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## Are All High-Potentials Successful Leaders? Exploring the Underlying Effect of Impostor Syndrome and Evaluative Concerns on the Relationship Between HiPo Designation and Leadership Self-Efficacy.

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**NORTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY**

Are All High-Potentials Successful Leaders? Exploring the Underlying Effect of Impostor Syndrome and Evaluative Concerns on the Relationship Between HiPo Designation and

Leadership Self-Efficacy

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**With Honors**

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**By**

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**DeKalb, Illinois**

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Are All High-Potentials Successful Leaders? Exploring the Underlying Effect of

Impostor Syndrome and Evaluative Concerns on the Relationship Between HiPo

Designation and Leadership Self-Efficacy

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### Abstract

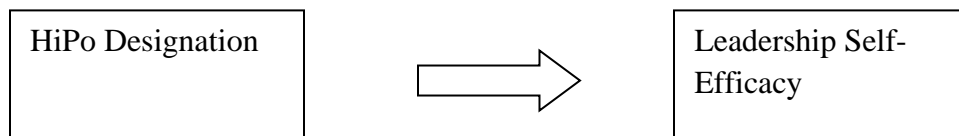
The rising prevalence of high-potential (HiPo) employee programs in organizations has led academicians to begin to research this newly developing area under the realm of industrial/organizational psychology. High-potential programs are intended to find employees with the maximum potential to succeed in strategic leadership roles within the organization and provide those individuals with specialized training and related developmental opportunities. The term “HiPo” refers to such employees who are designated as having higher potential than the average. This study aimed to explore the relationship that exists between employees being designated as HiPo and their self-perception of being successful leaders (measured as leadership self-efficacy) with the additional goal of investigating whether the individual differences of impostor syndrome and evaluative concerns among employees affects how they react to HiPo designation. Data for the purposes of the study was collected using an online survey circulated on social media among people (working part-time or full-time) and from upper-level psychology students. Contrary to our expectations, the results did not support the prediction of a significant positive relationship between HiPo designation and leadership self-efficacy (LSE). Furthermore, although there was a moderating influence of impostor syndrome and evaluative concerns on the relationship between HiPo designation and LSE, that pattern of that effect was opposite of our expectations. Based on the findings of this study, recommendations for organizational leaders and future researchers were made.

Are All High-Potentials Successful Leaders? Exploring the Underlying Effect of Impostor Syndrome and Evaluative Concerns on the Relationship Between HiPo Designation and Leadership Self-Efficacy

The ever-growing popularity of high-potential (HiPo) employee programs in private organizations has in turn driven a strong need for academicians to extensively research this newly developing area. High-potential programs identify individuals who are thought to have the most potential to succeed in strategic leadership roles within the organization in the future and provide those individuals with specialized developmental opportunities (Finkelstein, et al. 2018). The term “HiPo” refers to such employees who are designated as having higher potential than the average. A primary objective across current research on HiPo employee programs aims to find the best mechanism for identifying such employees with high potential which would ultimately help organizations attain optimal levels of productivity. In other words, there is an increasing emphasis on finding the most efficient tool that will help differentiate the future leaders with the maximum potential for enhanced development and success from the average employees (Church & Rotolo, 2013). A gap in the literature is that there has not been a lot of research investigating how employees react to being designated as a HiPo and almost no research looking at how individual differences influence how individuals react differently to HiPo designation. Hence, in this regard the present study looked to understand if any relationship exists between employees being designated as HiPo and their self-perception of being successful leaders. Additionally, the study aims to investigate whether the individual differences of impostor syndrome and evaluative concerns among the participants, plays a moderating role in how employees react to whether they are designated as HiPo.

This research aims to identify how HiPo designation may affect an employee's self-perception of being a successful leader. This outcome is represented by leadership self-efficacy (LSE). LSE is defined as the idea one has about their ability to effectively meet the demands of being a leader (Murphy & Johnson, 2016). According to Paglis (2010), high LSE leaders achieve superior results both in individual and collective group performance. Superior performance is a general expectation from HiPo employees, and HiPo employees are also predicted to succeed in strategic organizational roles (Finkelstein, et al. 2018). According to Bandura's self-efficacy theory (1977), verbal persuasion is a key source of self-efficacy information. When an individual receives verbal affirmation from a trusted and credible source regarding their ability to perform a task, their sense of self-efficacy increases (Wise & Trunnell, 2001). In another study by Luzzo and Taylor (1993), students who received verbal persuasion treatment from a career counselor demonstrated increased levels of self-efficacy in terms of the career decision-making process. These findings were in tandem with Bandura's (1977) hypothesis that verbal persuasion can significantly influence self-efficacy. In this regard, it was inferred that employees designated as HiPo would demonstrate high levels of LSE, owing to the verbal persuasion effect. This demonstrated the possible relationship that was drawn between HiPo designation and leadership self-efficacy.

*H1*: Individuals designated as high potential will have higher levels of leadership self-efficacy than those who were not designated.



