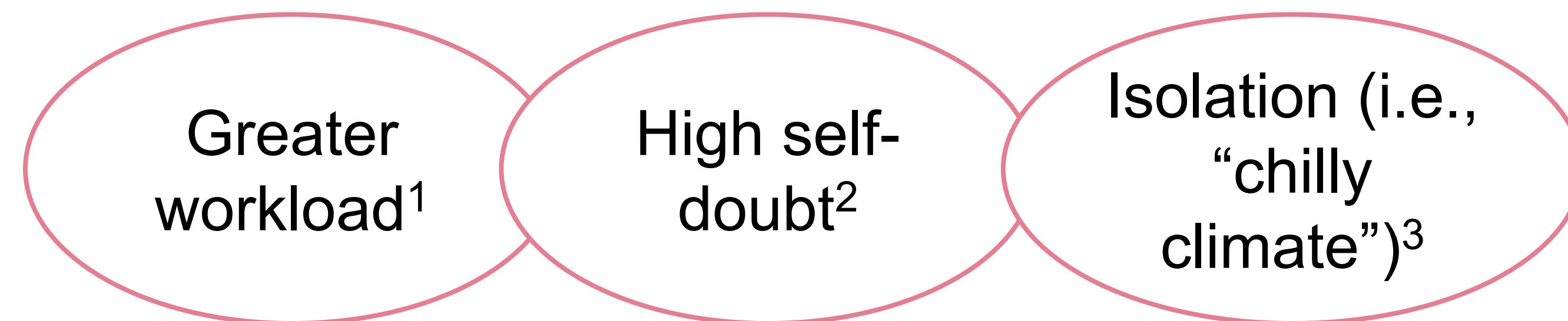


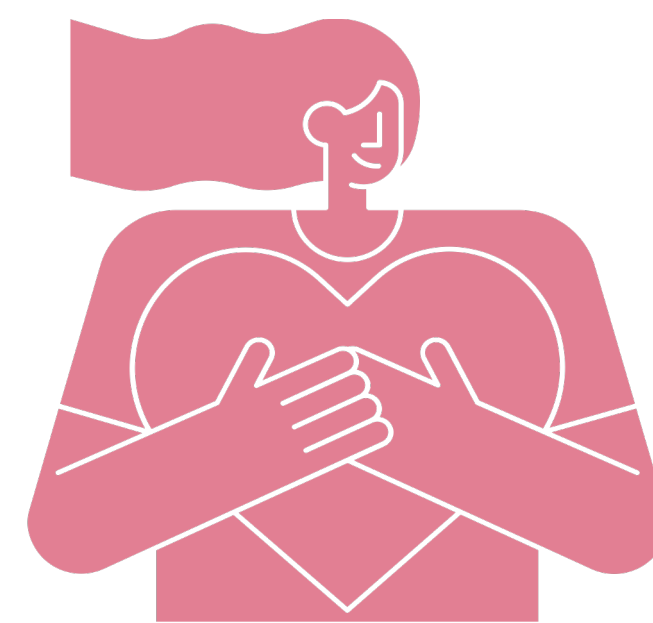
# Struggling to be kind: The mediating role of self-compassion between imposter phenomenon and burnout among early career faculty in STEM

## Introduction

The early career period for women in STEM:



- Such challenges combined with a lower sense of belonging can foster **imposter phenomenon (IP)**<sup>4</sup> which is linked with **job burnout**,<sup>5</sup> a common experience for women faculty.<sup>6</sup>
- Yet, this phenomenon **remains under-researched** among early career women in STEM.
- Through a conservation of resources (COR) lens,<sup>7</sup> the link between IP and burnout can be explained by a lack of **self-compassion**,<sup>8,9</sup> which depletes one's personal resources.



