

Entry

# New Organization Heights—The Impostor’s Impostor Syndrome

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**Definition:** A conceptual exploration of contrasting psychological phenomena—overconfidence, as exemplified by the Dunning–Kruger Effect (DKE), and self-doubt, represented by impostor syndrome—within organizational contexts. It examines how these biases shape individual behavior, team dynamics, and organizational performance, highlighting the interplay between competence miscalibration and the undervaluation of one’s skills. The article further explores the societal, psychological, and familial origins of these syndromes, proposing implications for leadership and workplace productivity.

**Keywords:** Dunning–Kruger Effect; impostor syndrome; overconfidence; organizational dynamics; leadership biases

## 1. Introduction

The workplace is a complex setting in which individual skill and self-perception are critical in creating team dynamics, productivity, and organizational success.

In corporate culture and leadership dynamics, overconfidence may significantly influence team cooperation, creativity, and decision-making. When overconfidence is common among leaders or supported by organizational norms, it can have a domino effect that diminishes long-term success, credibility, and adaptability.

Although confidence is an essential requirement for leadership, overconfidence, which is defined as an excessive sense of self-assurance, blurs the line between making well-informed decisions and acting autocratic. Leaders with this inclination frequently act on intuition, rejecting the team brainstorming processes required to address certain issues.

At its root, the Dunning–Kruger Effect (DKE) is caused by a lack of self-awareness, which prevents individuals from recognizing their own inadequacy. This mismatch might show in the workplace when employees impose themselves on responsibilities or decisions for which they are unprepared. On an organizational level, such behavior is concerning since it has the potential to overshadow the contributions of better equipped but less assertive individuals. Kruger and Dunning [1] show how this bias affects self-assessment, resulting in inflated perceptions of competence. Individuals who are unable to appropriately assess their performance because of a lack of metacognitive awareness bear a “double burden”. According to Kruger and Dunning [1], incompetent employees are not only ignorant of their shortcomings but also overconfident in their skills.

The Dunning–Kruger Effect highlights overconfidence in less skilled individuals, but its opposite, impostor syndrome, often impacts top achievers in organizations. Highly competent employees may undervalue their own abilities because they believe their coworkers are equally skilled or because they believe their achievement is unmerited. According to



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Dunning [2], this contradiction produces a difficult work environment where competent people may under-assert their contributions and overconfident employees may dominate.

The Dunning–Kruger Effect can cause overconfident leaders to disregard professional advice, make ill-informed judgments, or pursue unrealistically high goals without conducting an accurate evaluation. Strategic mistakes can lead to financial losses, damage to the individual's reputation, and a decline in employee morale among those entrusted with carrying out poorly thought-out projects.

Employees who overestimate their abilities could offer to perform more work than they can perform, pulling resources away from more competent team members; they might also take on a high-profile project without the necessary skills and produce inferior quality results, necessitating the intervention of others to fix it. Inefficient resource allocation increases workloads for competent staff, causes project delays, and diminishes overall productivity.

Overconfident employees often refuse constructive criticism because they believe it is irrelevant or inconsistent with their self-perception. This resistance limits skill development and promotes stagnation.

Employees that are overconfident may dominate conversations, disregard others' opinions, or impact team cohesion by overvaluing their abilities. Competent employees, on the other hand, may withdraw because they believe their contributions are being undervalued. This dynamic decreases collaboration and psychological safety, which restricts creativity and lowers team performance [3].

Employees impacted by the Dunning–Kruger Effect lack the self-awareness required to appropriately evaluate their competencies. This divergence is typically caused by insufficient exposure to feedback systems or a lack of training in reflective practices [4] (Schön, 1987). Employees in organizations may overestimate their talents and abilities based on limited successes or narrow expertise.

When overconfident employees control decision-making processes, other individual's viewpoints tend to be overlooked. This stifles innovation and results in inferior outcomes since key insights from more capable team members are disregarded [5].

Highly qualified individuals may feel dissatisfied with the lack of recognition or opportunities to contribute effectively to workplaces dominated by overconfident colleagues. This frustration frequently leads to disengagement and turnover, resulting in the loss of significant talent [6].

## 2. The Overestimation Problem and Its Build-Up on Overconfident Employees

The Dunning–Kruger Effect is characterized by overestimation of abilities by individuals with limited competence, which results from deficits in metacognition—the ability to reflect on, analyze, and regulate one's cognitive processes [Supplementary Materials]. Metacognition is defined as “thinking about thinking” or being aware of and understanding one's own mental processes. It has two major components:

Knowledge of cognition highlights understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses, as well as the nature of tasks. Cognition regulation refers to the ability to organize, monitor, and regulate cognitive activities to achieve certain goals.

Metacognitive deficiencies impede individuals from appropriately evaluating their own knowledge or performance. Those with limited competence lack the critical insight required to identify their flaws, resulting in exaggerated self-perceptions [1].

Metacognitive deficits lead to illusory superiority, which occurs when individuals believe they are above average despite evidence to the contrary. The skills required to perform a task successfully are often similar as those needed to accurately evaluate performance [2].