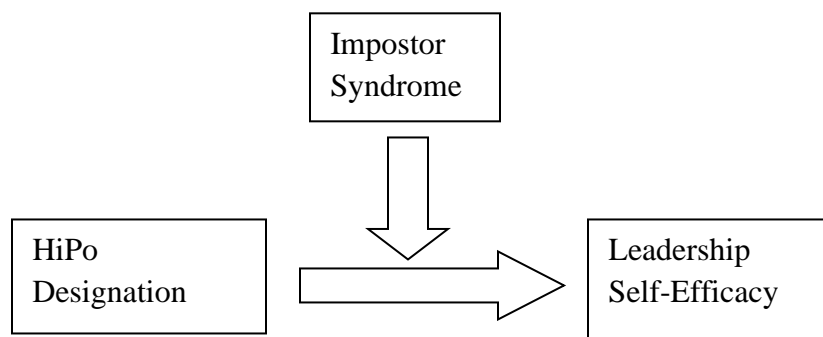
## **Individual Differences**

In an attempt to study how individual differences among employees affect their perceptions of being successful leaders upon being designated as HiPo, this research first considered impostor syndrome as an individual difference predictor. Impostor syndrome or the impostor phenomenon exists when one feels that they do not deserve their accomplishments or the recognition they have earned (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). People suffering from this phenomenon believe that their success is the result of any error or luck and thus live in constant fear of being proven as less capable (Neureiter & Traut-Mattausch, 2016). Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch's (2016) research indicated that impostor feelings were significantly predicted by a low self-esteem and a persistent fear of success among working professionals. A study by Hudson and Gonzalez-Gomez (2021), aiming to understand how impostors feel and perform in the workplace, found a significant positive relationship between impostor syndrome and shame. This can be a potential reason why individuals with high levels of impostor syndrome are less likely to react positively to HiPo designation as the underlying feeling of shame hinders their ability to accept what they have achieved.

According to the theoretical causal model of leadership (Jackson, 2018) impostor phenomenon among leaders leads to a persistent fear of failure, which ultimately results in a lack of confidence. Prior research has demonstrated that impostor syndrome is associated with a fear of failure and a lack of confidence. Hence, it can be inferred that HiPos (individuals with the potential to succeed as leaders) with high impostor syndrome experience a fair of failure and lack confidence which negatively affects their LSE levels. In this regard, it was predicted that the presence of impostor syndrome could lead to employees reacting differently to being designated as a HiPo which would in turn affect their leadership self-efficacy scores. The current study

looked to understand whether the presence of impostor syndrome would result in employees reacting differently to a HiPo designation which would in turn affect the relationship between HiPo designation and LSE.

*H2:* Impostor syndrome will moderate the relationship between HiPo designation and leadership self-efficacy, such that for individuals with higher levels of impostor syndrome, leadership self-efficacy will be negatively affected by HiPo designation.



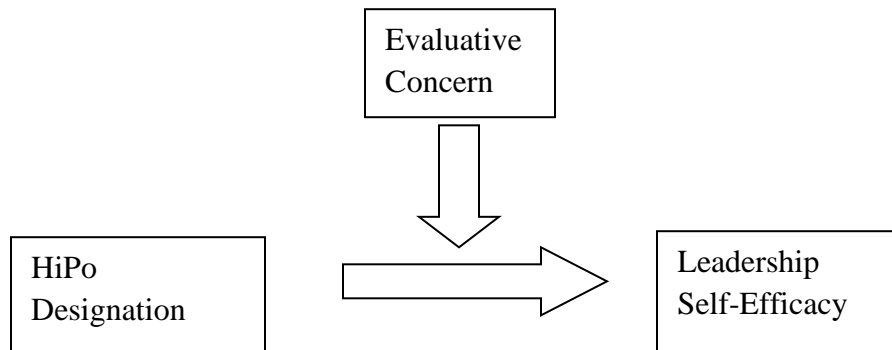
Furthering the scope of this study, evaluative concern was another moderating variable that may potentially affect the magnitude of the relationship between HiPo designation and leadership self-efficacy. Evaluative concern refers to a fear of being negatively evaluated by others in demanding situations. In this regard, the notion of evaluative concern relates to public self-consciousness. According to Finkelstein, et al. (2015), people high on the trait of public self-consciousness are predisposed to demonstrate higher concerns about how others perceive them. A study investigating the phenomenon of choking under pressure that occurs amongst athletes found that individuals high on public self-consciousness were more prone to experience heightened levels of anxiety under perceived pressure leading to substandard performance (Mesagno, et al. 2012).



What underlies the idea of evaluative concern is a fear of negative evaluation (FNE). FNE has been defined as “apprehension about others’ evaluations, distress over their negative evaluations, avoidance of evaluative situations, and the expectations that others would evaluate oneself negatively” (Watson & Friend, 1969). The Mesagno, et al. study (2012) had inferred that individuals having high FNE were susceptible to experience high anxiety in pressure situations leading to a deterioration in their performance levels (similar to the high self-conscious people). Thus, combining these two aspects (public self-consciousness and FNE) it can be stated that individuals high on evaluative concern will likely fail to perform at optimal levels under extreme pressure. Strategic leadership roles within organizations are often associated with working under significantly high levels of pressure (in terms of leading the organization and making high-impact decisions). In this regard, it can be predicted that evaluative concern will affect the relationship between HiPo designation and leadership self-efficacy of employees.

A study run by Paglis and Green (2002) established a positive relationship between trait self-esteem and LSE, such that individuals low on self-esteem feel more anxious and self-critical about their chances of succeeding as a leader than individuals high on self-esteem. Moreover, people with low self-esteem tend to be affected more negatively by negative feedback in addition to be socially anxious (Begley & White, 2003). This in turn establishes a relationship between low self-esteem and fear of negative evaluation (FNE). As noted by Leary (1983), owing to evaluative concerns, high FNEs tend to be more socially anxious and thus low on self-esteem. Hence, taking all of this existing literature into consideration, the aforementioned moderation was hypothesized as follows.

*H3*: Evaluative concern will moderate the relationship between HiPo designation and leadership self-efficacy, such that for individuals with higher levels of evaluative concern, leadership self-efficacy will be negatively affected by HiPo designation.



