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GENDER PERSPECTIVE OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT
STRATEGIES AMONG YOUNG ADULTS

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Abstract

As a relatively new research topic in local context, the study of the impression management strategies among young adults from the gender perspective is relevant both theoretically and empirically. The theoretical significance lies in the need for a comparative analysis of classical and recent studies conducted in various countries. Empirical investigation is of interest especially from the perspective of gender study of the phenomenon to identify and compare impression management strategies, used by young men and women in various contexts and interactions in the local environment (interpersonal relationships, workplace, organizational or public space), thus, we find this research actual as it would provide a better understanding of the strategies that young men and women use in to create a favourable image of themselves in various social contexts but also to suggest intervention for a better impression management of the public image in various social contexts by young adults and not only. Although at the international level, there are several studies analysing impression management strategies, at the national level, such studies are a few. In this sense, the studies carried out abroad served as conceptual support in the elaboration of the empirical approach carried out in the present research. Given the fact that impression management strategies are quite varied, we start from the premise that we will identify not only the strategies used in various social contexts but also differences in their manifestation and intensity, between men and women.

Keywords: impression management; gender perspective; public image; presentation strategies;

1. INTRODUCTION

Impression management refers to the activity of individuals carried out in order to process, evaluate and control information about an object, an event or about their own self in order to create a more favourable image of themselves. Impression management describes the efforts of an actor to create, maintain, protect, or modify an image held by a target audience (Bolino and Turnley, 2003). To achieve this goal, actors use a variety of specific impression management behaviours and tactics, such as compliments, designed to create a desired image (Bolino and Turnley, 1999). The sociologist Ervin Goffman was the first to find impression management as an objective field of study. He states that impression management refers to how individuals present themselves and their activity to others, how

they guide and control the impression they are creating, how individuals promote their performance and abilities (Bolino, Kacmar, Turney and Lilstrap, 2008). The study of impression management dimensions is relevant from both, theoretical and empirical points of view is a relatively new research topic in the local context.

Discursive impression management strategies are described by Bilbow and Young (1996) as "those linguistic, intentional or unintentional linguistic behaviours that create and maintain impressions with or without a conscious purpose." Impression management is also defined as a "conscious or unconscious attempt to control the images that are projected into social interactions" (Constantin, 2009). The motivation to manage the impressions of others about oneself depends on the value that the purpose for the person has and the relevance of the impressions to achieve this goal (Elis, West, Ryan and Deshon, 2002). Jones (1964) argues that the more favourable the results of a person's actions towards another individual, the more tactic of ingratiation will manifest that individual towards that person (Gardner and Martinko, 1988).

2. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

The research was designed to investigate the particularities of impression management strategies in various social contexts between young men and women. The research is based on theoretical approaches, taxonomies, classifications and studies by authors such as Goffman (1959); Leary and Kowalski (1990); Tedeschi and Melburg (1984); Bilbow (1996, 1997); Cody and McLaughlin (1990); Gardner and Martinko (1988); Gardner, Peluchette, and Clinebell (1994); Giacalone and Rosenfeld (1989, 1991); Leary (1996); Tedeschi (1981), Wayne and Kacmar (1991); Ellis, West, Ryan and DeShon (2002).

The investigative approach is based on quantitative research methods. The elaboration of the research design and the actual realization of the research (data collection, interpretation and analysis) was carried out in two stages: the first, of the elaboration of the research design and of the data collection and the second, analyses and data processing of the quantitative results obtained.

The aim of the research is to identify impression management strategies in various social contexts, also to identify the differences between young women and men.

The research objective is to determine the main self-presentation strategies and investigating the impression management strategies used by individuals in various social contexts, highlighting gender differences in the manifestation of impression management strategies.

3. RESEARCH METHODS

In order to carry out the research, the non-experimental methods were considered, the research of phenomena as they are, without manipulating the subjects or variables involved in the process. The non-experimental methods being descriptive, analytical and predictive, will help us to produce useful information for understanding impression management strategies, based on which we could identify solutions with practical impact for the subjects concerned.