Individuals without these evaluative skills are unable to notice errors, knowledge gaps, or task difficulty.

Individuals with limited competence carry out jobs ineffectively because they lack the necessary abilities or knowledge. They are unable to appropriately assess their performance due to the same deficiencies that impair task execution [1]. And because they interpret their poor performance as competence, this cycle feeds into overconfidence.

A lack of exposure to feedback or an inability to successfully integrate it increases metacognitive deficiencies. Individuals rely on their faulty self-evaluations in the absence of constructive criticism, which feeds the overestimation cycle [4].

Decisions made by those with metacognitive deficiencies are more likely to be based on incorrect or incomplete self-perceptions. This may result in mistakes, inefficiency, and lost chances. When someone cannot see their flaws, they have less drive to improve themselves. They are unwilling to invest in education or training if they think they are already competent.

Individuals with high levels of skill are so familiar with their field that they do not realize how much work and knowledge it takes to get there. According to Kruger and Dunning [1], this gives the impression that things that are simple for them must also be simple for others. These types of experts in their field tend to underestimate the time and effort required to obtain their expertise because they forget the learning curve they went through. They may also underestimate the uniqueness of their abilities by assuming they are common. This is especially true in technical or creative sectors where ability or talent are important. These individuals might fail to properly negotiate for their talents in professional settings or minimize their contributions in team settings [7].

They are less inclined to acknowledge their competence since they tend to focus on areas in which they are still inexperienced. In contrast, individuals who have lower skill levels might not even be aware of their knowledge gaps [1].

The tendency to underestimate their talents is consistent with impostor syndrome, in which capable, skillful individuals fear being discovered as frauds. This builds the belief that their abilities are not extraordinary [8]. These highly competent individuals who underestimate their abilities may struggle to effectively express their value, resulting in missed chances for professional advancement and organizational contributions [7].

Teams may fail to realize the full potential of highly competent people if they undervalue their abilities, affecting overall performance and innovation. They also tend to concentrate disproportionately on improving areas in which they lack confidence, failing to capitalize on what they already know, their abilities and their skills. While humility can inspire a desire for ongoing growth, it can also lead to undervaluation of their achievements and missed opportunities for recognition.

Overconfident employees resort to a sense of superiority, believing that their abilities outperform those of their colleagues. This bias can lead them to accept responsibilities that are beyond their abilities, expecting to perform as well as or better than their more experienced colleagues [1].

Employees with insufficient experience or competence may volunteer for tasks that require advanced abilities, believing they can “figure it out” as they go. While initiative is important, overestimation can lead to delays, errors, and mediocre results.

Unrealistic promises made to clients or superiors due to overconfidence can result in unfulfilled expectations and damage to the organization’s and the individual’s reputations.

When employees take on tasks beyond their capabilities, they may require more time and resources to fulfill them—or fail completely. This lowers overall productivity and efficiency as other team members may be required to step in to fix errors or complete unfinished work, diverting attention away from their core responsibilities.

Overconfident employees can restrict the contributions of more skilled team members, making them feel overshadowed or devalued. Teams may miss out on new ideas or productive approaches because skilled staff members are not given the opportunity to lead.

Individuals who are overconfident may pursue tactics based on their inadequate understanding, assuming they have all the information required for success. These tactics may ignore crucial variables, resulting in mediocre results or even considerable losses.

Individuals affected by the Dunning–Kruger Effect may also overestimate the success or plausibility of their decisions, resulting in unreasonable expectations. This can lead to wasted resources, unmet goals, and frustration among stakeholders.

Individuals are more inclined to misinterpret their level of knowledge when dealing with more difficult problems. Overconfidence in such situations might result in oversimplified solutions that do not address fundamental and underlying concerns [1].

Overconfident leaders may use their power to push their decisions through, even if others in the organization see possible issues. Power dynamics may discourage subordinates from questioning these judgments, worsening the situation [5].

Cultures that value decisiveness over deliberation may unintentionally create overconfidence, since employees may feel obliged to move rapidly without properly analyzing their knowledge or consulting others. Overconfident decision-makers are also more inclined to take unnecessary risks, minimizing potential challenges or failures.

Overconfident individuals tend to dominate talks because they believe their perspective is more valuable than others'. This often silences quieter team members and reduces the range of ideas expressed during talks, limiting potential for collaborative problem solving and innovation. Other team members may feel sidelined or undervalued, resulting in disengagement [3].

Employees who are overconfident are more likely to display confirmation bias, supporting their own ideas and rejecting opposing viewpoints [9]. Such behavior discourages collaboration and leads to a hierarchical dynamic in conversations. Multiple perspectives are overlooked, resulting in decisions that do not cover the full scope of a problem. Colleagues' perceptions that their contributions are not valued lowers team morale.

Overconfident individuals may undermine or disregard other people's efforts to reaffirm their apparent superiority. This might range from subtle criticism to outright rejection of another's contributions. This creates a toxic work environment marked by distrust and competitiveness, reduces collaboration, and breeds resentment among team members [3].

