




Potential Employees' Impression Management Tactics and Human Resource Management Professionals' Perspectives

Yağmur Bakanoğlu¹ , Emel Esen² , Selin Karaca Varinlioğlu³ 

¹Yıldız Technical University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, İstanbul, Türkiye

²Prof. Dr., Yıldız Technical University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, İstanbul, Türkiye

³Res. Assist., Turkish-German University, Faculty of Economics and Administrative Sciences, İstanbul, Türkiye

ABSTRACT

This research aims to determine the impression management tactics used by potential employees that are important to employers in the job market, particularly in their curriculum vitae (CVs) and interviews during the application process, and to identify which tactics are the most important to human resources (HR) specialists. The study has employed within its scope semi-structured interviews that allow a thorough examination of the participants' feelings, attitudes, and thoughts with 45 potential employees and eight HR professionals. The study findings reveal that potential employees mostly prefer the tactics of building a favorable image, self-promotion, and supplication, whereas they use exemplification tactics less. Similar to these results, HR professionals also highlighted the tactics of building a favorable image, self-promotion, and supplication in recruitment interviews. The study results are expected to be beneficial for creating a more positive image of potential candidates in the labor market, both during the recruitment interviews and the job application stage.

Keywords: impression management, self-presentation, human resources, potential employees, job application

JEL Codes: M1, M10, M12

Introduction

Background

In daily life, people are in constant communication with others in their business lives as well as in their personal lives. The impressions that people make on others during these communications play an important role in their judgments, evaluations, and decisions about themselves. In this respect, people who are closely interested in how others perceive and evaluate themselves are seen to often try and influence and manage others' impressions of themselves (Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Sociologist Erving Goffman had pioneered studies on impression management and argued in his book *The Presentation of the Self in Everyday Life* (Goffman, 1959) that people manage the impressions they have of other people by projecting the identity they desire to achieve. Following Goffman's work, social psychologist Edward Jones (1964) also discussed what kinds of behaviors people approve of and highlighted the complementary role of impression management in interpersonal perception. Impression management is "the goal-directed activity of controlling information in order to influence the impressions formed by an audience" (Schlenker, 2003, p. 492). In the studies in the literature, some researchers consider impression management tactics more as imitation and "a form of deception," (Waung et al., 2017, p. 728) while others argue that impression management emerges naturally in line with "social expectations" (Waung et al., 2017, p. 742).

Impression management has been studied in the field of sociology and psychology for many years. It has also been examined in the organizational context since the 1980s and has begun to find a place in the field of organizational behavior (Giacalone & Rosenfeld, 1989). In the field of HR in particular, impression management behavior can emerge in recruitment interviews between candidates and employers (Ellis et al., 2002; Peck & Levashina, 2017). Job interviews are considered one of the initial points of interaction between prospective employees and companies. When considering the importance the impact of impression management tactics during the recruitment process has on employers' decisions regarding their preferences (Gioaba & Krings, 2017), candidates use a range of tactics, including nonverbal cues and verbal expressions. The aims of the research are to examine

Corresponding Author: Selin Karaca Varinlioğlu E-mail: selin.karaca@tau.edu.tr

Submitted: 05.11.2023 • Revision Requested: 29.11.2023 • Last Revision Received: 29.11.2023 • Accepted: 13.12.2023



This article is licensed under a Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (CC BY-NC 4.0)

the impression management tactics potential employees use, which have a significant role in the employment market for employers, especially those used on CVs and in job interviews when applying for work, and to reveal which tactics come to the fore for HR professionals. In this regard, the study researches which impression management tactics potential employees utilize and which tactics HR professionals deem to be important.

Impression Management Tactics in Recruitment Processes

In business life, candidates for a job might utilize impression management tactics, in particular to arouse recruiter interest during job interviews. Potential employees communicate both verbally and nonverbally during interviews, including by smiling, dressing appropriately, and introducing themselves (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). Employers may prefer job candidates who apply impression management tactics during job interviews more than others (Gioaba & Krings, 2017).