We aimed to perform a cross-sectional research, the investigated phenomenon being measured in a single moment, the values describing the characteristics measured in a single time section. The selection of the subjects and the measurement of the research variables were performed only once, followed by the analysis and extraction of conclusions based on them. Thus, the research results represent the investigated characteristics, as manifested at that time, with reference to the respondents, with the possibility of generalization of the results on the reference population.

The research involves a comparative study due to the variables involved and the contexts in which we aim to analyse impression management strategies: (1) theoretical methods: syntheses and analyses of studies and bibliographic sources related to impression management strategies in various contexts; (2) data collection methods: questionnaire; (3) data processing methods: qualitative content analysis.

For the study of impression management strategies we used the Impression Management Scale that was developed by Bolino and Turnley, (1999) who aimed to develop a valid and reliable scale to measure impression management behaviours based on two scales already existing scales from the 1990s (Kumar and Beyerlein, 1991; Wayne and Ferris, 1990). Bolino and Turnley identified the limitations of those scales and developed a more practical scale to identify impression management strategies.

In their study, Bolino and Turnley (1999) classified impression management strategies into five behavioural tactics: self-promotion, insinuation, exemplification, intimidation, and begging. Thus, the construction of this version of the Impression Management Scale through which these five tactics can be examined, marked a very important step in the process of developing a reliable and valid tool for studying the management behaviours of impressions in various contexts: (1) self-promotion, demonstrating skills and achievements to appear competent; (2) ingratiation, using flattery and doing favours to look nice; (3) exemplification, doing things better than required and in a larger volume than necessary to demonstrate that is dedicated or superior; (4) intimidation, threatening or harassing in an attempt to appear dangerous and powerful; (5) supplication, presents themselves as weak or dependent to get help.

The Impression Management Scale contains 25 items, the subjects evaluating the frequency of manifestation of a certain statement, being asked to indicate how often they use the listed behaviours. Answers range from 1 to 5 (1 - almost never, and 5 - almost always).

The collection of quantitative data for this study took place between September and October of 2019. The Impression Management Scale was applied to the group of subjects. Out of the total of 573 questionnaires applied, 46 questionnaires (8.02%) were only partially completed, accordingly, the answers of 527 respondents were considered for the processing and interpretation of the results, of which: 225 respondents (43%) represent young men and 302 respondents (57%) represent young women, as per below:

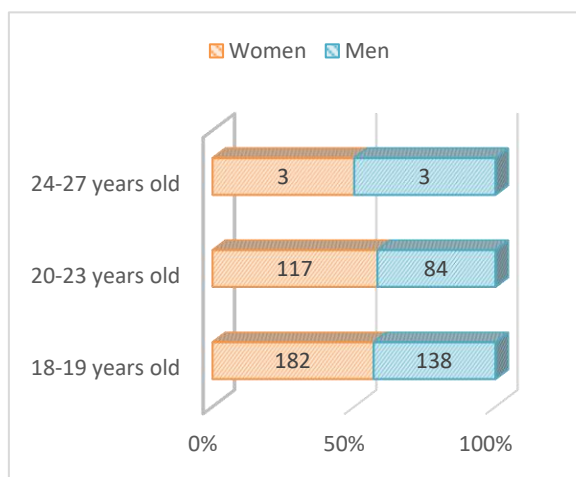


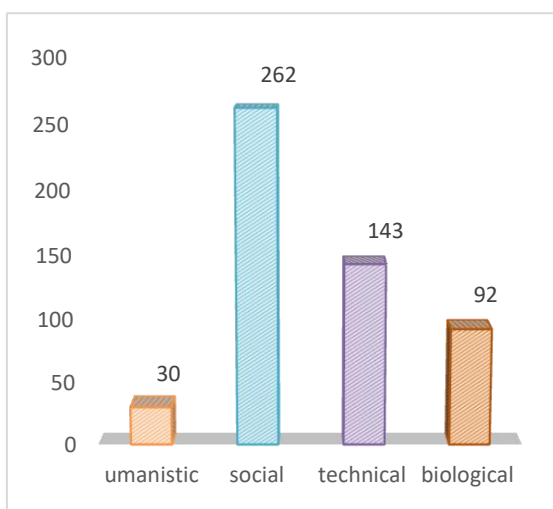
Figure 1. The composition of the group of subjects (age and gender)

The age of the respondents is between 18 - 27 years old, out of which: 182 young women and 138 young men aged 18 - 19 years (61%), 117 female and 84 male aged between 23 - 23 years (38) and per 3 young men and women aged between 24 and 27 (1%).