Competent employees, on the other hand, commonly downplay their talents and avoid participating in debates over the fear of appearing inadequate or incorrect. This behavior is commonly associated with impostor syndrome, in which people credit achievement to external factors such as luck rather than their own abilities [8].

Skilled individuals may hesitate to communicate their thoughts for fear of being judged or dismissed. This hesitancy may deprive the team of crucial ideas and insights. Despite their absence of expertise and knowledge, the more vocal members tend to be the ones to dominate team discussions [3].

Persistent self-doubt or a lack of appreciation might cause skilled staff members to disengage, believing that their contributions are insignificant, which limits their prospects for growth and development. For companies, this dynamic presents a two-fold difficulty:

- Overconfidence, which results in dominance, ideas excluded, and errors in judgment.
- Hesitation, which results in underuse of ability and missed chances for innovation.

These actions taken together lower corporate productivity and compromise team effectiveness.

Employees who have excelled in somewhat easy or straightforward activities could mistakenly believe that their abilities apply to more difficult challenges. This misjudg-

ing results from a lack of appreciation of the subtleties and complexity of advanced operations [9].

When other employees must fix errors brought on by an overly confident employee, they could become frustrated or resentful. According to Edmondson [3], this can make individuals lose trust and choose to work less collectively.

### 3. Growing up to Be the Perfect Employee

Early family-related interactions often serve as the source of the development of overconfidence without a strong foundation in competence. These relationships influence how a child views themselves, their belief systems, and their attitudes toward success and competence.

Children may develop a false sense of superiority if their families constantly compliment them on their achievements, regardless of their actual worth. By separating praise from effort and success, children may think they are naturally great, no matter of their actual performance [10].

Feedback tends to be more positive in such families, with parents avoiding criticism to preserve the child's self-esteem. Children who do not receive constructive criticism may not develop the self-awareness necessary to recognize and correct their own weaknesses.

This dynamic makes individual's self-perceptions unstable because they keep their confidence up by rejecting or avoiding feedback that goes against their inflated perception of themselves.

Overprotective parents may step in to make sure their children do not fail or struggle, which can mean they miss out on chances to become resilient and develop a healthy and realistic sense of self-worth [11]. These children grow up linking ease with ability, exaggerating their abilities in areas where they have never confronted true difficulties.

Parents who are too protective keep their children from learning the link between effort, ability, and results by keeping them from experiencing the natural consequences of their actions. This can lead to the false belief that success comes easy or in an automatic way.

In households with many children, parents may inadvertently compare siblings, highlighting the superiority of one child in particular areas. This may cause the preferred child to internalize a perception of inherent skill or intelligence, regardless of whether these qualities are exaggerated.

When a child is consistently favorably compared, they may prioritize sustaining this apparent superiority above genuine self-improvement. This may lead to an overestimation of abilities that is not supported by consistent effort or growth.

Children frequently imitate the attitudes and behaviors of their caretakers. When parents display overconfidence by exaggerating their capabilities or disregarding feedback, children can mimic these behaviors. Overconfident parents may prioritize superficial indicators of achievement, such as grades or awards, rather than actual knowledge or competence.

Maintaining a positive image, professionalism, and trustworthiness is essential in both personal and professional areas. However, when the emphasis on appearance takes priority over true understanding, skill development, or authenticity, a few challenges might arise. When the focus is on external indicators of success, like grades, awards, or social standing, children might not have the depth of knowledge or abilities needed to maintain success over the long run. They might learn to "play the game" to obtain results instead of developing the skills they will need for future challenges [6].

Children may do well in short-term tasks, like obtaining good grades on a test, but not so well with more difficult tasks that come up in real life and require them to think critically, solve problems, and be adaptable.

When external validation becomes the main factor that motivates effort, the foundation for future successes is insufficient and fragile. Mistakes and setbacks, which are necessary components of growth, might be ignored to maintain the illusion of competence.

Children may often struggle to overcome obstacles and disappointments because they develop a fear of failing. Those who are not resilient may give up under pressure when faced with situations where appearances alone cannot sustain success.

Some families have great expectations of their children to succeed without offering the knowledge, guidance, or feedback required to meet those goals. Children growing up in such surroundings may grow overconfident as a coping method, masking emotions of inadequacy with self-assurance.

Parents who favor external markers of success—such as awards or public recognition—may unintentionally encourage their children to put appearances above real competence. This can result in an overemphasis on displaying confidence rather than developing knowledge and skills.

Children may develop a distorted perception of themselves in homes where parents are inconsistent in their praise and criticism. As a coping mechanism, they may rely on their self-confidence to stabilize their identity and defend their self-esteem.

These children might focus on displaying their strengths or what they think are their wins instead of evaluating where they are lacking.

Parents who fail to teach emotional intelligence or self-regulation risk raising children who associate confidence with achievement. These children may resort to inflated self-esteem as a defense mechanism as they lack the cognitive capacity to examine their feelings and actions.