Jones and Pittmann (1982) made important contributions to the literature on impression management and mentioned five basic strategies for a strategic self-presentation: self-promotion, ingratiation, intimidation, supplication, and exemplification. When looking at the classifications of impression management, two dimensions of tactics (i.e., assertive and defensive) are widely accepted in the literature (Wayne & Kacmar, 1991; Stevens & Kristof, 1995; Andrews & Kacmar, 2001). Assertive tactics involve active behaviors that aim to create greater impressions, while defensive tactics essentially try to maintain an existing impression (Andrews & Kacmar, 2001). During an interview, candidates may use defensive tactics to prevent their self-image from a real or potential threat (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). However, studies have shown candidates to prefer assertive tactics more than defensive tactics during job interviews (Ellis et al., 2002). Regarding the assertive tactics used during interviews, candidates can focus on the recruiters conducting the interview, as well as on themselves to demonstrate that they have the skills and other positive qualities related to the position for which they are applying in order to positively affect the perceptions of the HR specialists (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007; Peck & Levashina, 2017). Stevens and Kristof's (1995) study also showed self-promoting behavior, which refers to the behaviors of introducing the qualifications, emphasizing the achievements of the potential employee, and exaggerating the abilities of the candidate, to emerge prominently during job interviews. Another impression management tactic that is used in job applications and that has a significant impact on hiring decisions is ingratiation, which is aimed at ensuring that one's performance is highly evaluated; this can be perceived as cute, sympathetic, and harmonious by others (Varma et al., 2006). A candidate uses this tactic to gain the appreciation of the HR specialist and tries to create an image in order to be able to introduce themselves as suitable candidates for the position to which they are applying (Swider et al., 2011). A potential employee can also use the exemplification tactic, which is a "strategy for self-presentation that involves inducing other people to regard one as a highly moral, virtuous person whose actions are consistent with positive, shared values," and the supplication tactic, which follows a different path from others in terms of showing one's weaknesses and devotions (Jones & Pittman, 1982, pp. 246-247). The purpose of all these impression management tactics candidates use is to impress potential employers. Chen et al.'s (2010) study showed the verbal and nonverbal impression management tactics candidates who focus on themselves and others use in job interviews are positively related to the evaluations of the interviewers. The results from Roulin et al.'s (2014) study also provide evidence that potential employees' perceptions on self-promotion and perceived candidate transparency are positively associated with interview evaluations. The results of Wilhelmy et al.'s (2021) study also revealed the importance of candidates' impression management tactics being consistent with the interviewer's expectations in a job interview.

These studies in the literature point out the importance of impression management for both employers and potential employees. In line with these studies, the following research questions have been put forward in order to contribute to the literature:

RQ1. Which impression management tactics do potential candidates reveal during interviews?

RQ2. What are the impression management tactics that come to the fore during interviews according to HR professionals?

Knouse et al. (1988) drew attention to impression management tactics in CVs and cover letters, which are where an employer gets the first information about a potential candidate. Waung et al. (2017) studied the impression management tactics of potential candidates in their CVs and cover letters to develop a taxonomy. To contribute to the limited research in the literature on impression management tactics in CVs, the following research questions have been developed:

RQ3. What impression management tactics do potential candidates use on their CVs?

RQ4. What are the characteristics of the ideal CV according to HR professionals in the context of impression management?

Research Methodology

Research Design and Context

The research method was determined as qualitative research, which allows one to examine the emotions, thoughts, and attitudes of the participants in depth. Semi-structured interviews were conducted within the scope of the study to give participants the

opportunity to answer a variety of questions and provide in-depth information about the study's topic (Hammarberg et al., 2016). The interview questions were prepared based on Jones and Pittman's (1982) five strategies for impression management, as well as assertive and defensive tactics that are commonly accepted in the literature (Wayne & Kacmar, 1991; Stevens & Kristof, 1995; Andrews & Kacmar, 2001). The questions were formulated with the support of the literature on potential employees and the assistance of a research consultant in accordance with the study's purpose. The Yıldız Technical University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee granted approval for the data-gathering techniques and methodologies to be employed in the current study.

Data Collection Procedure

Due to applications with a CV being the initial step in the hiring process, CVs of the potential employees (i.e., 3rd- and 4th-year university students) were requested first and then emailed to the research consultant. With the help of the research consultant, an ideal CV was created based on the sources in the literature, and the CVs collected from potential employees were examined and analyzed based on the created ideal CV data. The second stage conducted semi-structured interviews with the potential employees who'd submitted their CVs in order to determine the tactics they use in their job interview experiences. As part of the research, semi-structured interviews were also conducted with HR professionals, who were asked questions about which of a potential employee's impression management tactics they attach importance to while recruiting. The participants were asked additional questions as needed due to the nature of the semi-structured interviews.

Implementation

All participants were informed about the study's aim and that their data would stay private prior to the interviews. Therefore, their names and last names are expressed here using initials. All interviews were audio recorded with the participants' approval. During the interviews, the participants were primarily asked demographic questions and then semi-structured questions in accordance with the research purpose. The semi-structured interviews were conducted with 45 potential employees between December 1-28, 2021 and with eight HR professionals between March 25-April 6, 2022. 78% of the potential employee interviews were conducted in the faculty meeting room, and 22% were conducted remotely by telephone. The HR professionals were all interviewed remotely.

Sample

The sample of potential employees consists of public university 3rd- and 4th-year students in Istanbul, Turkey. In order to participate in the study, the potential employees must have a CV and have previously participated in a recruitment interview. The snowball sampling method was used to ensure that the number of potential employee participants being interviewed reached sufficient saturation, with students studying in other faculties of the university who met the criteria also being reached (Table 1).

Table 1. Department and School Year of the Potential Employees

Department of Potential Employees	Number of Potential Employees	Percentage (%)
Business Administration	20	45
Economics	12	27
Political Science and International Relations	3	7
Industrial Engineering	3	7
Environmental Engineering	2	4
Communication Design	1	2
Food Engineering	1	2
Chemical Engineering	1	2
Environmental Engineering	1	2
Mathematical Engineering	1	2
Grade Level of Potential Employees	Number of Potential Employees	Percentage (%)
3. Grade	10	22
4. Grade	35	78

The sample of HR professionals consists of HR specialists working in various sectors with various levels of experience. In order to participate in the study, the HR specialists must have conducted recruitment interviews with candidates. HR professionals who meet this criterion were first reached through the contacts of the research consultant, and the snowball sampling method was used to ensure that the number of interviewed participants reached sufficient saturation (Table 2).