This study is important because it would be adding to the limited literature that exists in the relatively newer area of research exploring high-potential programs. Moreover, there is an underlying assumption that everyone wants to be a HiPo. This might not be true for all employees. The absence of extensive research looking into how individual differences affect people's reactions to these HiPo designations leads to academicians making such assumptions about how individuals in general would perceive a HiPo designation. Hence, research studies like the current one are needed to investigate whether the pre-existing assumptions are justifiable or not. According to Hanrahan (2020), both researchers and practitioners need to examine ways a high-potential designation can impact the individual employees as such labels can significantly impact the employees and their work. The findings from this study can help improve the HiPo programs that organizations use to enhance productivity by helping upper-level management in organizations develop a better understanding of how HiPo designations affect employees' leadership self-efficacy and whether the individual differences of impostor syndrome and evaluative concern have an effect on that relationship.

## Method

### Participants

The study had a total of 257 participants initially respond to the survey. However, after data cleaning only 179 participants were used in the final sample for analyses (*response rate* = 69.65%). Out of the initial 257 participants, 69 individuals had missing responses. The data of those participants were removed from the data set as they missed more than 50% of the questions on the survey. Additionally, the data of 9 participants were removed for not meeting the eligibility requirements because they missed two out of the three attention check items on the survey. Of the final sample ( $N = 179$ ), 45 (25.14%) were men, 130 (72.63%) were women, 30.73% were employed full-time, 47.49% were employed part-time, and 21.79% were unemployed. Furthermore, the final sample ( $N = 179$ ), comprised 19 (10.61%) African American participants, 15 (8.38%) Asian/Pacific Islander participants, 28 (15.64%) Hispanic/Latino participants, 110 (61.45%) White participants, and 5 (2.79%) participants who reported more than one race/ethnicity. The final sample ( $N = 179$ ) also reported an average age of 25.79 years with an associated standard deviation of 9.83.

### Measures

**Leadership Self-Efficacy.** The Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale (Bobbio & Manganelli, 2009) was used in this study for measuring leadership self-efficacy. The Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale (LSES) comprises 21 closed-ended items presented in the form of statements. Sample items include “*I can identify my strengths and weaknesses*” and “*I can successfully manage relationships with all the members of a group*”. The items on the LSES measure six conceptual domains of leadership and utilize a six-point Likert scale with response options

ranging from 1 (*absolutely false*) to 6 (*absolutely true*) (Mullen, et al. 2019). Respondents' total score on the LSES is calculated by summing the scores across the 21 individual items and then averaging it. According to the Mullen, et al. (2019) article, Bobbio and Manganelli (2009) found LSES scores to correlate with general self-efficacy, present leadership, and past leadership, thereby providing evidence for concurrent validity. In the Mullen, et al. (2019) study internal consistency reliability of the LSES was found to be  $\alpha = 0.93$ .

**Impostor Syndrome.** The Clance Impostor Scale (Clance, 1985) was used to measure impostor syndrome. The Clance Impostor Scale (CIPS) comprises 20 closed-ended items presented in the form of statements. Items such as, "*I avoid evaluations if possible and have a dread of others evaluating me*" and "*I can give the impression that I am more competent than I really am*" attempt to measure feelings such as fear of evaluation, fear of failure despite prior success, and attributions to luck (Kananifar, et al. 2015). The CIPS utilizes a five-point Likert scale with response options ranging from 1 (*Not at all true*) to 5 (*Very true*). Respondents' total score on the CIPS is calculated by adding the score on their individual responses to each of the 20 items. Hence, the total score on the CIPS can range from 20 to 100 with a higher score indicating more frequent and serious interference from impostorism in an individual's life (Levant, et al. 2020). The CIPS has also been found to demonstrate high internal reliability with Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.92$  and has been also found to be strongly correlated with scores on the Perceived Fraudulence Scale ( $r = 0.79, p < 0.01$ ) (Levant, et al. 2020).

**Evaluative Concern.** The Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983) was used to measure evaluative concern. The scale comprises 12 closed-ended items presented in the form of statements, such as, "*I am afraid that others will not approve of me*" and "*I often worry that I will say or do the wrong things*". The measure uses a five-point Likert scale with response

options ranging from 1 (*Not at all characteristic of me*) to 5 (*Extremely characteristic of me*). Eight of the twelve items are straightforwardly scored, while the remaining four are reverse scored (Duke, et al. 2006). The inter-item reliability of the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation (BFNE) scale is significantly high with Cronbach's  $\alpha = 0.90$  and the correlation between the BFNE and the original Fear of Negative Evaluation scale is also high,  $r = 0.96$  (Leary, 1983).

**HiPo Designation.** To assess whether the participants have ever been selected in a HiPo program or have been designated as HiPo, two items were developed. The first one was a dichotomous item that presented participants with a description of HiPo programs and asked a closed-ended question as follows.

*“At different points in one’s academic or professional career one may encounter certain specialized programs aimed towards finding individuals with the necessary capabilities to succeed in the respective field or role and providing them with the most essential resources to attain success. These “accelerated” programs for the “gifted” identify individuals who are capable of outperforming their peer groups in various settings and circumstances and demonstrate a significant drive to grow and succeed more quickly and effectively than their peer groups. The “chosen few” are then given an opportunity to maximize their potential. Have you ever been selected/chosen to be in these programs?”*

The item had a “Yes, I think so” vs “No I don’t think so” type response format. Participants responding with a “Yes, I think so” to the above item were classified as being selected in a HiPo program in the past.

The second item was a continuous one and asked participants to reflect on their experiences at work and/or in school and select from a variety of options (for example,

University Honors Program, top talent programs, selective leadership training/workshops, etc.) each representing some form of a high-potential program. Participants were also given an option to select “None of These” if they were never a part of any of the given programs or select “Other” upon which they were asked to type their respective response if they thought that they were (or are) a part of a HiPo program that was not listed. We created the continuous variable by summing the number of options that each participant checked.