Confidence is commonly associated with charisma and the capacity to take chances, both of which can help achieve goals. However, when confidence is overemphasized or equated with achievement, it raises several psychological, social, and organizational concerns.

The interaction of parental effects, with one parent displaying the Dunning–Kruger Effect and the other experiencing impostor syndrome, generates a unique and often conflicting setting for the development of a child. The contrasting models of self-perception—overconfidence and self-doubt—can significantly influence a child’s cognitive, emotional, and behavioral tendencies, which will eventually arise in personal and professional settings.

Parents with the DKE are inclined to ignore their limitations and overstate their capabilities [1]. They model behavior that values confidence over ability, often encouraging boldness without the foundation of skill or knowledge. On the contrary, a parent with impostor syndrome consistently doubts their abilities despite evidence of success, frequently attributing accomplishments to luck or external factors [8]. This parent’s conduct highlights humility and perfectionism; however, it may inadvertently develop a fear of failure in their child.

A child who is reared in such an environment is likely to be exposed to a duality of extremes: a parent who overvalues their abilities and another who undervalues them. With limited or no guidance on how to achieve a balance between the two, this leads to a perplexing environment of expectations where ability and confidence are either overestimated or underestimated.

The child may experience an oscillating sense of self-esteem, which is influenced by the impostor syndrome parent’s self-doubt and the DKE parent’s emphasis on confidence. This conflict may be noticed in the form of a fluctuating self-perception, in which they

occasionally exhibit boldness despite lacking sufficient expertise, and at other times feel undeserving or inadequate, regardless of their actual competence [12].

The child may develop perfectionistic tendencies, striving to meet exceedingly high standards, because of the impostor syndrome parent. Simultaneously, the DKE parent's influence may induce overconfidence, resulting in them overcommitting or taking risks without completely evaluating their readiness [1,8].

The contradictory parental influences may result in an inconsistent response to feedback. The DKE parent teaches the child to resist criticism, considering it as unimportant or invalid. They inherit a hypersensitivity to criticism from their impostor syndrome parent, which they see as proof of their incompetence. This combination may result in an excessively critical or defensive response to constructive feedback [13].

Alternatively, the child might develop adaptability as a coping tool for dealing with inconsistent parental models. This resilience allows individuals to attain a balance between confidence and humility, resulting in more nuanced self-awareness and interpersonal skills in adulthood. They may succeed in careers requiring diplomacy or problem-solving because they may draw on both extremes to achieve balance and equilibrium [13].

When these individuals enter professional settings, how they were raised shapes how they communicate, make decisions, and lead. They may appear confident in public while secretly doubting their abilities. This contradiction may push individuals to overcompensate with meticulous planning and effort, resulting in strong performance but maybe at the expense of stress or burnout [12].

Their ability to maintain a balance between boldness and caution can make them good leaders or collaborators, if they develop self-awareness. Without this awareness, individuals risk overestimating their abilities (as influenced by the DKE parent) or undervaluing their efforts and contributions (replicating the impostor syndrome parent).

Leaders who have been influenced by these opposing parental models may exhibit varying degrees of confidence. Sometimes they could be like their DKE parent, taking decisive action despite their lack of knowledge. But because of their parent's impostor syndrome, they often encounter periods of intense self-doubt mixed in with this assurance. As the leader goes back and forth between being firm and hesitant in making decisions, this type of oscillation can confuse team members [1,8].

These types of leaders could take on the overconfidence of their DKE parent along with the perfectionist inclinations of their impostor syndrome parent. This may motivate them to set extraordinarily high expectations for themselves and other employees. Although striving for excellence can lead to exceptional outcomes, it also runs the risk of producing a stressful atmosphere where failure-related anxiety takes over [8,12]. Their incapacity to manage these inclinations may lead to overworked teams and individual burnout.

The impact of the impostor syndrome parent could make these leaders sympathetic, aware of the difficulties of their subordinates and offering emotional support. But because of their DKE parent's inclination for micromanagement, they could be reluctant to delegate tasks since they think their strategy is better. This opposing tendency can result in inefficiency, with some employees feeling highly managed and others lacking clear direction [14].

The context typically determines whether employees displaying the Dunning–Kruger Effect (DKE) are unqualified. Despite their propensity for exaggerating their skills and displaying unjustified confidence [1], these individuals do not always lack potential or qualifications. Their main difficulty instead is fairly evaluating their competency in relation to the expectations of their position or task.

People with a lack of metacognitive awareness—that is, individuals who are unable to see their limitations in particular domains—cause the Dunning–Kruger Effect [1]. Their

cognitive bias causes them to view themselves as more competent than they are capable. This misalignment does not always indicate a lack of knowledge or experience. It usually shows that their confidence surpasses their actual ability, resulting in a mismatch that could be misunderstood as total inadequacy.