Table 2. *Positions and Industries of the HR Professionals*

Codes for HR Professionals	Positions of HR Professionals	Industries of HR Professionals
N.Y.	Human Resources Specialist	Software
B.F.E.	Senior Executive Assistant	Private Equity Investment
E.G.	Human Resources Specialist	Software
B.Ö.	Human Resources Specialist	Technology
İ.F.S.	Organizational Development Specialist	Investment
D.S.	Human Resources Director	Private Equity Investment
N.G.	Human Resources Specialist	Maritime
Ö.D.	Recruitment Specialist	Food

Data Analysis

The study employs qualitative data analysis approaches to determine the answers to the research questions. Qualitative research involves the systematic collection, organization, identification, and interpretation of textual and oral data (Hammarberg et al., 2016). During the interviews, audio recordings were taken with the permission of the 45 potential employees and eight HR professionals. The audio recordings were meticulously deciphered, and the transcriptions were checked by the research consultant. Certain categories were created from the deciphered voice recordings and interview questions. Information irrelevant to the subject was extracted. In order to determine the impression management tactics potential employees use and the impression management tactics HR professionals consider important, the interviews with the participants were transcribed and analyzed with the help of manual coding and prepared for the report. For another part of the study, an ideal CV was prepared in the presence of a research consultant according to the literature review, and various categories were created for the potential employee CV analysis. The CV data of potential employees were analyzed in accordance with the determined categories. The study now goes on to include the research findings.

Findings

Demographic Characteristics

Potential Employees

When looking at the demographic variables, the majority of participants are seen to be women. When conducting the research, the minimum monthly wage in Turkey was \$150.95 USD. Table 3 provides information on employment status, place of birth, education, and income level.

Table 3. *Demographic Information of Potential Employees*

Gender					
Gender		Number of Potential Employees	Percentage (%)		
Female		39	87		
Male		6	13		
Employment Status					
Employment Status		Number of Potential Employees	Percentage (%)		
Unemployed		17	38		
Intern		17	38		
Part-Time Employee		9	20		
Full-Time Employee		2	4		
Monthly Family Income Amount (TL)					
Amount of Income		Number of Potential Employees	Percentage (%)		
Less Than \$ 160,27		4	9		
\$160,27 - \$ 267,13		16	36		
\$ 267,13 - \$ 534,26		20	44		
More Than \$ 534,26		5	11		
Parental Education Level (Mother)			Parental Education Level (Father)		
Education Level	Number of Potential Employees	Percentage (%)	Education Level	Number of Potential Employees	Percentage (%)
Illiterate	1	2	Illiterate	0	0
Primary school	14	31	Primary school	7	16
Secondary school	7	16	Secondary school	13	29
High School	16	36	High School	13	29
Associate degree	2	4	Associate degree	2	4
Degree	5	11	Degree	10	22

HR Professionals

When looking at the demographic variables of HR professionals, the vast majority of professionals are seen to be in the 25-30 age range, with half of the HR professionals having worked in their current institution for less than 1 year. Table 4 contains detailed data on the demographic traits of the HR specialists.

Table 4. *Demographic Information of the HR Professionals*

Gender of HR Professionals		Number of HR Professionals	
Female		5	
Male		3	
Age Range of HR Professionals		Number of HR Professionals	
25-30		7	
31-40		0	
41-50		0	
51+		1	
Education Level of HR Professionals		Number of HR Professionals	
Degree		4	
Postgraduate		4	
Professional Experience of HR Professionals		Experience in the Institution of HR Professionals	
Year Range	Number of HR Professionals	Year Range	Number of HR Professionals
Less than 1 Year	0	Less than 1 Year	4
1-5 Years	3	1-5 Years	4
6-10 Years	4	6-10 Years	0
11-15 Years	0	11-15 Years	0
16-20 Years	0	16-20 Years	0
More Than 21 Years	1	More Than 21 Years	0

Findings on HR Specialists' and Potential Employees' Ideal CV Format

This part of the study presents the findings after the analysis of the semi-structured interviews with the HR professionals, expectations regarding the ideal CV format, and the data for potential candidates from the reviewed CVs regarding this format.

Photograph

An ideal CV features a recent professional photo of the potential employee. Favorable conditions are stated as formal attire, smiling, starting at the shoulder level and above, a simple background, a bright atmosphere, and great photo quality. The analysis showed that 76% of applicants had included a suitable photo with their CV.

Personal Information and Contact Information

In an ideal CV, potential employees should include personal and up-to-date contact information that includes their first name, last name, phone number, email address, and home address (Risavy, 2017), as well as LinkedIn URL, driver's license information, and date of birth so the HR specialist can get to know them and contact them if they meet the requirements. The applicant's name, surname, phone number, home or dormitory address, and email address should be in bold print and current. The email address should include the candidate's first and last name and be professional. If the applicant has a driver's license, providing this information on the CV is important. On the other hand, if the applicant does not have a driver's license, not including this information is better. Examining the candidates' collected CVs reveals that each candidate's CV has their first name, surname, and email address. The majority of applicants included their residential addresses and telephone numbers on their CVs. However, only 42% of candidates included their LinkedIn URL, and only 20% included their driver's license information. In addition to these findings, the potential employees' CVs were observed to contain excessive personal and unnecessary information that should not be included on a CV, such as blood type, smoking status, countries visited, and not having a driver's license.