### Self Compassion:

- Self kindness: treating oneself with care vs. self-criticism and judgment
- Common humanity: understanding that all people have failures vs. blaming oneself
- Mindfulness: taking a balanced perspective vs. ruminating

- Hence, understanding the role of self-compassion can help address the gender gap in STEM and **reduce attrition among women faculty** (i.e., the "leaky pipeline").<sup>10</sup>

## Hypotheses

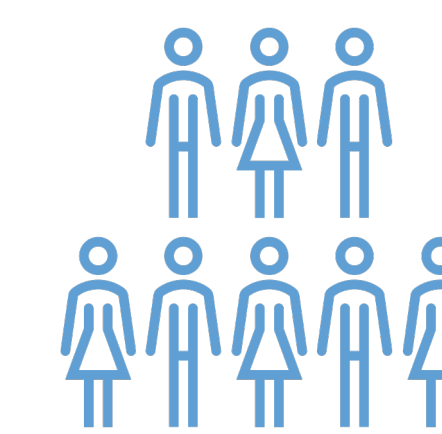
- H1.** Early career women (vs. men) faculty in STEM will report more IP.
- H2.** IP is positively associated with job burnout.
- H3.** Self-compassion mediates the relationship between IP and job burnout.



## Methodology

### Design

- Online survey study
- Early career STEM faculty in large U.S universities ( $n = 411$ )
- 49.9% male, 50.1% female
- Age:  $M = 35.52$



**Lack of self-compassion may explain lower well-being outcomes for early career women faculty in STEM**



### Measures

- Imposter Phenomenon:** 20 items; "I can give the impression that I'm more competent than I really am" ( $\alpha = .94$ )<sup>11</sup>
- Job Burnout:** 9 items; "I was overwhelmed at work" ( $\alpha = .86$ )<sup>12</sup>
- Self-compassion:** 26 items; **self-kindness**; "I'm kind to myself when I'm experiencing suffering" ( $\alpha = .89$ ), **mindfulness**; "When something upsets me, I try to keep my emotions in balance" ( $\alpha = .83$ ), **common humanity**; "I try to see my failings as part of the human condition" ( $\alpha = .82$ )<sup>8</sup>

