reliability by statistically comparing researchers' codes across the pilot cases using Cohens' kappa coefficient (κ =.983). Following the pilot coding process, coders coded the remaining cases individually with high interrater reliability (overall κ = .963). To determine the final coding, the two coders discussed any discrepancies until consensus was reached.

Researchers engaged in several strategies to promote trustworthiness and rigor. First, the codebook was reviewed by an external auditor (third author) to ensure categories exhaustively represented the data, while also being mutually exclusive. Considering the auditor's feedback, the coders revised the structure and wording of themes. In addition, the coding process was recursive as coders continuously reviewed the data to support constant engagement with the text (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Finally, researchers ensured that consensus was reached in the coding process and the calculation of Cohens' kappa statistically indicated high interrater rater reliability between coders.

Results

In total, six overarching categories emerged. The first three categories directly expanded the findings of Phase I including: (a) inconsistent areas of efficacy in the research process, (b) supports in conducting research, and (c) barriers in conducting research. In addition, three additional categories emerged in relation to participants' experiences of IP across roles including: (a) experiences of IP across roles, (b) triggers of IP, and (c) factors that quiet IP, with 56 subcategories subsumed under these six superordinate categories. All subcategories are listed within Table 1.

Table 1. *Analysis by Category* (*N* = 26)

1. Inconsistent Areas of Efficacy in the Research Process					
Areas of Efficacy in Research	***n***	**%**	*Lack of Efficacy in Research*	***n***	**%**
What I was trained in	1	3.8	What I was trained in	0	0
Vision/Preplanning	9	34.6	Vision/Preplanning	2	7.7
Participant recruitment	8	30.8	Participant recruitment	2	7.7
Study design/methodology	12	46.2	Study design/methodology	4	15.4
Literature review	11	42.3	Literature Review	2	7.7
Developing a research question	16	61.5	Developing a research question	2	7.7
Quantitative data analysis	7	26.9	Quantitative data analysis	8	30.8
Qualitative data analysis	10	38.5	Qualitative data analysis	2	7.7
Data collection	11	42.3	Data collection	2	7.7
Data analysis in general	10	38.5	Data analysis in general	8	30.8
Interpreting results	8	30.8	Interpreting results	6	23.1
Writing/publication	5	19.2	Writing/publication	9	34.6
Developing connection with community	1	3.8	Developing connections with community	3	11.5
2. Supports in Conducting Research	***n***	**%**	**3. Barriers in Conducting Research**	***n***	**%**
Collaboration with others in general	11	42.3	Other job demands/lack of time	11	42.3
Editorial support	13	50	Lack of mentorship/support	4	15.4
Mentorship	5	19.2	Journal submission process	2	7.7
Preference to work collaboratively	21	80.8	Co-authors or team	3	11.5
Preference to work alone	1	3.8			
Preference to work both collaboratively & alone	4	15.4			
Collaborations: strengths/weaknesses	12	46.2			
Collaborations: deadlines/schedule	8	30.8			
Collaborations: positive relationships	3	11.5			

Table 1. (Continued)

4. Experiences of Imposter Phenomenon Across Roles	***n***	**%**	**5. Triggers of Imposter Phenomenon**	***n***	**%**
Presence of IP	21	80.8	Academic environment that fosters IP	6	23.1
IP in Research	18	69.2	Not knowing something	11	42.3
IP in Teaching	12	46.2	Feeling overwhelmed	2	7.7
IP in Service	6	23.1	Comparing self with peers	3	11.5
IP in Leadership	3	11.5	Comparing self with perceived authority	8	30.8
Lack of confidence rather than IP	1	3.8	Criticism from peers	4	15.4
Feeling inadequate	13	50	Criticism from those with more experience	1	3.8
Fear that others would “find out”	4	15.4	Critical journal reviews or rejections	5	19.2
Describes IP as normative growth process	5	19.2	Tenure process	5	19.2
IP negatively impacts career goals	10	38.5	Being new as counselor educator	8	30.8
IP positively impacts career goals	3	11.5			