The perception of un-qualification is sometimes accentuated in positions or responsibilities calling for advanced expertise or specialized skills. In such situations, the overconfidence that DKE individuals show can lead to suboptimal outcomes or errors, thereby reinforcing the perception that they are unqualified [15]. In settings where confidence is highly prized, such sales or public speaking, their self-assurance may be appreciated even if their technical abilities are lacking.

The overconfidence related to the DKE may influence choices on hiring and promotion. Studies reveal that in professional environments, especially during interviews or assessments, confidence is commonly confused with competency [13]. This bias could let the DKE people land jobs for which they are just partially competent. While they may struggle at first, this does not imply that they are unable to learn and adapt. Many such workers can close skill gaps with suitable training and feedback.

Often, these individuals exhibit a mismatch between ability and confidence rather than a total lack of qualifications.

## 4. Impostor Syndrome Versus Dunning–Kruger Effect in the Business Environment

### 4.1. IS vs. DKE in the Workplace

Strictly speaking, employees who show the DKE are indeed incompetent in fields where they overestimate their skills. Their failure to appropriately evaluate their own knowledge or abilities results in a mismatch between perceived and actual competence. This miscalibration means that, within some jobs or responsibilities, they may underperform, make mistakes, or fall short of expectations [15]. Their overconfidence often limits them from seeking help or admitting their shortcomings, worsening the problem.

While the DKE employees may be incompetent areas at times, this is not always the case. Through targeted feedback and development, research indicates that individuals can improve their competence [12]. However, their progress is dependent on their willingness to receive external feedback, which represents a considerable challenge for individuals with the DKE.

Individuals with DKE characteristics, such as overconfidence and an unwillingness to recognize their own inadequacy [12], usually dominate conversations and decision-making processes. Their excessive self-assurance can overshadow the contributions of impostor syndrome individuals, who doubt their abilities despite being competent or even exceptionally skilled [8]. This dynamic may result in the DKE individual taking center stage, while the impostor syndrome individual withdraws or is hesitant to express their opinions.

DKE individuals often reject feedback, suggestions or opposing viewpoints, reinforcing their sense of superiority. Impostor syndrome individuals, on the other hand, may place excessive value on external validation, resulting in an unhealthy loop in which the DKE individual supports their own overconfidence by dismissing criticism, while the impostor syndrome individual internalizes this as evidence of their inadequacy. This encounter supports both sides' self-perception biases.

When these two types collaborate on decision-making, the DKE individual's assertiveness may lead to rash or poorly thought-out choices, whereas the impostor syndrome individual, hesitant to question the decision, remains silent despite noticing potential issues. This dynamic can lead to undesirable outcomes for the organization.

Working with a DKE coworker can exacerbate the insecurities of individuals with impostor syndrome. Being continually overshadowed or having their feedback ignored could create feelings of fraud or inadequacy, resulting in decreasing morale and involvement. Over time, this can reduce their contribution to the team and the organization.

Overconfidence in the DKE individual can result in poor decision-making, particularly in high-stakes scenarios where competence is essential. Meanwhile, the impostor syndrome individual's reluctance to express concerns or ideas may result in the loss of valuable insights. This imbalance suppresses creativity and critical thinking, resulting in inefficiencies or missed opportunities for the organization [16].

Team members, particularly those with impostor syndrome, may experience frustration and disengagement created by the dominance of DKE individuals. Over time, this dynamic may result in a high turnover rate, as talented employees with impostor syndrome pursue healthier environments where their contributions are appreciated.

According to Claire and Imes [8], individuals experiencing impostor syndrome often overcompensate for their self-doubt by working harder and aiming for perfection. Because they are self-assured, DKE people may assign or avoid tasks, which results in unequal workloads. This relationship leads to a culture of complacency for DKE individuals and burnout among impostor syndrome employees. Because impostor syndrome personnel are less inclined to advocate for themselves, teams led by DKE individuals may overlook or undervalue their abilities. In contrast, DKE individuals may advance despite a lack of competence, which could contribute to the perpetuation of systemic inefficiencies and the development of a leadership void [17].

#### 4.2. IS vs. DKE on Decision-Making

The Dunning–Kruger Effect and impostor syndrome are psychological phenomena that have profound but distinct effects on decision-making processes and team dynamics. Impostor syndrome and the Dunning–Kruger Effect both involve distorted self-perceptions; however, the former is characterized by an underestimation of one's own abilities, whereas the latter is characterized by an overestimation. The way individuals contribute to group settings and influence decisions is influenced by these distinctions.

Impostor syndrome is defined by the dread of being exposed as a fraud and feelings of self-doubt, despite the presence of evidence verifying one's competence. Despite possessing the requisite skills, individuals who are experiencing impostor syndrome may hesitate to assume leadership roles or undermine their contributions to a team. This proclivity may result in numerous complications regarding team dynamics [8]:

- **Underutilization of Talent:** Teams that have members who are experiencing impostor syndrome may not fully capitalize on their expertise, as these individuals may minimize their insights or defer excessively to others.
- **Refraining from Risk-Taking:** Behavior that is excessively circumspect may impede the decision-making process. Fearing that they lack authority or expertise, individuals with impostor syndrome may refrain from proposing innovative ideas or challenging the status quo.
- **Emotional Strain:** The presence of impostor feelings frequently results in increased tension and anxiety, which can have a contagious impact on team morale. A lack of confidence may be misinterpreted as disengagement, resulting in conflict among team members.