### **Procedure**

The study used an online survey to collect data from participants. When participants clicked on the link of the online survey, they were taken to the *Informed Consent* page, where they were notified of the eligibility criteria and other related information pertaining to the study. Once participants granted their consent to participate, they were assigned the different surveys pertaining to the four key variables of the study, namely, leadership self-efficacy (assessed using the LSES), impostor syndrome (assessed using the CIPS), evaluative concern (assessed using the BFNE scale) and HiPo designation (assessed using the newly developed items). The survey randomized the order of assignment of the CIPS, BFNE, and the LSES questionnaires. Once participants were done responding to the CIPS, BFNE and LSES scales, they responded to the HiPo designation items and were finally asked to provide some basic demographic information (age, gender, ethnicity, employment status, etc.). Lastly, participants were given a debriefing that explained the actual purpose of the study and were thanked for their participation. In this study, anonymity of the participants was ensured by not obtaining any identifiable information from the participants. Moreover, the raw data could only be accessed by the primary investigators, namely, the undergraduate research student and the faculty advisor who guided the project. This in turn ensured the confidentiality of the data.

## Results

### Preliminary Analyses

A priori decision was made to create a composite moderator variable termed Evaluative Apprehension if the impostor syndrome and evaluative concern measures had a significantly high correlation (anything at or above 0.70). The two moderators ended up having a correlation of 0.71 and thus we created the evaluative apprehension variable by averaging the composites of the CIPS and BFNE measures. Please refer to Table 1 which contains information pertaining to the means, standard deviations, and reliabilities of all the scales (LSES, CIPS, BFNE, Evaluative Apprehension) and provides the correlation among the scales (LSES, CIPS, BFNE, Evaluative Apprehension, and the continuous HiPo item). As we combined our two moderators into a single composite, our final analyses included just the evaluative apprehension composite moderator. Hence, the new second hypothesis predicted that evaluative apprehension will moderate the relationship between HiPo designation and leadership self-efficacy, such that for individuals with higher levels of evaluative apprehension, leadership self-efficacy will be negatively affected by HiPo designation.

### Hypothesis 1

The first hypothesis predicting a positive relationship between HiPo designation and LSE was assessed using an independent samples t-test. Of the total sample ( $N = 179$ ), 66.48% indicated that they believed they had been designated as HiPo in our dichotomous measure, while 33.52% said they had not been designated as HiPo ever before. The independent samples t-test used the dichotomous HiPo IV and found that the participants designated as high potential, ( $M = 4.35$ ,  $SD = 0.79$ ) did not have significantly higher levels of leadership self-efficacy than the

participants who had not been designated as HiPo ( $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 0.82$ ;  $t(176) = -0.11$ ,  $p = 0.46$ ). Figure 1 shows the mean differences between the HiPos (people who responded affirmatively to the dichotomous HiPo item) and the NoPos (people who said that they had never received a HiPo designation) on the leadership self-efficacy measure (the DV). The first hypothesis was also tested by examining the correlation between the continuous HiPo IV and LSES (depicted in Table 1). This correlation ( $r = 0.12$ ) was not statistically significant ( $p = 0.12$ ).

## **Hypothesis 2**

The second hypothesis predicted that evaluative apprehension would moderate the relationship between HiPo designation and leadership self-efficacy (LSE). This was tested with a moderated multiple regression analysis. In the first step, there was a main effect of evaluative apprehension on LSE ( $b = -0.32$ ,  $t(176) = -4.81$ ,  $p < 0.001$ ,  $R^2 = 0.16$ ), but there was no significant effect of the continuous HiPo IV. Table 2 depicts the results of the regression analysis. In the second step, a significant interaction was found between the moderator and the IV. The regression results showed that the relationship between HiPo designation and the LSES was moderated by the level of evaluative apprehension,  $b = 0.09$ ,  $t(176) = 2.11$ ,  $p < 0.05$ ,  $R^2 = 0.16$ . Please refer to Table 3 for the results of the simple slopes analysis. The simple slopes analysis revealed that at higher levels of evaluative apprehension, HiPo designation was positively related to LSE. This was the opposite of the original prediction. Figure 2 provides a line graph depicting the results of the simple slopes analysis.



## **Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to expand the existing literature on high-potential employee programs by investigating how individual differences may affect employees' reactions to HiPo designation. In this regard our first hypothesis predicted that individuals designated as high-potentials would have relatively higher levels of leadership self-efficacy (LSE) than individuals not designated. This was based on existing research that suggested that acknowledging people's potential and recognizing their inherent leadership capabilities (through the HiPo designation) leads to a subsequent increase in their self-efficacy levels (Bandura, 1977). We incorporated our individual difference moderators, impostor syndrome and evaluative concern, into one composite moderator variable, termed evaluative apprehension to explore its impact on the relationship between HiPo designation and LSE. As such, we proposed that people with high levels of evaluative apprehension would react differently to a HiPo designation such that their LSE levels will deteriorate rather than increase. This was based on research that showed that impostor feelings and a fear of negative evaluation are associated with a significant lack of confidence and persistent fear of failure which ultimately hinders performance in demanding situations. Given that HiPos are naturally expected to take on leadership roles in the future, it was inferred that high levels of evaluative apprehension could interfere with one's belief in their leadership capabilities.

## **Theoretical Contributions**

The findings with regards to the first hypothesis showed that being designated as having higher potential than others did not enhance individuals' self-perception of being successful leaders. As the study used a student sample, we were a little concerned about not having enough participants who identified as HiPo in the more traditional sense, so we allowed for a multitude

of ways (a dichotomous and a continuous HiPo item) for participants to claim HiPo status. In doing so, we think that we may have erred on the side of making it too easy to be considered a HiPo. This was evident from the fact that over half of the sample (approximately 66.48%) identified themselves as HiPos in the dichotomous HiPo measure. This number contrasts existing research literature which suggests that in any random sample the number of HiPos would be relatively small. Thus, our HiPo measurement may not have been true to the essence of the construct.