6. Factors that Quiet Imposter Phenomenon	***n***	**%**
Supportive relationships with others	11	42.3
Mentorship	5	19.2
Accolades or recognition from others	3	11.5
Comparing self with perceived experts	1	3.8
Seeing results or successes	9	34.6
Time and experience	5	19.2
Encouragement or positive feedback from peers	3	11.5
Encouragement or positive feedback from well-known scholars in the field	1	3.8
Comfort with authenticity	3	11.5

Inconsistent Areas of Efficacy in the Research Process

This category emerged across all 25 participants and included specific aspects of the research process (e.g., developing a research question through completion and publication of a study) in which participants felt efficacious as well as areas in which they questioned their abilities. Thirteen subcategories were included within this category. Overall, participants greatly varied in areas they felt more or less efficacious in research, with little consistency across results. Of note, three areas of the research process were identified by a roughly equal number of participants as either an area they felt efficacious in or as areas they questioned their abilities, including interpreting results (30.8% felt efficacious; 23.1% lacked efficacy), data analysis in general (38.5% felt efficacious; 30.8% lacked efficacy), and quantitative data analysis (26.9% felt efficacious; 30.8% lacked efficacy).

Most participants identified confidence in developing a research question (61.5% felt efficacious), followed by study design and research methodology (46.5% felt efficacious), literature review (42.3% felt efficacious), and data collection (42.3% felt efficacious). As one participant noted, "I feel confident in developing a research question, designing the study, data collection." Slightly more respondents identified confidence in qualitative analysis as compared to quantitative analysis. Participants identified additional areas of confidence including vision or preplanning for a research study ("I feel most confident with the vision") and participant recruitment or working with participants ("developing and following through with a sampling plan"). Areas of confidence that were relatively rare in responses, but were noted for a few participants, included writing/publications ("manuscript preparation"; 19.2% felt efficacious; 34.6% lacked efficacy), developing research connections with the community ("building community relationships"; 3.9% felt efficacious; 11.5% lacked efficacy) and confidence in their

research training (3.8% felt efficacious). As one participant noted, “I feel confident to do the kind of research I was trained to do.”

Conversely, participants identified specific areas of the research process in which they felt less efficacious – while a few participants did note that they felt efficacious in some of these areas, more participants indicated these were areas they felt lower in research self-efficacy and/or felt like an imposter (see Table 1). Overall, writing/publication was the most frequently mentioned aspect of the research process in which counselor educators felt less confident. For example, participants described how they question their ability “to provide a meaningful write-up of the study” and had concerns regarding “writing to specific outlets.” The second most common area participants’ questioned their abilities was in quantitative data analysis. For example, participants reported they questioned their ability with “analyzing data (setting it up correctly)” or “high level data analysis.” However, as noted above, roughly equal number of participants indicated quantitative data analysis as an area they felt confident in. Additional areas of the research process that participants mentioned less frequently in relation to their lack of confidence included study design and research methodology (“understanding how to design studies that use statistical procedures”; 15.4% lacked efficacy) and interpreting results of a study (23.1% lacked efficacy). Of note, relatively few participants mentioned questioning their abilities in several beginning aspects of the research process including developing a research question, conducting a literature review (“after the articles are collected, I struggle to read through and organize them in a helpful fashion”), and having a vision or preplanning for a research study.