Also, the young men and women from the group of subjects were grouped into 4 categories according to the discipline of studies: humanities (languages, literature); social sciences (psychology, history and philosophy, law, economics); biological sciences (stomatology, general medicine, pharmacy) and technical sciences (urbanism and architecture, computers and informatics, physics and engineering, information technologies, mathematics).

Figure 2. Composition of the group of subjects for the quantitative study by discipline

The young respondents are students in 3 higher education institutions in the Republic of Moldova: Moldova State University, Technical University and University of Medicine and Pharmacy of the Republic of Moldova and study the disciplines mentioned in these institutions. Subjects were randomly selected, with participation in research being voluntary. Previously, the subjects were informed about the purpose of the study, how to use the results and respect for confidentiality in relation to personal data.

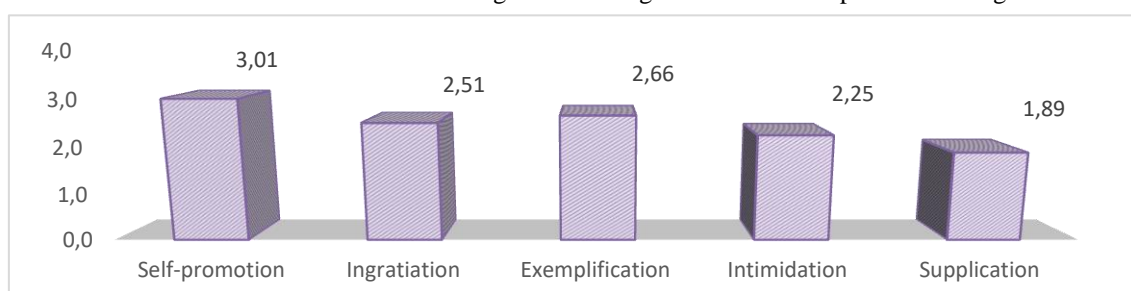


4. FINDINGS

The analysis of the subscale items of the Impression Management Questionnaire developed by Bolino and Turnley (1999) confirmed that they are sufficiently reliable, Cronbach Alpha tests indicating coefficients higher than .70, which according to Hinkin (1995) is an accepted common indicator for measuring reliability and internal consistency. Thus, we present the Cronbach Alpha scores obtained from subscale analyses, as follows: (1) self-promotion scale: $\alpha = 0.85$; (2) ingratiation scale: $\alpha = 0.81$; (3) exemplification scale: $\alpha = 0.74$; (4) intimidation Scale: $\alpha = 0.80$; (5) supplication scale: $\alpha = 0.84$. The results suggest that the translated and adjusted Impression Management Scale developed by Bolino and Turnley (1999) is a reliable tool for investigating young people's impression management strategies.

According to the data, the most frequent used impression management strategies are the self-promotion statements, with an average score of 3.01 points out of a maximum of 5. At the opposite pole is the supplication, with a score of 1.89, followed by the intimidation scale (2.25 points). The ingratiation and exemplification scales accumulated on average 2.51 and 2.66 points accordingly (see Figure 3).