Nevertheless, impostor syndrome can also have counterintuitive positive consequences. In certain instances, individuals who are struggling with it exert additional effort to demonstrate their value, which can result in exceptional performance. Furthermore,

their humility may encourage collaborative environments by increasing their receptiveness to feedback.

The Dunning–Kruger Effect describes a cognitive bias wherein individuals with limited competence overestimate their abilities. This overconfidence often stems from a lack of self-awareness and can disrupt team cohesion and decision-making in the following ways [1]:

- **Dominance in Discussions:** Individuals affected by the Dunning–Kruger Effect may assert their opinions forcefully, overshadowing more knowledgeable team members. This dominance can suppress diverse viewpoints and lead to suboptimal decisions.
- **Resistance to Feedback:** Overconfident individuals are often less receptive to constructive criticism, reducing opportunities for learning and growth. Their resistance can hinder the team’s ability to adapt to new information.
- **Poor Judgment:** Overestimating their skills, such individuals may make uninformed or risky decisions, potentially leading the team astray. Their confidence can mislead others into following flawed judgments.

Despite its negative implications, the Dunning–Kruger Effect is not without nuance. Overconfident individuals may inspire action in situations requiring quick decisions, as their assertiveness can galvanize hesitant teams. However, the long-term consequences of their misplaced confidence can outweigh these short-term benefits.

The primary distinction between these two phenomena is the way they influence interpersonal interactions. Impostor syndrome frequently results in under-participation, as capable individuals withhold valuable input [18]. In contrast, the Dunning–Kruger Effect results in over-participation, where individuals with lower levels of competence dominate discussions and decisions. Both dynamics have the potential to induce imbalances in team performance; however, they necessitate distinct strategies for mitigation.

Impostor syndrome necessitates cultivating an inclusive and supportive environment. Fostering mentorship, celebrating accomplishments, and encouraging open communication can assist individuals who are affected in developing confidence and making a more meaningful contribution. By acknowledging and validating the expertise of these individuals, leaders can play a critical role [15].

Strategies that concentrate on the promotion of self-awareness are most effective for the Dunning–Kruger Effect. Regular feedback, skill assessments, and a culture of contrition can assist individuals in recalibrating their self-perception [19]. It is also possible to prevent overconfident individuals from monopolizing processes by promoting collaborative discussions and evidence-based decision-making.

The Dunning–Kruger Effect and impostor syndrome both underscore the intricacy of human psychology in the context of team dynamics and decision-making. Although one is the result of self-doubt and the other is the result of misplaced confidence, their effects can undermine group cohesion and effectiveness if left unattended. By acknowledging these phenomena and implementing customized strategies, teams can establish environments in which all members, regardless of their level of confidence or modesty, can contribute their best efforts to the team’s overall success.

#### *4.3. Can DKE and IS Coexist in the Same Individual?*

At first inspection, the DKE and IS appear to be opposites among psychological phenomena. The DKE is characterized by a persistent dread of being exposed as a fraud and an overestimation of one’s abilities because of a lack of self-awareness, whereas IS is characterized by self-doubt [8]. This is the case even when competence is evident. Nevertheless, these phenomena are not mutually exclusive and may coexist within the same individual. A complex interplay of self-perception biases can result from contextual

variation, domain-specific competence, personality characteristics, or external influences, which can lead to this coexistence.

The coexistence of the DKE and IS is frequently context-dependent, as individuals exhibit varying self-perceptions in different aspects of their lives. A person may overestimate their capabilities in a field in which they lack knowledge or experience (DKE) [1] while concurrently experiencing feelings of impostorship in areas in which they are genuinely skilled. For example, a programmer who is proficient may experience feelings of inadequacy when they compare themselves to their more experienced colleagues, as they may dispute their accomplishments and be concerned about being exposed as a fraud (IS). However, the same individual may confidently assert that they are highly effective in leadership or communication, despite having limited talents in those areas (DKE).

This context-based fluctuation demonstrates that self-perception is not consistent across life domains, but rather is influenced by personal insecurities, feedback, and variable levels of competence.

The DKE and IS can also interact dynamically over time. Self-doubt and feelings of inadequacy may result from corrective feedback that an individual who overestimates their abilities (DKE) may experience, which can induce IS [15]. Conversely, an individual who is experiencing IS may fall into DKE patterns by projecting excessive confidence in other areas to overcompensate for their insecurities [Supplementary Materials].

For instance, an employee may experience feelings of inadequacy when presenting their ideas during team meetings because of IS, but they may overestimate their technical abilities when completing tasks that they perceive as less scrutinized. This dynamic interaction underscores the potential for self-perception to change in response to feedback, personal development, and changing circumstances [18].