Supports in Conducting Research

The second category, Supports in Conducting Research, emerged among all 25

participants and included various sources of support that participants found beneficial throughout the research process. This category included nine subcategories. Overall, multiple participants identified collaboration with others in general as an important source of support when conducting and preparing a research project for publication. As one participant noted, "I have never written anything without co-authors…so I think the help of peers is my best support." The overwhelming majority of participants reported a notable preference to work collaboratively with others throughout the research process ("I feel very unprepared when it comes to taking this task on alone") or preference to work both collaboratively and alone on various projects ("For every project I collaborate on, I try to identify two projects on my own"). Participants also noted that they preferred to work collaboratively for a variety of specific reasons including collaboration to balance each other's strengths and weaknesses and collaboration to help stay accountable in regard to deadlines and schedules for the research process. For instance, one participant noted, "[research team members] hold me accountable to what we have agreed to do plus we can benefit from each other's strengths." Additionally, three participants reported that working collaboratively allowed them to build positive relationships with others. As one participant described, "I think the relational aspect of co-researching is fun." Participants also identified additional sources of support including mentorship ("I can always call/text my research mentor if I feel stuck") and receiving editorial support ("I have my manuscript reviewed by someone else for clarity").

Barriers in Conducting Research

Conversely, 13 of 25 participants mentioned barriers in conducting research which included challenges they faced within the research process, project completion, and research productivity. This category included four subcategories. Almost half of the participants

identified that other job demands and/or lack of time hindered their ability to focus on research. For example, participants described the difficulty of "finding the time to write" or "the demands in this position for teaching and service are higher." Additionally, participants mentioned challenges in the journal submission process itself ("poor or critical reviewers, selecting a journal outlet, length of time in the review process"). Several participants also described that a lack of mentorship or support from others in the research process was a barrier. For instance, one participant reported, "I didn't have a research mentor…but, I am certain I could have (and still could) benefitted from a more senior faculty giving me tips along the way." Interestingly, a couple of participants identified challenges with collaborative research, and specifically noted that co-authors or teams are sometimes barriers to publication and research project completion. For example, one participant noted the challenge, "when co-authors don't fulfill their responsibilities." Notably, one participant solely preferred to work alone on research projects because working collaboratively "takes a long time to get our schedules to 'sync' and I feel pressured to make sure I have articles for tenure."

Experiences of Imposter Phenomenon Across Roles

This fourth category emerged across 22 out of 25 participants who described their various experiences of IP (or lack thereof), areas of their work where they felt like an imposter, and description of IP. This category included eleven subcategories.

Overall, most participants reported the presence of imposter feelings. Participants noted, "many times I have felt like an imposter. I feel like I live up to the saying that those who can't - teach," and "It is common to wake-up and think, 'what the *&# am I doing?'". Of note, one participant reported feeling a lack of confidence but did not identify with IP. He described, "I have felt a lack of confidence at times in my roles…however, I do know I have a solid

clinical background and excellent education to be working in these various roles." Participant responses were most likely to identify IP in the area of research (69.2%) followed by teaching (46.2%) and service (23.1%). For example, participants described, "I avoid certain types of research because I don't think I can do them well," while other participants identified other roles, like teaching, "[I feel IP in] teaching especially related to getting some mediocre teaching evaluations and feeling like I should be doing better at this." Three participant responses (11.5%) identified leadership roles as a separate and unique area where they felt like imposters ("I also do not feel qualified to hold leadership").

For participants, the most common IP experience was feeling inadequate or insecure. Half of participants described experiences where they felt inadequate in their role or abilities. For example, participants described how "feelings of 'not good enough' and shame regularly surface" or "I won a research award this past year, and I totally feel as though I didn't deserve it." Additionally, several participants described a fear that others would "find out" that they were inadequate. As one participated noted, "I have always felt like people will eventually figure out that I'm not as smart as they once thought." Overall, a little less than half of participants reported that IP negatively impacted their career goals ("I believe I could have been more productive and possibly taken more risks if I had believed that I was not an imposter"), whereas only three participants reported that IP positively impacted their career through pushing past their feelings and motivating them to work harder towards success. As one participant described, "I have been able to work through [imposter feelings] when they come up and I try to leverage them to help motivate me." Moreover, approximately a third of participants described IP as a normative growth process. Participants stated, "I honestly think a little dose of feeling like an imposter is healthy as it keeps me humble, in check and holds me accountable" and "I think it's normal to

feel like an imposter at times, as long as those feelings do not interfere with my ability to complete a project."