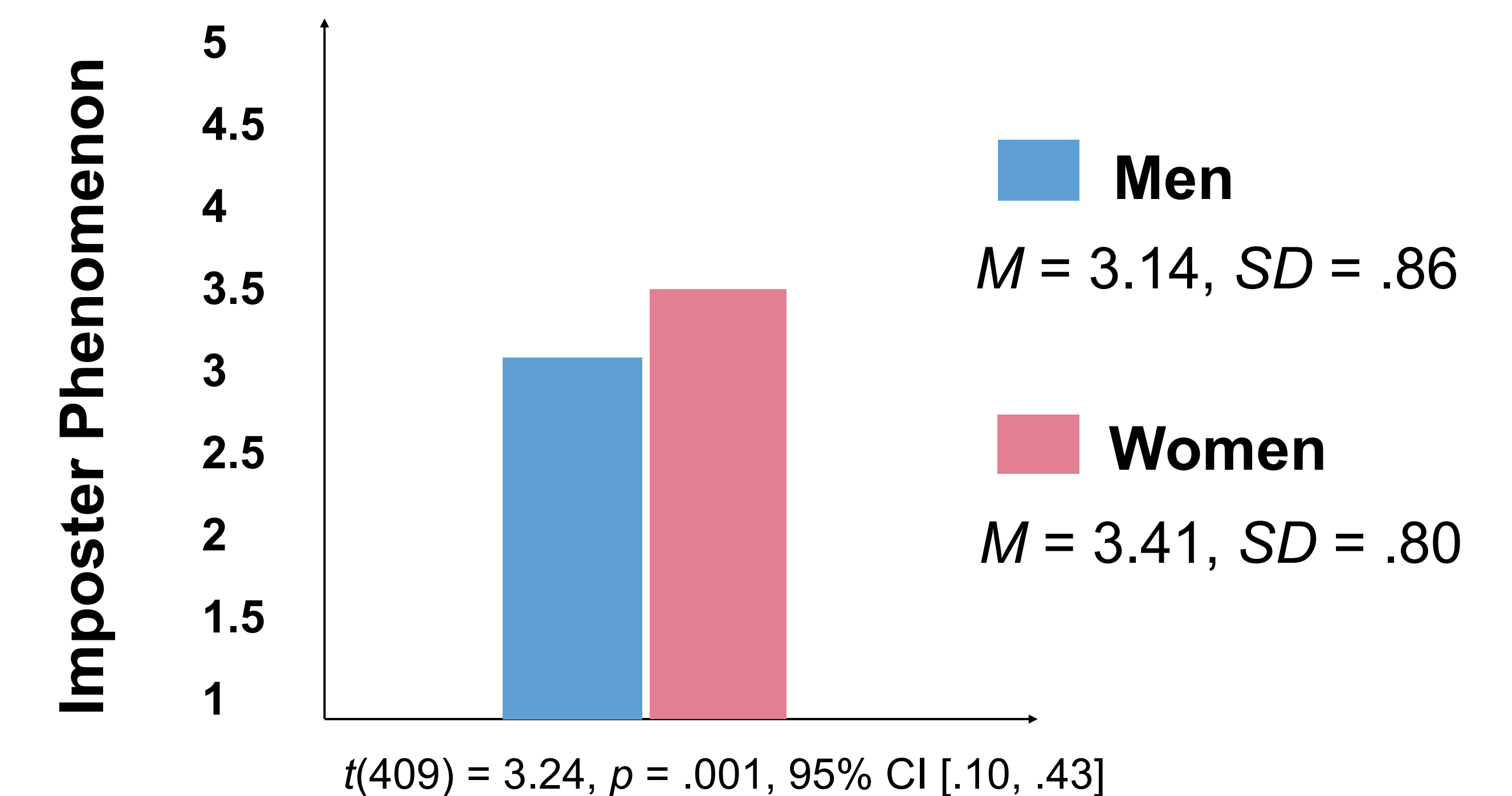
### Analyses

- T-test
- Hayes Process Macro Model 6

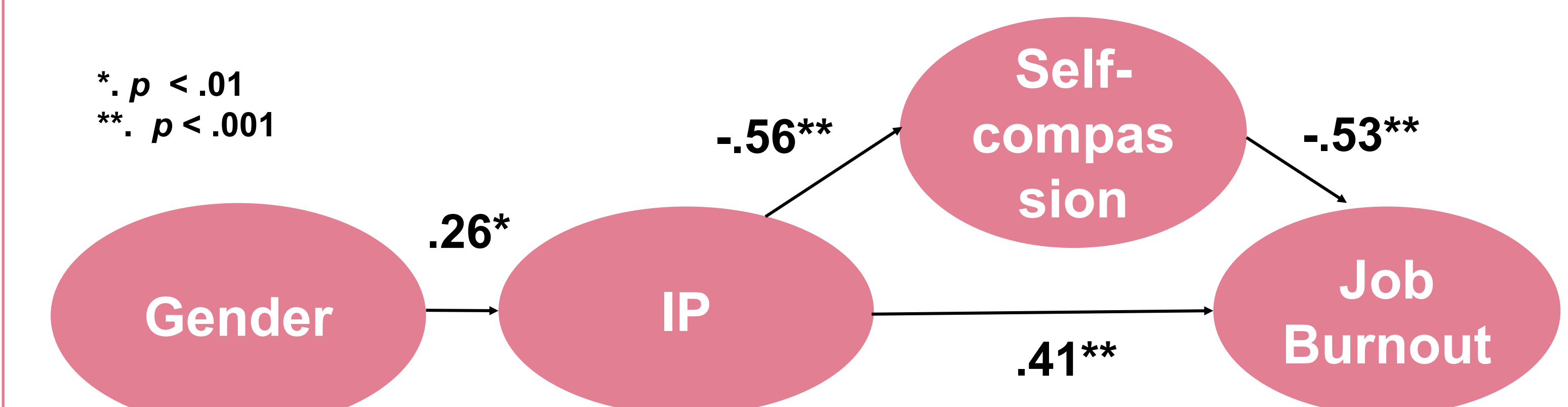


## Results

H1



H2 & H3



Total effect: .20 ( $p < .05$ )

Direct effect: ns

Indirect effect: .08 [.03, .14]

\* Note: For gender, 1 = male, 2 = female; we also conducted analyses with all sub-facets of self-compassion and results revealed that all three mediated the relationship between IP and job burnout.

## Discussion

- The early career period is associated with **negative well-being outcomes including job burnout** for women faculty in STEM, which can be explained by **low self-compassion**.
- Incorporating self-compassion in secondary interventions**, alongside primary interventions targeted to the workplace,<sup>13</sup> can help women in STEM interrupt the detrimental self-blame process.
- We aim to **continue investigating other underlying factors** of the "leaky pipeline" among women in STEM utilizing a longitudinal framework.