Purpose / Objective

Stating an objective is optional on a CV. This section can be provided if the candidate has little or no work experience to put on their CV, so sharing their professional ambitions makes the candidate seem qualified. This section should have multiple words and be arranged with respect to the position being applied for. The findings revealed 29% of the potential employees to have added a purpose statement to their CV.

Work Experience

In addition to institutions' names, positions held, and dates of employment, the work experience section should also list the candidate's responsibilities and accomplishments for each position. Internship experiences should also take place under this heading, and all professional experiences should be listed in reverse chronological order. Supporting the potential employee's duties and responsibilities with numbers and accomplishments and incorporating these onto the CV play a crucial part in capturing the attention of a possible employer. As a result of the analysis, all potential employees were seen to have included the names of the companies where they had gained work experience and their positions there on their CVs. However, only 58% of potential employees mentioned their responsibilities and achievements on their CVs.

Education

The ideal CV should include information about high school and university; however, including details about previous education is not required. Based on the current study, all of the potential employees were determined to have included university information on their CVs, while only 4% had included information on their primary and secondary schooling. In addition, 47% of potential employees were seen to have included their university graduation date and grade point averages in their CVs. However, any potential employees who have studied or are currently studying at other departments or universities through alternative programs in addition to their current university degree should also share details about these studies. Although the study has revealed few findings, the potential candidates with different educational backgrounds notably included this information on their CVs.

Projects

Potential candidates who've been involved in projects should include the project names, their position within the project, project completion date, and their duties and responsibilities on their CVs. The findings show that 47% of the potential employees had taken part in a project and added this information to their CVs.

Volunteer Work

Potential employees who've participated in volunteer work, been a member of a non-governmental organizations, or carried out volunteer projects should add this information to their CV. The results reveal that 49% of potential employees had done volunteer work and included this information on their CVs.

Certification

Potential employees who've attended training, events, or courses and earned a certificate should provide this information on their CV, as this is important. This section should include the certificate name, the name of the institution where the certificate was obtained, and the date of the certificate. According to the results of the current study, 64% of the potential employees were seen to have earned certificates through various studies and to have added this information to their CVs.

Competencies

Potential employees are expected to mention their specific abilities, job-related competencies, and foreign language proficiencies on their CV. While 91% of the potential employees in the sample were seen to include foreign language knowledge and different competencies on their CVs, only 11% were revealed to have also shown their native language to be Turkish with regard to language proficiency.

Awards and Achievements

Potential employees should also indicate the awards and significant accomplishments they've obtained on their CV. This section should contain the institution from which the award was received, the subject or achievement for which an award was given, the degree that was obtained, and the date on which the award was won. The results indicate that only 16% of the potential employees had won awards or achieved success and added their information to their CVs.

Hobbies / Interests

Candidates can include hobbies and interests on their CV if they prefer. If potential employees have difficulty filling their CVs with content, they can provide information about their hobbies and interests on their CV and give HR professionals insight into their personality. Of the potential employees in the sample, 44% were seen to have included their interests or hobbies on their CVs.

References

Because HR specialists verify the reference information upon completing the application, reference information does not need to be provided directly in the application alongside the CV, which is the first step. In order to express the existence of reference information, the phrase "Reference information will be shared upon request" should be added to the CV. The reference list should comprise an average of three to five references that include the references' first and last names, phone numbers, e-mail addresses, and job titles, as well as the names and addresses of the companies where they work. When evaluating the obtained CVs, 82% of the candidates' CVs were discovered to not contain references.

Template

The format of a CV is a further consideration. While preparing a CV, attention should be paid to spelling rules, and official fonts such as Times New Roman, Arial, and Calibri should be used, with the letter size falling between 10-12 points. Bold or italic font type should be preferred for emphasizing the name of an organization or position. A CV must be converted to PDF format in order to be viewed as desired. Meanwhile, a CV should be between one and two pages long, brief summaries should be favored over lengthy paragraphs in explanatory articles, consideration should be given to time periods, and passive structures should be used. CVs should be produced in both Turkish and English and submitted in accordance with the company's desires. A CV should be written in the same sequence as the titles mentioned in the current research. The findings show that 80% of the potential employees in the sample had created their CVs in PDF format, 58% had provided a CV in Turkish, and only 9% had prepared a CV with more than two pages.

HR Professionals' Ideal CV Findings Regarding Potential Employees

The outcomes from the interviews with the HR professionals shed light on what an ideal CV should contain. According to HR specialists, the professionals were unable to reach a consensus regarding the ranking of education, work, and internship experiences when assessing the potential employees' CV data. The first group of HR professionals argued that educational information should be included first, while others suggested that work and internship experiences should be. The ideal CV should start with personal information and contact information that provides first and last names, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses, and home addresses, including province and district. This ideal CV should then continue with information regarding education, employment, or internships, followed by certificate information, foreign language knowledge, computer program knowledge, projects, awards, and hobbies/interests.