Triggers of Imposter Phenomenon

The next category emerged in 19 out of the 25 participants who described situations, events, and contributing factors that triggered or exacerbated their feelings of IP. This category included ten subcategories. Just under half of the participants identified that a perceived lack of knowledge triggered imposter feelings ("during teaching when students have difficult questions") and two participants reported feeling like an imposter when they were feeling overwhelmed. Additionally, several participants described that being new to the counselor educator role contributed to IP. For example, one participant described that she is, "the youngest and newest faculty member in a department of…full professors, so it is daunting to see what they have done." Approximately one third of participants felt like an imposter when they compared themselves with those in perceived authority or with more experience (i.e., professors of higher rank, well-known scholars in the field). For example, one participant noted that IP is triggered when "comparing myself to other people especially leaders in the field (kind of like how Facebook makes people feel bad about themselves)." Similarly, participants identified that imposter feelings emerged when they compared self with peers ("I am often comparing myself to others and struggle with accepting myself for who I am") or when they are criticized by peers ("[other counselors] discounted my (very relevant and doable) ideas…and I then felt very small and incapable"). One female participant also identified that IP is triggered when she receives criticism from those who have more experience or are in a perceived positions of power ("older men who have a higher rank than me").

At the broader level, a number of participants identified specific academic environments that trigger IP, often in relation to the culture of their program or department. For example, participants described several environmental triggers such as, "[imposter feelings] had to do with the scholarly environment I was in and the way other professors put down any research that wasn't like their own." Moreover, participants identified that critical journal review or rejections ("a critical editor who told me I can't write") and the tenure process can trigger imposter feelings.

Factors that Quiet Imposter Phenomenon

The final category emerged from 19 of the 25 participants and included participants' descriptions of the multiple experiences and factors that helped diminish imposter feelings. This category included nine subcategories. Supportive relationships with others (including colleagues, families, and friends) were the most commonly reported factors that helped quiet IP. For example, participants described how imposter feelings were quieted with "people sincerely believing in me—I'm grateful that I have some wonderful cheerleaders in my life" and "voicing those feelings with trusted others." Similarly, a few participants reported that encouragement and positive feedback from peers helped quiet IP ("hearing from other faculty member I am doing a 'good job'"), whereas one participant identified that receiving encouragement and positive feedback from well-known scholars in the field helped minimize imposter feelings.

Participants also described that IP is quieted when they receive accolades or recognition from others ("[when] a younger scholar…read my work and they admired it or it meant a lot to them"). Another factor that helped diminish imposter feelings included mentorship. For example, participants stated that their IP was quieted by "having mentors who have seniority share they've also felt like an imposter" or receiving "positive feedback from mentors." Additional factors that

quieted IP included seeing results or success in their work ("I keep some letters from former students that are very encouraging in my office where I can see them when I am feeling especially like an imposter"), time and experience in the counselor educator role, and comparing self with perceived experts and feeling as though they measure up ("I remember thinking 'okay, if [a reputable doctor] thought of this, and I thought of this then I'm doing something right!"). It is interesting to note that several participants described the importance of authenticity. Specifically, they described the importance of feeling comfortable with authenticity, which helped buffer imposter feelings. As one participant stated, "I don't over sell who I am and hope that I am transparent and authentic…I have never tried to be something I am not."

Discussion and Implications

The current study sought to enhance our understanding of IP among counselor educators specifically within the research process and in general across their role as faculty. Considering that fear of failure and perceived efficacy relate to whether an individual pursues or avoids their goals (Dweck, 1986; Urdan & Kaplan, 2020), identifying areas where counselor educators feel more or less efficacious in the research process can illuminate where IP emerges in the research process and expand our understanding of how IP may interact with research self-efficacy (see Wester et al., 2020), as well as other roles counselor educators have as faculty.