In our second hypothesis we expected that people who were more worried about what others thought and were designated as a HiPo would have lower levels of confidence in their leadership abilities. However, our results demonstrated the opposite effect. Those people who reported as being involved in higher numbers of specialized programs (listed in the continuous HiPo item) showed more leadership self-efficacy when they were more concerned about being evaluated. Although these results might have occurred due to certain limitations in our study (discussed later), we think the surprising effect observed can be explained in different ways.

This study did not consider the fear of failure as a precondition of impostor feelings (Neureiter and Traut-Mattausch, 2016). Fear of failure could have driven the people experiencing high levels of evaluative apprehension to efficiently take on the responsibilities of being a HiPo and thereby attain an increased self-belief in their ability to succeed as leaders. Arnold and Costanza (2021) have noted that the occurrence of self-fulfilling prophecy might lead employees to align themselves with their new HiPo label and eventually behave like a HiPo would. Thus, people in our sample with higher evaluative apprehension, upon receiving the external validation about their potential could have felt motivated to work through their fears and take on the

responsibilities of a HiPo. This could have enhanced their LSE levels and led to the observed effect.

Lastly, another factor that might underlie the observed effect is gender. Approximately 72.63% of our sample comprised women. This is a significantly high number of participants from one specific gender for a random sample. Thus, it might be possible that women react to a HiPo designation in a way that is different from men. Given the dearth of women in the c-suite of organizations and the minimal leadership opportunities that are offered to them, women (even the ones with relatively high levels of evaluative apprehension) might be driven to work hard and take on the challenges to succeed as a leader within their organization once they are designated as a HiPo. This then leads to a consequent increase in their LSE levels, as shown in our results.

### **Practical Contributions**

In addition to expanding the existing literature on the new area of research exploring HiPo programs, this study also provides practitioners and researchers a new direction for examining ways a HiPo designation may affect individual employees and their work. Ultimately, the findings from this study should contribute to the quest for developing the most efficient HiPo program that organizations across the world can use to enhance productivity. Such programs can ensure that employees with potential are rightly designated as HiPo and may even help create a strong leadership pipeline (Arnold and Costanza, 2021). This study also provides some newer ideas that future researchers can explore and further bridge the knowledge gap that exists in the field of HiPo programs.

Based on the findings of this study, organizational leaders/managers can think about ways their employees react to a HiPo designation and take people's individual differences into

consideration when identifying potential. Additionally, managers and other organizational leaders should even consider providing training to help employees cope with impostor syndrome and evaluative concern at work such that HiPos who experience these fears can effectively take on their new responsibilities and contribute to the organization's growth and productivity.

Keeping the broader goal of identifying potential in mind, we had initially thought that the ideal HiPo program should consider potential special needs of the HiPos with higher evaluative apprehension, as we had predicted that fear to diminish their LSE levels. However, now with the results we found it can be inferred that if future replications of our study find similar results (where employees with higher fears of negative evaluation experience an enhancement in their LSE levels after being designated as HiPos) then organizations need not worry too much about their HiPos experiencing a fear and stress in the face of demanding situations, as long as it does not reach debilitating levels. It might very well be possible that the external validation that employees receive by means of being designated as HiPos cancels out some (or most) of their fear of being negatively evaluated by others in high pressure environments.

### **Limitations**

A major limitation of our study is the nature of the sample. Reliance on a student sample may have significantly hindered our chances of accurately measuring HiPo designation as it is a concept not many students are familiar with. While an honors program (something we listed in our continuous HiPo item) might be a similar indicator of potential, it is markedly different from a HiPo program in that students self-nominate themselves for their entry into the Honors program while employees within an organization are designated as HiPos by their managers and/or HR. Furthermore, in contrast to existing evidence our study found a fear of being

negatively evaluated to be associated with an increase in LSE. This in turn shows that a student sample is not ideal for future studies exploring HiPo programs.

This study also had a few measurement errors. As noted earlier, there were problems with the way we measured HiPo designation. We made it easy for participants in our sample to consider themselves a HiPo and thus we may have ended up overestimating true HiPo designation. There is also the possibility of people identifying themselves as HiPos due to a social desirability bias. Having people reflect on their academic and/or professional careers and self-report on whether they ever received HiPo designation or not could have led to certain measurement errors.

### **Future Directions**

In conclusion, there are various future directions researchers may take based on the findings of this study. For starters, future replications of this study or other studies exploring HiPo programs can avoid measurement errors by not relying on people self-reporting if they were designated as HiPos or not. Supervisors or HR managers, instead, could be asked to provide such information. Researchers may investigate some other individual difference variables like self-esteem and assess its relationship with HiPo designation.

Using a more diverse sample (with fewer students) and employing new methods to assess high-potential can be another step for future replications. For instance, an experimental set-up can help overcome the limitation arising from having people recall if they were designated as HiPo in the past and may yield expected results. An experimental design investigating our research question would entail recruiting a random sample and then randomly assigning the participants to either an experimental group (receiving HiPo designation) or a control group (not

receiving any designation). Participants in both the groups would be given an overview of what a HiPo program involves, would take a measure that purportedly assesses potential, and would then be told if they have been identified as a HiPo or not. They would then respond to the scales measuring the dependent variable and the moderator(s). Ultimately, the findings from our study should contribute to the quest for developing the most efficient HiPo program that organizations across the world can use to enhance productivity and build a strong leadership pipeline.