Within the scope of education information, candidates are expected to include information about high school, university start and end dates, and grade point average if they are successful. Furthermore, candidates who've participated in a student exchange program such as Erasmus should also describe this experience. The section describing work and internship experiences should list the dates of internships and employment, the names of the companies, and the positions held, as well as duties and responsibilities.

Furthermore, the HR professionals noted that the ideal CV should be clear and precise, simple, abbreviation-free, and limited to one page. The findings also show that professionals mostly pay attention to whether education information, internship experience, and contact information have been included, as well as certificate and foreign language knowledge, projects, the accuracy of the written information, and whether Turkish has been used correctly. Moreover, the HR professionals stated that personal information, work and internship experience, education information, and contact information are indispensable regarding potential employees' CVs.

Findings on the Impression Management Tactics Potential Employees Use in Recruitment Interviews

The results from the semi-structured interviews with the potential employees in the sample reveal the findings about the impression management tactics candidates performed during the job interviews. During the interviews, the conversations were recorded and then transcribed for analysis. The written texts were subsequently reviewed based on the assigned codes for each displayed impression management tactic. Afterwards, the percentage of potential employees in the sample who'd employed an impression management tactic was determined for each tactic.

Findings on the Tactic of Ingratiation

During the recruitment interview, 83% of potential employees used the ingratiation tactic, which is one of the impression management tactics. Of those who used the tactic of ingratiation,

- 91% of the potential employees tried to be affectionate, sympathetic, and friendly during the interview.
- 93% of the potential employees did not compliment the recruiter in order to make them believe they are a good person. The potential employees believed that this behavior is unnecessary and that they can demonstrate their moral character not by praising the recruiter but by describing their volunteer work.
- 82% of the potential employees praised the company. While the vast majority of potential employees praised the company, they stated that their main purpose was to let the recruiter know that they had researched the company before coming to the recruitment interview.
- All the potential employees generally agreed with the recruiter's thoughts throughout the interview. The vast majority of the potential employees expressed themselves when the recruiter's thoughts coincided with their own thoughts and facts and did not hesitate to express their own thoughts.

Findings on the Tactic of Self-Promotion

During the recruitment interview, 86% of the potential employees used the self-promotion tactic, which is one of the impression management tactics. Of those who used the tactic of self-promotion,

- In the recruitment interview, 91% of the potential employees described their previous work, internship, group, and/or social responsibility projects, as well as their successes while taking part in them.
- 85% of the potential employees talked about their educational life during the interview.
- 82% of the potential employees mentioned their talents, knowledge, and skills during the interview.

Findings on the Tactic of Exemplification

During the recruitment interview, 35% of the potential employees used the exemplification tactic, which is another impression management tactic. Within the scope of this tactic, potential employees used truly few behaviors for creating the impression of being altruistic and exemplary individuals in the eyes of the recruiting interviewer. Stating phrases such as "I do not take leave other than annual leave," "I help my colleagues," "I can take work home if necessary" "I can stay late if necessary," and "I can come to work on the weekend if necessary" during the interview represents exemplary behaviors within the scope of exemplification. Of those who used the tactic of exemplification,

- 86% of the potential employees did not say, "I do not take leave other than annual leave" during the interview.
- 58% of the potential employees said "I help my colleagues" during the interview.
- 69% of the potential employees did not say "I can take work home if necessary" during the interview.
- 58% of the potential employees did not say "I can stay overtime if necessary" during the interview.
- 72% of the potential employees did not say "I can come to work on the weekend if necessary" during the interview.

Findings on the Tactic of Supplication

During the recruitment interview, 88% of the potential employees used the supplication tactic, another one of the impression management tactics. Of those who used the tactic of supplication,

- 93% of the potential employees stated wanting to benefit from the experience of employees who had already started working for the company.
- 82% of the potential employees said they really needed the job during the recruitment interview.

Findings on the Tactic of Favorable Image

During the recruitment interview, 99% of the potential employees used the tactic of building a favorable image, another impression management tactic. Of those who used the tactic of building a favorable image,

- All potential employees took care to wear acceptable attire during their recruitment interviews. When attending a job interview, the potential employees tended to be more trendy, well-groomed, and attentive to their attire.
- 98% of the potential employees paid attention to making eye contact and appropriate gestures throughout the interview.

Findings on the Impression Management Tactics HR Professionals Prefer Potential Employees Use in Recruitment Interviews

The following section reveals the results on the findings from the semi-structured interviews with the HR specialists in the sample regarding the impression management tactics they prefer candidates perform during a job interview.

Findings on the Tactic of Ingratiation

Of the HR professionals, 66% stated that potential employees should use the ingratiation tactic during a recruitment interview. Within the scope of ingratiation:

- The vast majority of HR professionals stated that potential employees' attitudes should be balanced throughout the recruitment interview.
- All HR professionals stated that potential employees need to research the company before coming to the recruitment interview.
- All HR professionals stated that having potential employees agree with the professional's own thoughts and show them approval does not make them sympathize with the potential employee.
- The HR professionals indicated that they expect potential employees to be enthusiastic, interested, passionate, curious, and willing to learn throughout an interview.