Overall, research was the most frequently identified role where counselor educators felt IP. Further, the most frequently cited aspects of the research process where participants questioned their ability were data analysis, interpretation and writing up a study for publication. Therefore, more counselor educators may feel efficacious around the beginning stage of research, with less efficacy around analyses and dissemination. These finding relate to the Phase I results, identifying that low research self-efficacy coupled with any level of IP resulted in

decreased scholarly productivity (Wester et al., 2020). For example, if counselor educators lack confidence in writing and publishing their findings, it is likely their scholarly productivity will suffer. This also seems to align with the barriers to conducting research category, with counselor educators identifying lack of time or other job demands as a counselor educator getting in the way of finding time to write. While this may be true, it can also be understood through the lens of achievement goal theory, where faculty may be consciously (or unconsciously) avoiding engaging in analyzing and writing given the lower levels of efficacy they may feel about this portion of the research process.

However, the inconsistency in responses related to where counselor educators felt efficacious versus lacking efficacy suggests there is no "one size fits all" in terms of the research process for counselor educators. Given the increasing expectations for research productivity in higher education and the need to 'publish or perish' (Eagan & Garvey, 2015; Moosa, 2018), this finding highlights that there are many critical aspects in research where counselor educators may question their abilities, potentially leading to lower productivity. When this lower level of efficacy is paired with the feeling of being an imposter, then counselor educators may avoid engaging in research, diminishing the number of scholarly products they produce (Wester et al., 2020). Thus, identifying the unique areas in the research process where individual counselor educators may question their abilities, sheds light on specific research skills that may be important to address through professional development and/or enhanced research training in order to increase research self-efficacy among faculty.

Counselor educators also identified several factors that supported them throughout the research process, such as mentorship, colleagues, and supportive relationships, highlighting important sources of support that may aid productivity and the development of research skills in

counselor educators. This finding provides valuable insight regarding contextual and relational factors that may support research activities of counselor educators and explain how moderate to frequent level of IP can positively interact with high research self-efficacy (Wester et al., 2020). Many participants described supportive factors in relation to countering their weaknesses. For example, participants described how working collaboratively with others was helpful because it balanced each others strengths and limitations. Therefore, aligned with previous research, it appears that encouragement, support, and reassurance from colleagues, friends, and mentors can support the development of a positive researcher identity (Lamar & Helm, 2017).

Since pressures in academic culture can enhance IP among faculty (Zorn, 2005), the areas of supports and barriers of the research process that were identified by faculty in the present study can inform counselor education practices. For example, peer collaborations, mentorship, and manuscript editing may support research productivity, accountability, and positive relationships among colleagues. Moreover, finding the right team for research collaborations, seeking out a research mentor, and requesting support from seasoned colleagues regarding the journal submission process may help overcome barriers to research productivity.

While most participants experienced imposter phenomenon in research, additional data emerged regarding their experience of IP across the faculty role including teaching, service, and leadership. This highlights that IP can emerge across all aspects of counselor educators' work and there is a need to explore IP across the variety of roles that counselor educators are expected to serve. Participants' description of IP and IP triggers across roles, including feeling inadequate, fear that others would 'find out', triggers in the academic environment, being new to the faculty role, receiving journal rejections or critical feedback, and comparing self with others, are consistent with descriptions of IP among faculty in higher education across fields (Clance &

Imes, 1978; Fitzgerald, 2018; Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017; Zorn, 2005). Fitzgerald (2018) also highlighted the need to mentor and support those new to a role, such as assistant level faculty, which aligns with what counselor educators in the current study identified in the variety of factors that may help quiet imposter feelings such as fostering supportive relationships, seeking mentorship, and identifying areas of success. It seems that proximal informal sources of support (e.g., colleagues, mentors) can aid faculty in their identity development and help them process emotions and cognitions related to imposter feelings (Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017; Jarvis-Selinger et al., 2012). Therefore, counseling program directors and chairs might consider fostering faculty development initiatives, such as intentional mentorship programs for new faculty or facilitating group discussions surrounding academic pressures and faculty stressors (Hutchins, 2015). Initiatives that encourage collaboration and support among faculty colleagues may be valuable tools to support educators as they navigate the pressures common in academia (Eagan & Garvey, 2015).