The multidimensional nature of human abilities is another explanation for the coexistence of the DKE and IS. Few individuals are equally proficient in all aspects of their lives, and their self-perceptions frequently differ by domain. Even if the evidence indicates that an individual is capable of excelling in technical tasks, they may perceive themselves as unqualified for creative or leadership positions. In areas where they lack expertise, they may fail to acknowledge their deficiencies, resulting in the overconfidence that is associated with the DKE.

The interaction of skill level, external validation, and the individual's self-awareness suggests that an individual's cognitive biases are not static but rather are influenced by this domain-specific competence. Individuals may be susceptible to both the DKE and IS due to specific personality traits [20]. For instance, impostor syndrome frequently coexists with perfectionism, as perfectionists establish unrealistically high standards for themselves and experience feelings of inadequacy when they fail to meet them. Concurrently, the overconfidence observed in the DKE can be exacerbated by perfectionism, which can prevent these individuals from recognizing gaps in their knowledge.

In the same vein, high-achieving individuals may experience feelings of unworthiness in the areas where their abilities are most refined, as they frequently establish ambitious success criteria. Nevertheless, their self-assurance may be exaggerated in unrelated fields where they lack expertise but are unaware of their limitations. The simultaneous expression of both phenomena is facilitated by these personality traits.

The coexistence of the DKE and IS is further exacerbated by social and environmental factors. In competitive environments, individuals may compare themselves to others, which can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy and impostorism [19]. Simultaneously, they may exhibit overconfidence in areas where they perceive less scrutiny or to conceal their insecurities. For instance, a student enrolled in a demanding academic program may

underestimate their intellect while simultaneously exaggerating their organizational or leadership abilities as a defensive mechanism.

Additionally, these biases may be exacerbated by societal pressures and cultural expectations. In cultures that prioritize achievement, individuals may alternate between underestimating their capabilities in less pertinent areas (DKE) and doubting their successes (IS) to preserve their self-esteem.

Contextual variation, domain-specific competence, personality traits, and external influences can all contribute to the coexistence of the Dunning–Kruger Effect and impostor syndrome within the same individual, despite the contrary appearance of these two phenomena. Human self-perception is rarely uniform or static, and this coexistence is indicative of this complexity [Supplementary Materials]. A nuanced approach that encompasses self-awareness, feedback, and external support is necessary to address these biases. Individuals can more effectively navigate the challenges posed by these cognitive biases by cultivating environments that promote open communication, psychological safety, and a culture of growth, thereby unleashing their potential for effective contribution and balanced self-perception.

## 5. Cultural Influences on the Impostor Syndrome and the Dunning–Kruger Effect

Cultural factors considerably influence these psychological phenomena, even though the analysis of IS and the DKE frequently assumes a universal framework. Additionally, culture influences the manifestation of these prejudices in organizational settings, in addition to influencing individual self-perception. It is essential to comprehend these cultural dimensions to develop interventions that are effective.

IS, which is defined by persistent self-doubt and the apprehension of being exposed as an impostor, may be more prevalent in collectivist cultures. In East Asia and certain regions of Latin America, collectivist societies prioritize humility, modesty, and group harmony, within the following contexts:

- **Valuing Humility:** The cultural emphasis on humility may discourage self-promotion, causing individuals to minimize their accomplishments. As a result, individuals may internalize achievement because of external factors, which can exacerbate feelings of impostorism.
- **Expectations of Others:** Meeting familial or societal expectations is frequently a significant priority in collectivist cultures. Individuals are more susceptible to IS when they are under pressure to meet collective standards, which can exacerbate feelings of inadequacy.
- **Fear of Shame:** Collectivist cultures are frequently shame-based, in which the loss of face can occur because of failing to meet societal or familial expectations. This dread of failure can exacerbate feelings of impostorism, as individuals are perpetually concerned with not meeting expectations.

On the other hand, cultures that prioritize assertiveness and self-assurance may exacerbate the DKE, which occurs when individuals with limited knowledge overestimate their competence. Self-promotion and personal accomplishment are frequently prioritized in individualistic cultures, including those in North America and Western Europe:

- **Self-Promotion Encouragement:** In societies that celebrate individual accomplishments, there may be a social incentive to present oneself as knowledgeable, even if one lacks the requisite skills. This cultural norm has the potential to perpetuate overconfidence, which is a defining characteristic of the DKE.

- **Overestimation of Charisma:** In individualistic environments, charismatic presentation is frequently associated with competence. The DKE bias may be reinforced by the pressure individuals experience to project confidence, despite their actual expertise.
- **Norms of Risk-Taking:** Overconfidence is frequently regarded favorably, which can result in individuals overestimating their capabilities due to cultural norms that encourage assertiveness and risk-taking.