Findings on the Tactic of Self-Promotion

Of the HR professionals, 95% stated that potential employees should use the self-promotion tactic. Within the scope of self-promotion:

- The vast majority of HR professionals stated that potential employees should introduce their qualifications and describe their previous jobs, internships, clubs, and social responsibility projects, as well as their successes while taking part in them.
- All HR professionals think that potential employees should mention the university and department they've studied when introducing their qualifications, even though they are already included on the CV.
- All HR professionals expect potential employees to describe their talents, knowledge, and skills that are both employable and oriented toward social life.
- When HR professionals ask potential employees to introduce the potential employee's own qualities, the professional expects the potential hire to talk about themselves, the qualities associated with the position, what they have achieved in their previous internships, their contributions to previous projects, their hobbies and talents, volunteer projects, personal characteristics, strengths, technical knowledge, and any extra training they've received towards their goal while studying.

Findings on the Tactic of Exemplification

The following shows 23% of HR professionals to view the usage of exemplification tactics positively. Within the scope of exemplification:

- All HR professionals stated having a potential employee say "I do not take leave other than annual leave" during an interview does not make them perceive the potential employee as altruistic or exemplary.
- The vast majority of HR professionals stated that having potential employees use the phrases "I can take work home if necessary," "I can stay overtime if necessary," and "I can come to work on the weekend if necessary" during an interview does not make them perceive the potential employee as devoted or exemplary.
- The vast majority of HR professionals stated that having a potential employee use the phrase "I help my colleagues" during an interview will make them perceive the potential employee as altruistic and exemplary.
- Of the above statements, the HR professionals only see the phrase "I help my colleagues" as a necessary quality of a devoted and exemplary employee.

Findings on the Tactic of Supplication

Of the HR professionals, 54% stated that potential employees should use the supplication tactic during a recruitment interview. Within the scope of supplication:

- Almost all of the HR professionals see no harm in stating that potential employees want to benefit from the experiences of the employees working within the company or requesting mentorship from them should they start work in that company.
- The majority of HR professionals stated not being bothered when potential employees state really needing the job they are interviewing for in order to be successful in their career, improve themselves, or gain work or internship experience; however, these statements do not help a potential employee get a job/internship.

Findings on the Tactic of Building a Favorable Image

Of the HR professionals, 91% stated that potential employees should use the tactic of building a favorable image during a recruitment interview. Within the scope of building a favorable image tactic:

- All the HR professionals stated that their first impressions will be positively affected by a potential employee being stylish, well-groomed, and carefully dressed when coming to the recruitment interview.
- More than half of the HR professionals recommended that potential employees dress in accordance with the corporate culture when coming to the interview.
- Almost all the HR professionals stated that the correct use of body language (i.e., making eye contact, using gestures), as well as using the correct tone of voice, has a positive effect on their recruitment decision.

Conclusion and Discussion

This study has analyzed potential employees' impression management tactics regarding their applications and recruitment interviews. The research constructed an ideal CV based on sources in the relevant literature and then assessed the CV data of the potential employees to find their strengths and weaknesses. The study also includes the advice from HR specialists regarding potential hires' CVs. The research has examined how potential employees use the tactics of ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplification, supplication, and building a favorable image during recruitment, as well as HR professionals' expectations.

A photograph of a potential employee can serve as a powerful tool for managing visual impressions in the context of self-presentation (Siibak, 2009). As per the HR professionals, an official headshot of an applicant with a smile is considered the optimal visual representation for a CV. The optimal CV should also include work experience after personal information. In an ideal CV, having a potential employee share their high school and university knowledge is sufficient for the field of education. The HR professionals recommend that candidates should include basic information (i.e., company, position, start and leave dates) on their CV, as well as the duties and responsibilities related to their work experience. Boudt and Thewissen's (2019) study also emphasized the importance of the order in which words are placed with regard to impression management and drew attention to the role of presenting information in an order that creates a positive perception. Moreover, potential employees should be able to introduce themselves on their CVs briefly and clearly without giving unnecessary details. The HR professionals also agreed that further personal information besides first and last name, phone number, email address, home address (county/province), LinkedIn URL, driver's license information, and date of birth is unnecessary. Readability and comprehensibility of documents play important roles with regard to written impression management (Ozsozgun Caliskan & Esen, 2018). Accordingly, the HR professionals expect to see only clear, understandable, and necessary information on CVs. In this context, the determination has been made that potential employees should add their competencies, foreign language knowledge, computer knowledge, certificates, awards, volunteer work, and hobbies/interests to their CV. The fact that HR professionals want to see potential employees' skills, achievements, and awards reveals the importance of using self-promotion tactics on a CV. Volunteer work is highly valued by HR experts and signifies the tactic of exemplification, while hobbies indicate the strategy of ingratiation. Therefore, the study's findings overall highlight the significance of having potential candidates employ assertive tactics on their CVs.