Interestingly, data supports that IP can either hinder or support research productivity and success, expanding the findings from the Phase I quantitative analysis (Wester et al., 2020). While almost half of participants described the ways that IP negatively impacted their career goals, several participants conversely viewed IP as a normative growth experience. Specifically, some counselor educators identified that they were able to channel IP feelings to motivate productivity. This double-sided impact of IP described by participants is consistent with Wester et al. (2020) who found that scholarly productivity declined with greater feelings of IP among counselor educators; however, moderate levels of IP coupled with high research self-efficacy led to high scholarly productivity. Thus, IP in moderation can be viewed as a motivating factor that may support, rather than hinder, counselor educators' scholarly productivity – but only when

a strong belief in one's research abilities exist. Therefore, it may be important to intentionally identify deficits in both research self-efficacy and IP, which may be addressed in different and intentional ways. For example, low research self-efficacy could be addressed through research mentorship, opportunities for professional development relating to rigorous research, and improved research training in counselor education programs (e.g., support research identity development, faculty support, opportunities to conduct research; Lamar & Helm, 2017). Conversely, counselor educators with high levels of IP might benefit from outside therapy, supportive mentorship, and open dialogue with colleagues to enhance self-awareness and develop intentional strategies to quiet IP feelings. It is important for faculty who experience IP to obtain both formal and informal support such as job feedback from department chairs and on-going support from colleagues and peers (Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2015).

Overall, understanding both the positive potential of IP as a motivational factor as well as the potential detrimental consequences can assist counselor educators in managing IP experiences. Counselor educator colleagues can support each other by validating, normalizing, and processing feelings of IP with each other, which has been noted as a valuable strategy for coping with IP (Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2017; Hutchins & Rainbolt, 2015). Moreover, tenured faculty could share their knowledge and experiences of IP with un-tenured faculty to support them in viewing IP as a developmental growth feeling.

Limitations and Future Research

Although this research contributes to the current literature regarding IP among counselor educators, several limitations should be noted. First, although the small sample provides emerging data regarding counselor educators' experiences, it is not exhaustive. Most participants identified as female and White/Caucasian; therefore, it is unknown if similar

experiences may exist among other populations of counselor educators. Researchers should further examine if unique experiences of IP may vary across gender identity, races/ethnicities, and counselor educators of color. Second, all data was self-report information and IP was not measured through a formal assessment. Thus, information obtained pertains to participants' personal viewpoints and understanding of IP and may not holistically reflect the IP construct. Third, overall themes and experiences were developed from a sample of both pre-tenure and tenured faculty; however, less is known if responses may have differed in a more homogeneous sample of either all pre-tenured or all tenured faculty members. Future research would benefit from identifying potential nuances between experiences of IP among tenured versus pre-tenured faculty.

Future research should continue to explore research productivity among counselor educators and determine possible mediating roles of factors such as mentorship, research teams, and supportive relationships. Finally, given the paucity of research exploring IP among counselor educators, further inductive inquiry may gain more in-depth information in regard to counselor educators experiences of IP triggers and factors that help quiet IP in order to lay the foundation for additional large-scale analysis and measurement of IP across counselor educator rank, gender, ethnicity, and type of institution.

Conclusion

Given the increasing pressures for scholarly productivity in higher education, counselor educators must learn to effectively balance their roles in teaching and service while simultaneously maintain an active and successful research agenda. However, challenges such as lack of research self-efficacy and IP can be barriers to scholarly productivity. The current study investigated research experiences and the experience of IP across faculty roles among

counselor educators to better understand this phenomenon. Findings provide valuable information regarding identified supports, barriers, and triggers that influence IP. Results can be used to support counselor educators who face the academic pressures of serving as researchers, educators, supervisors, and leaders in the counseling field.

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