Empirical research indicates that the prevalence of IS and DKE is indeed influenced by cultural differences:

- **IS:** Research suggests that cultures that prioritize collective success and modesty have higher prevalence rates of IS [21]. For instance, the concept of “*sekentei*” (social appearance) in Japan can exacerbate sentiments of inadequacy, thereby contributing to IS.
- **DKE:** Research has demonstrated that the DKE is more pronounced in Western cultures, where self-esteem is closely associated with personal achievement and self-promotion [22].

Interventions must be culturally sensitive considering the cultural diversity present in IS and the DKE. IS is mostly found in collectivist culture, and seen as a functionality trait through:

- **Mentorship Programs:** By associating individuals with mentors who comprehend and value cultural values, it is possible to facilitate conversations regarding self-doubt and promote the recognition of personal accomplishments.
- **Collective Recognition:** The distress associated with self-promotion can be alleviated by framing achievements in terms of team or group success rather than individual accolades [23].
- **Training on Attribution Styles:** Workshops that instruct employees on the distinction between internal and external attribution can assist in altering the perception that success is exclusively the result of external factors.

Meanwhile, the DKE is part of individualistic cultures that thrive on the following conceptual framework:

- **Structured Feedback Mechanisms:** Concrete data on performance and areas for improvement can be provided through regular, structured feedback, which can be used to recalibrate self-assessments.
- **Emphasis on Continuous Learning:** Overconfidence can be mitigated by cultivating an environment that prioritizes learning over inherent talent. The tendency to exaggerate one’s capabilities can be mitigated by promoting humility in the learning process.
- **Peer Review Systems:** The introduction of diverse perspectives through the implementation of peer reviews can mitigate the risk of isolated overconfidence.

The manifestation of IS and the DKE is significantly influenced by cultural factors, which affect the way in which individuals perceive their abilities and interact within teams [24]. Identifying these cultural dimensions enables organizations to develop interventions that are more effective and culturally appropriate, thereby enhancing the overall decision-making process and promoting a balanced self-perception [25]. To fully leverage the capabilities of a diversified workforce in a globalized work environment, it is imperative to implement such nuanced strategies.

## 6. Conclusions

This paper has investigated the complex interplay between the Dunning–Kruger Effect (DKE) and impostor syndrome (IS) in organizational settings, underscoring their significant impact on individual behavior, team dynamics, and overall workplace productivity. The

study has illuminated the multifaceted ways in which these psychological phenomena intersect and diverge, thereby influencing the professional environment, through the integration of established theories, sociocultural perspectives, and practical insights.

The Dunning–Kruger Effect demonstrates how overconfidence, which is a result of metacognitive deficits, can impede innovation, disrupt team cohesion, and result in inefficient decision-making. In contrast, impostor syndrome emphasizes the potential for self-doubt to lead to underutilization of talent, reduced risk-taking, and disengagement, even in individuals who are highly competent. Both phenomena underscore the significant obstacles to cultivating harmonious team dynamics. Overconfident individuals may monopolize discussions and decision-making, while self-doubting yet capable individuals are hesitant to assert their contributions [26].

This paper's primary contribution is its acknowledgment of the familial and sociocultural origins of these biases. Collectivist cultures, which prioritize contrition and external validation, may exacerbate IS, whereas individualistic cultures, which prioritize self-promotion and assertiveness, can exacerbate the DKE. These cultural dimensions not only influence the prevalence of these phenomena but also affect their manifestation in workplace settings. In the same vein, the necessity of contextually tailored interventions is further underscored by familial factors, including parental styles and early feedback mechanisms, which significantly influence individuals' confidence calibration.

The analysis also underscores the substantial implications of these biases for the performance of teams and organizational leadership. Leaders who are overconfident and influenced by the DKE may disregard valuable input, resulting in strategic missteps and a decrease in morale. Conversely, employees with IS may withdraw or overcompensate, which could result in burnout and lost opportunities for innovation. This complex professional landscape is frequently characterized by a misalignment between individual and collective performance, which is the result of the interplay between self-doubt and overconfidence. To confront these obstacles, organizations must implement strategies that are culturally sensitive and nuanced. Interventions such as structured feedback systems, mentorship programs, and inclusive communication practices can assist in reducing the adverse effects of the DKE and IS. Fostering a culture of continuous learning, promoting self-awareness, and encouraging psychological safety are essential components of establishing a fair and equitable work environment [27,28]. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge the coexistence of these phenomena in individuals and to customize interventions to accommodate context-specific variations to achieve sustainable organizational success.

In conclusion, this paper contributes to the broader discussion of psychological biases in organizational behavior by providing a framework for comprehending and resolving the intricacies of the DKE and IS. This establishes the foundation for future research and intervention design by connecting theoretical insights with practical applications. Fostering a balanced and inclusive approach to confidence and competence will be essential in unleashing individual potential and driving collective success as organizations increasingly navigate the challenges of a diverse and globalized workforce.

**Supplementary Materials:** The following supporting information can be downloaded at: <https://www.mdpi.com/article/10.3390/encyclopedia5010021/s1>.

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## Abbreviation

The following abbreviation is used in this manuscript:

DKE      Dunning–Kruger Effect

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