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Table 1

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	Correlations					
			1	2	3	4	5	
1. HiPo Designation	1.85	1.40	-					
2. LSE	4.35	0.80	0.12	<b>0.93</b>				
3. Impostor Syndrome	3.22	0.85	0.04	0.29**	<b>0.92</b>			
4. Evaluative Concerns	3.44	0.95	0.01	0.35**	0.71**	<b>0.90</b>		
5. Evaluative Apprehension	3.33	0.83	0.03	0.35**	0.92**	0.93**	<b>0.96</b>	

Note: This table provides the means (*M*) and standard deviations (*SD*) of the participants' responses on the leadership self-efficacy scale, the CIPS, the BFNE and the continuous HiPo designation item. Additionally, the table also signifies the correlations between each of these five scales with the bold values depicting their respective reliabilities.

Table 2

Predictor	Estimate	SE	t	p
Intercept	4.3507	0.0555	78.33	< .001
Evaluative Apprehension	-0.3245	0.0674	-4.81	< .001
Continuous HiPo Item	0.0734	0.0396	1.85	0.066
Interaction	0.0956	0.0453	2.11	0.036

Note: This table depicts the results of the moderated multiple regression analysis. It shows the effect of the moderator (Evaluative Apprehension) on the relationship between HiPo designation and LSE.

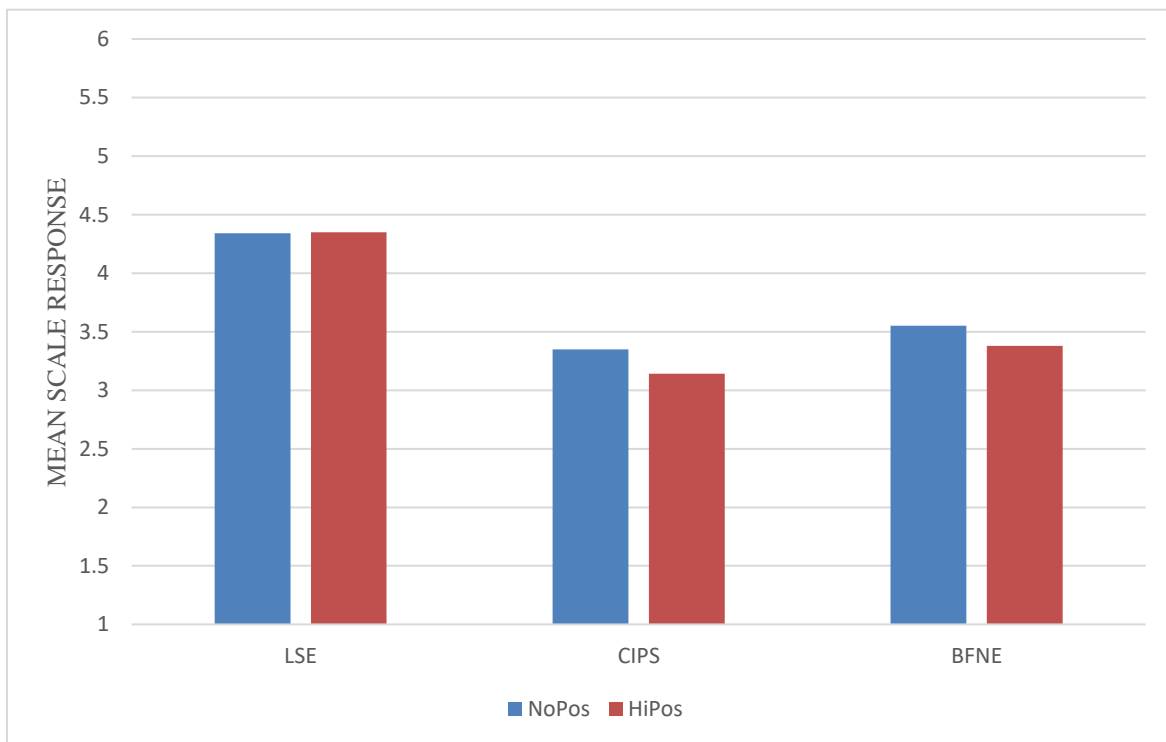
Table 3

Simple Slope Estimates

	Estimate	SE	95% Confidence Interval		Z	p
			Lower	Upper		
Average	0.07342	0.0396	-0.00418	0.1510	1.854	0.064
Low (-1SD)	-0.00589	0.0528	-0.10940	0.0976	-0.112	0.911
High (+1SD)	0.15272	0.0558	0.04329	0.2622	2.735	0.006