This study has discussed and analyzed in detail under separate headings the impression management tactics potential employees use in recruitment interviews and the impression management tactics HR professionals want from potential employees. The research findings indicate potential employees to prefer assertive tactics during interviews that involve actively demonstrating behaviors that attempt to create a specific impression (Andrews & Kacmar, 2001). In line with previous research (Ellis et al., 2002; Van Iddekinge et al., 2007; Peck & Levashina, 2017), the present study found that potential employees attempt to enhance HR professionals' perceptions by highlighting their skills and positive abilities. The potential employees extensively used the impression management tactic of ingratiation. By using this ingratiation tactic, potential employees can be considered charming, empathetic, and agreeable (Varma et al., 2006) by interviewers. In this context, the potential employees were friendly and approachable to the expert conducting the recruitment interviews. The potential employees praised the company in order to convey to the HR professional that they have researched the company they've applied to. HR professionals recommend that potential employees strike a balance between sincerity and formality and stated that having potential employees research the company and be able to convey as much will make them stand out among other candidates; however, potential employees do not need to praise the company.

The potential employees used self-promotion, another impression management approach. HR professionals advised that candidates use this method more. As Roulin et al. (2014) stated in their study, the use of self-promotion tactics can enhance the interview evaluations a potential employer conducts. By applying the tactic of self-promotion, potential employees can effectively show their skills by highlighting their accomplishments (Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Some candidates described their former employment, internships, clubs, social responsibility initiatives, and triumphs in detail, while others described their experiences without going

into detail. As in Ellis et al.'s (2002) study, self-promotion is a preferred impression management tactic for potential employees. The HR specialists advised that candidates describe their employability and social skills, of which the majority did practice.

The potential employees used the impression management tactic of exemplification less frequently. Long (2016) focused his research on the subject of employees using exemplification behaviors to affect the reactions of potential audiences. However, just over half of the potential employees used the phrase "I help my colleagues" during the recruitment interviews. The HR professionals were determined to not recommend potential employees use any other expressions apart from something akin to "I help my colleagues," and the majority of potential employees did the right thing.

Despite the divergence from other approaches in terms of showing weakness and flattery (Jones & Pittman, 1982), the potential employees used the tactic of supplication extensively. Almost all the potential employees stated wanting to benefit from the experiences of the employees currently working in the company during the recruitment interview and requested coaching from them. The use of these expressions by potential employees was determined to create a positive impression on the HR professionals.

The potential employees frequently adopted the tactic of building a positive image. All the potential employees stated that they took care to dress stylishly, be well-groomed, and be attentive while going to the interview because they consider first impressions to be important. Creating a positive image might be important during interviews as a nonverbal way of making an impression (Van Iddekinge et al., 2007). The HR professionals stated thinking the same as potential employees in this regard and having potential employees come to the interview clean, well-groomed, orderly, and attentive positively affecting the professionals' first impressions.

As a result, this research has revealed findings about what should be included on an ideal CV and potential candidates' impression management tactics and interpreted these by comparing them with HR professionals' expectations both regarding job interviews and what should be on a CV. As Wilhelmy et al. (2021) stated, consistency between HR professionals' expectations and what potential employees use as far as impression management tactics is important for job interviews. Therefore, the results of the research are expected to provide useful information to the labor market and shed light on future studies.

Limitations and Assumptions of the Research

In terms of potential employees, the research is limited to the CVs and recruitment interview experiences of 3rd- and 4th-year university students within the scope of job applications. The research is also limited to the experiences and experience levels of the HR professionals who've worked in various sectors and who've conducted recruitment interviews with potential employees. In addition, the competence of the research interviewer, as well as the answers the participants gave to the questions and the time allocated to the interviews, were also limited.

The CV information about the potential employees who participated in the research is assumed to be truthful. In order to ensure this, the potential employees were informed that all personal information on their CVs would be kept confidential. The potential employees and HR professionals who participated in the research are also assumed to have answered the questions sincerely and honestly.

Acknowledgments: This project is supported by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) within the scope of University Students Research Projects Support Program No. 2209-A.

Ethics Committee Approval: This study was approved by The Yıldız Technical University Social and Human Sciences Research Ethics Committee (2021.11)

Peer Review: Externally peer-reviewed.

Author Contributions: Conception/Design of Study- E.E., Y.B., S.K.V.; Data Acquisition- Y.B.; Data .Analysis/Interpretation- E.E., Y.B.; Drafting Manuscript- Y.B., S.K.V.; Critical Revision of Manuscript- E.E.; Final Approval and Accountability- E.E., Y.B., S.K.V.

Conflict of Interest: Authors declared no conflict of interest.

Financial Disclosure: This project is supported by the Scientific and Technological Research Council of Turkey (TUBITAK) within the scope of University Students Research Projects Support Program No. 2209-A.

ORCID:

Yağmur Bakanoğlu	0009-0001-7786-2309
Emel Esen	0000-0001-5753-3252
Selin Karaca Varinlioğlu	0000-0003-1802-5452

REFERENCES

- Andrews, M. C., & Kacmar, K. M. (2001). Impression management by association: Construction and validation of a scale. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 58(1), 142-161. DOI: 10.1006/jvbe.2000.1756
- Boudt, K., & Thewissen, J. (2019). Jockeying for position in CEO letters: Impression management and sentiment analytics. *Financial Management*, 48(1), 77-115.
- Chen, C. C., Wen-Fen Yang, I., & Lin, W. C. (2010). Applicant impression management in job interview: The moderating role of interviewer affectivity. *Journal of Occupational and Organizational Psychology*, 83(3), 739-757. doi:10.1348/096317909x473895.
- Ellis, A. P., West, B. J., Ryan, A. M., & DeShon, R. P. (2002). The use of impression management tactics in structured interviews: A function of question type?. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 87(6), 1200-1208. DOI: 10.1037/0021-9010.87.6.1200
- Giacalone, R. A., & Rosenfeld, P. (Eds.). (1989). *Impression management in the organization*. Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, Inc.
- Gioaba, I., & Krings, F. (2017). Impression management in the job interview: An effective way of mitigating discrimination against older applicants? *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 770. <https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00770>
- Goffman, E. (1959), *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Doubleday, Garden City, NY.
- Hammarberg, K., Kirkman, M., & de Lacey, S. (2016). Qualitative research methods: when to use them and how to judge them. *Human Reproduction*, 31(3), 498-501. <https://doi.org/10.1093/humrep/dev334>
- Jones, E. E. (1964), *Ingratiation*, Appleton-Century-Crofts, New York, NY.
- Jones, E.E. and Pittman, T.S. (1982), "Toward a General Theory of Strategic Self-Presentation", Suls, J. (Ed.), *Psychological Perspectives on the Self*, Vol. 1, Erlbaum, Hillsdale, pp. 231-262.
- Knouse, S. B., Giacalone, R. A., & Pollard, H. (1988). Impression management in the resume and its cover letter. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 3(2), 242-249. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01014492>
- Leary, M. R., & Kowalski, R. M. (1990). Impression management: A literature review and two-component model. *Psychological Bulletin*, 107(1), 34-47. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.107.1.34>
- Long, D. M. (2016). A method to the martyrdom. *Organizational Psychology Review*, 7(1), 36-65. doi:10.1177/2041386616663816
- Peck, J. A., & Levashina, J. (2017). Impression management and interview and job performance ratings: A meta-analysis of research design with tactics in mind. *Frontiers in Psychology*, 8, 201. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2017.00201. PMID: 28261135
- Risavy, S. D. (2017). The resume research literature: where have we been and where should we go next. *Journal of Educational and Developmental Psychology*, 7(1), 169-187. DOI:10.5539/jedp.v7n1p169
- Roulin, N., Bangerter, A., & Levashina, J. (2014). Interviewers' perceptions of impression management in employment interviews. *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 29(2), 141-163. <https://doi.org/10.1108/JMP-10-2012-0295>
- Schlenker, B. R. (2003). Self-presentation. In M. R. Leary & J. P. Tangney (Eds.), *Handbook of self and identity* (pp. 492-518). The Guilford Press.
- Siibak, A. (2009). Constructing the Self through the Photo selection - Visual Impression Management on Social Networking Websites. *Cyberpsychology: Journal of Psychosocial Research on Cyberspace*, 3(1), article 1. <http://cyberpsychology.eu/view.php?cisloclanku=2009061501&article=1>
- Stevens, C. K., & Kristof, A. L. (1995). Making the right impression: A field study of applicant impression management during job interviews. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 80(5), 587-606. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.80.5.587>
- Swider, B. W., Barrick, M. R., Harris, T. B., & Stoverink, A. C. (2011). Managing and creating an image in the interview: The role of interviewee initial impressions. *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(6), 1275-1288. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0024005>
- Ozsozgun Caliskan, A. & Emel, E. (2018). Readability of Corporate Reports and Impression Management. *PressAcademia Procedia*, 7(1), 300-302.
- Van Iddekinge, C. H., McFarland, L. A., & Raymark, P. H. (2007). Antecedents of impression management use and effectiveness in a structured interview. *Journal of Management*, 33(5), 752-773. DOI: 10.1177/0149206307305563
- Varma, A., Min Toh, S., & Pichler, S. (2006). Ingratiation in job applications: Impact on selection decisions. *Journal of managerial psychology*, 21(3), 200-210. <https://doi.org/10.1108/02683940610659551>
- Wuang, M., McAuslan, P., DiMambro, J. M., & Mięgoć, N. (2017). Impression management use in resumes and cover letters. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 32(6), 727-746. DOI: 10.1007/s10869-016-9470-9
- Wayne, S. J., & Kacmar, K. M. (1991). The effects of impression management on the performance appraisal process. *Organizational Behavior and Human Decision Processes*, 48(1), 70-88. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978\(91\)90006-F](https://doi.org/10.1016/0749-5978(91)90006-F)
- Wilhelmy, A., Roulin, N., & Wingate, T. G. (2021). Does it take two to tango? Examining how applicants and interviewers adapt their impression management to each other. *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 36, 1053-1076. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10869-020-09720-5>

How to cite this article

Bakanoglu, Y., Esen, E., Karaca Varinlioglu, S. (2023). Potential employees' impression management tactics and human resource management professionals' perspectives. *Istanbul Management Journal*, 95, 53-64. <http://doi.org/10.26650/imj.2023.95.1386466>