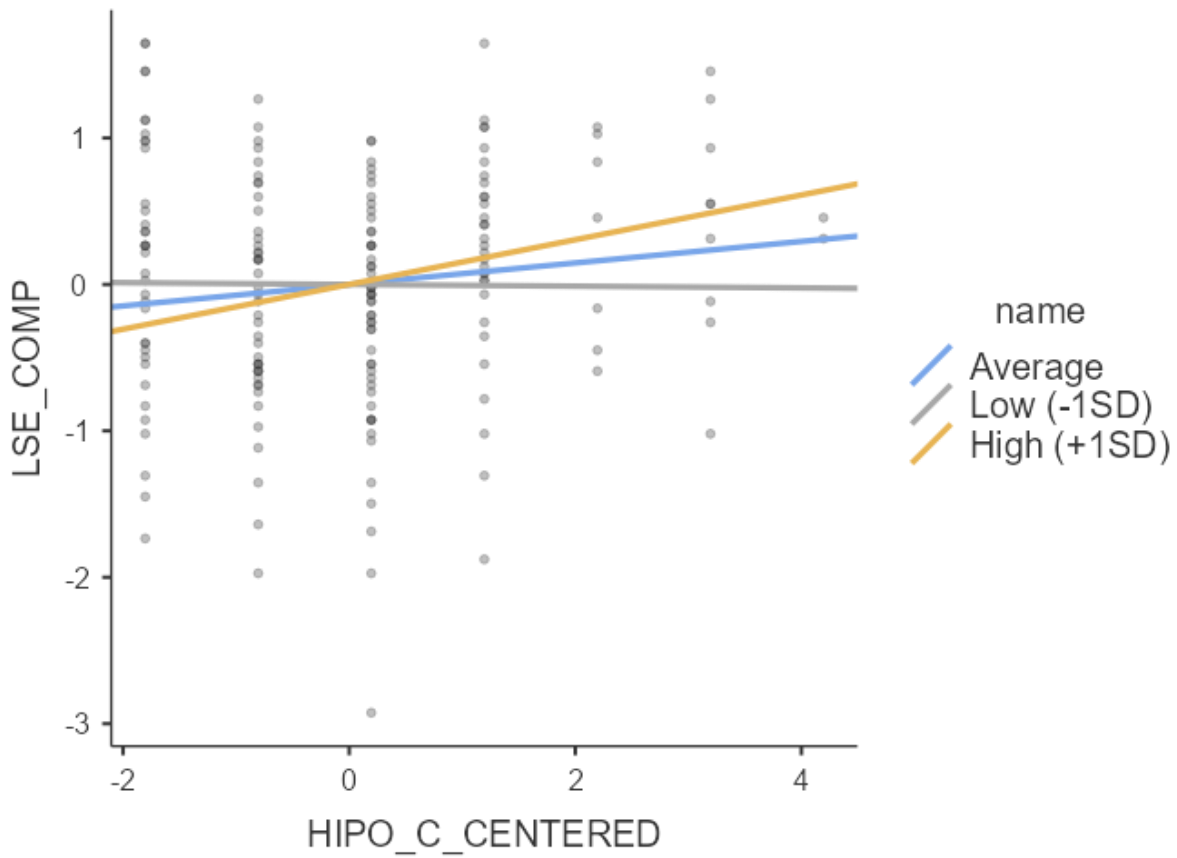
Note: This table shows the effect of the predictor (HiPo designation) on the dependent variable (LSE) at different levels of the moderator (Evaluative Apprehension)

Figure 1



Note: This figure shows the mean differences between HiPos (people who responded affirmatively to the dichotomous HiPo item) and NoPos (people who responded negatively to the dichotomous HiPo item) on the LSE, CIPS, and BFNE scales.

Figure 2



Note: This figure shows the results of the simple slope analysis. The graph depicts the effect of the predictor (HiPo item) on the dependent variable (LSE) at the mean level and one standard deviation above and below the mean levels of the moderator (Evaluative Apprehension).

## Appendix

### Informed Consent

**Eligibility:** Participants must be at least 18 years old, have a clear understanding of the English language and have a job (either full-time or part-time).

**Study Description:** This online study asks you to read and respond to certain statements reflecting upon your experiences at your current and/or previous jobs. You will then answer questions regarding your experience taking this survey and provide some demographic information.

**Risks and Benefits:** There are only minimal risks associated with this study. If you experience any discomfort because of participating in this study, you may contact the researcher (Anjishnu Chakrabarti, z1852981@students.niu.edu). Participation is also completely voluntary and thus you may choose not to continue at any point. The results of this study may be published in scientific research journals and presented at professional conferences. However, your record will remain confidential. Your data will be used as part of a larger data set with no identifying information. The data set, once deidentified, could potentially be posted to a scholarly, public online medium.

**Right to Refuse or Withdraw:** You may refuse to participate at any part of the study. You may change your mind about being in the study and quit after the survey has started. You may skip any questions you do not feel comfortable answering. We are interested in your opinions on the different aspects touched by the statements. We assure you that you will find none of these statements threatening or harmful to you. We will tell you more about the research details after the study is over, but we would appreciate your full participation without knowing those details, or why the statements are included in the study. Your informed consent acknowledges the fact that there are a few things about the research we have not told you about, and that you consent to participate in the study even though we are withholding this knowledge until after the debriefing.

**Questions:** If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, you may contact the Northern Illinois University Office of Research Compliance (815-752-8588). If you have any questions about this research study, you can contact the undergraduate student or faculty advisor. This research has been approved by the institutional review board of Northern Illinois University. If you have any questions about this research, please contact Mr. Anjishnu Chakrabarti at z1852981@students.niu.edu or Dr. Lisa Finkelstein at (815) 753-0439 or lisaf@niu.edu.

I understand the above and grant my consent to participate:

- Yes – Continue to Survey
- No – Exit Survey

### Leadership Self-Efficacy Scale

The instructions for the leadership self-efficacy scale (Bobbio & Manganelli, 2009) are as follows. “For the following items, use the scale to rate the level of truth for each of the leadership statements based on how you feel personally”. The scale referred to in the instructions was a six-point Likert scale with response options ranging from 1 (*absolutely false*) to 6 (*absolutely true*).

The 21 items underneath their specific dimensions are listed below.

#### *Dimension 1: Starting and leading change processes in groups*

1. I am able to set a new direction for a group, if the one currently taken doesn't seem correct to me
2. I can usually change the attitudes and behaviors of group members if they don't meet group objectives
3. I am able to change things in a group even if they are not completely under my control

#### *Dimension 2: Choosing effective followers and delegating responsibilities*

4. I am confident in my ability to choose group members in order to build up an effective and efficient team
5. I am able to optimally share out the work between the members of a group to get the best results
6. I would be able to delegate the task of accomplishing specific goals to other group members
7. I am usually able to understand to whom, within a group, it is better to delegate specific tasks

#### *Dimension 3: Building and managing interpersonal relationships within the group*

8. Usually, I can establish very good relationships with the people I work with
9. I am sure I can communicate with others, going straight to the heart of the matter
10. I can successfully manage relationships with all the members of a group

#### *Dimension 4: Showing self-awareness and self-confidence*

11. I can identify my strengths and weaknesses

12. I am confident in my ability to get things done

13. I always know how to get the best out of the situations I find myself in

14. With my experience and competence I can help group members to reach the group's targets

15. As a leader, I am usually able to affirm my beliefs and values

*Dimension 5: Motivating people*

16. With my example, I am sure I can motivate the members of a group

17. I can usually motivate group members and arouse their enthusiasm when I start a new project

18. I am able to motivate and give opportunities to any group member in the exercise of his/her tasks or functions.

*Dimension 6: Gaining consensus of group members*

19. I can usually make the people I work with appreciate me

20. I am sure I can gain the consensus of group members

21. I can usually lead a group with the consensus of all members



### Clance Impostor Scale

The instructions for the Clance impostor scale (Clance, 1985) are as follows. “For the following items, use the scale to rate the level of truth for each of the statements based on how you feel personally”. The scale referred to in the instructions was a five-point Likert scale with response options ranging from 1 (*Not at all true*) to 5 (*Very true*). The 20 items are listed below.

1. I have often succeeded on a test or task even though I was afraid that I would not do well before I undertook the task
2. I can give the impression that I’m more competent than I really am
3. I avoid evaluations if possible and have a dread of others evaluating me
4. When people praise me for something I’ve accomplished, I’m afraid I won’t be able to live up to their expectations of me in the future
5. I sometimes think I obtained my present position or gained my present success because I happened to be in the right place at the right time or knew the right people
6. I’m afraid people important to me may find out that I’m not as capable as they think I am
7. I tend to remember the incidents in which I have not done my best more than those times I have done my best
8. I rarely do a project or task as well as I’d like to do it
9. Sometimes I feel or believe that my success in my life or in my job has been the result of some kind of error
10. It’s hard for me to accept compliments or praise about my intelligence or accomplishments
11. At times, I feel my success has been due to some kind of luck
12. I’m disappointed at times in my present accomplishments and think I should have accomplished much more
13. Sometimes I’m afraid others will discover how much knowledge or ability I really lack
14. I’m often afraid that I may fail at a new assignment or undertaking even though I generally do well at what I attempt

15. When I've succeeded at something and received recognition for my accomplishments, I have doubts that I can keep repeating that success

16. If I receive a great deal of praise and recognition for something I've accomplished, I tend to discount the importance of what I've done.

17. I often compare my ability to those around me and think they may be more intelligent than I am

18. I often worry about not succeeding with a project or examination, even though others around me have considerable confidence that I will do well

19. If I'm going to receive a promotion or gain recognition of some kind, I hesitate to tell others until it is an accomplished fact.

20. I feel bad and discouraged if I'm not "the best" or at least "very special" in situations that involve achievement

### **Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale**

The instructions for the Brief Fear of Negative Evaluation Scale (Leary, 1983) are as follows.

“For the following items, use the scale to rate the extent to which each statement is characteristic of you”. The scale referred to in the instructions was a five-point Likert scale with response options ranging from 1 (*Not at all characteristic of me*) to 5 (*Extremely characteristic of me*).

The 12 items are listed below. (Note: Reverse score items are marked ‘R’)

1. I worry about what other people will think of me even when I know it doesn't make any difference.
2. I am unconcerned even if I know people are forming an unfavorable impression of me. (R)
3. I am frequently afraid of other people noticing my shortcomings.
4. I rarely worry about what kind of impression I am making on someone. (R)
5. I am afraid that others will not approve of me.
6. I am afraid that people will find fault with me.
7. Other people's opinions of me do not bother me. (R)
8. When I am talking to someone, I worry about what they may be thinking about me.
9. I am usually worried about what kind of impression I make.
10. If I know someone is judging me, it has little effect on me. (R)
11. Sometimes I think I am too concerned with what other people think of me.
12. I often worry that I will say or do the wrong things.

### HiPo Designation Item

The instruction for the sole HiPo designation item is as follows. “Read the following description and choose the option that best describes you”. The options referred to in the instructions were “Yes, I think so” and “No, I don’t think so”. The item is listed below.

At different points in one’s academic or professional career one may encounter certain specialized programs aimed towards finding individuals with the necessary capabilities to succeed in the respective field or role and providing them with the most essential resources to attain success. These “accelerated” programs for the “gifted” identify individuals who are capable of outperforming their peer groups in various settings and circumstances and demonstrate a significant drive to grow and succeed more quickly and effectively than their peer groups. The “chosen few” are then given an opportunity to maximize their potential. Have you ever been selected/chosen to be in one of these programs?

Now, read the following options depicting different programs. Check the adjacent box for the ones you have been or still are a part of. You may select as many options below as are applicable for you. If you recall being a part of any similar selective program, check the “Other” option and type your response below. If none of the given options apply to you and you have not been a part of any similar program, check the “None of These” box.

1. Advance Placement (AP) programs in high school
2. University Honors Program
3. Top-talent programs within your organization
4. Apprenticeship programs with a selective application process
5. Elite youth sports programs
6. Advanced musical training programs
7. Specialized performing arts programs for gifted students
8. Summer Center and Camps for gifted and talented students
9. Selective leadership training/workshops recommended by supervisor(s) or HR
10. Other – type below
11. None of These

**Attention Check Items**

1. Please select “Absolutely True” for this item.
2. Select “Not At All True” for this item.
3. Select “Not at all characteristic of me” for this item.