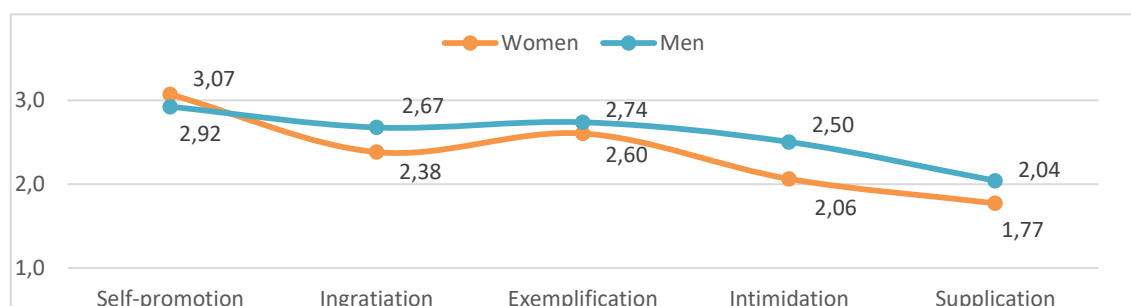
Figure 3. Average scores of the impression management scales



In their study of impression management strategies, Bolino and Turnley (1999) obtained averages of: 2.95 for the self-promotion and ingratiation scales; 2.29 on the exemplification scale; the highest scores were also recorded for intimidation (1.91) and supplication (1.62).

Although women accumulated a higher score on the self-promotion scale (3.07), compared to men (2.92 points), according to the results obtained based on the independent T test, there are no gender differences in the manifestation of this type of impression management strategies: $t = 1.929$, $p < .05$. As for the exemplification scale, where men accumulated a slightly higher score than women (2.74 and 2.60), according to the results obtained based on the independent T test, there are also no gender differences: $t = -1.744$, $p < .05$. Significant differences in the use of impression management strategies by women and men were identified on the ingratiation scale, where women recorded an average of 2.38 compared to men who recorded a higher average (2.67), according to the independent T test: $t = -3.833$, $p = 0.000142$. Intimidation scale is led by young men, as women also recorded a lower average score (2.06) compared to men (2.50), this significant difference being also reflected in the results of the independent T test: $t = -5.978$, $p < .00001$. A similar situation is attested in the results of the intimidation scale, where men recorded a higher average score (2.04) compared to women (1.77), the independent T test, resulting significant differences: $t = -3.642$, $p = .000297$ (see Figure 4).

Figure 4. Average scores of the impression management scales from gender perspective



The correlation between the 5 types of impression management strategies (see Table 1) reflects a trend of positive correlation between the various dimensions of impression management strategies, suggesting that people generally tend to either engage in the use of impression management strategies, or to avoid the involvement of impression management strategies in their behaviour. According to the Pearson correlation test, the strongest correlation occurred between ingratiation and exemplification ($r = .486, p = 0.01$, bilateral). The next strongest correlation occurred between intimidation and supplication ($r = .472, p = 0.01$, bilateral).

Table 1: The correlation between the impression management scales

	Self-promotion	Supplication	Exemplification	Insinuation	Intimidation
Self-promotion	1				
Supplication	.141**	1			
Exemplification	.360**	.343**	1		
Insinuation	.350**	.387**	.486**	1	
Intimidation	.234**	.472**	.368**	.368**	1

** $p > 0.01$ (bilateral) * $p > 0.05$ (bilateral)

5. CONCLUSION

The present study of the impression management strategies among young adults, first, confirmed the validity and reliability of the Impression Management Scale and is an additional confirmation of the fact that the scale can be applied on young people in order to identify the most frequent used impression management strategies. The results of the study revealed that self-promotion is the most used impression management strategy among young adults, but supplication the least, also, young women use less ingratiation, intimidation and supplication strategies compared to young men.

The strong correlation between ingratiation and exemplification, according to Bolino and Turnley (1999), is evident, as from the theoretical perspective, this two impression management strategies should demonstrate the strongest correlation, because both ingratiation and exemplification are used as an attempt to create a favourable self-image, without emphasizing one's achievements. The next strongest correlation between intimidation and supplication, results, according to Bolino and Turnley (1999), since these two tactics of impression management are considered to be the most negative compared to all the other dimensions.

The obtained results are comparable to the ones obtained by other authors, including the researchers who elaborated the scale, Bolino and Turnley in 1999, even so, the results obtained by the present study, offer an objective and perspective ground for further research that would lead to a better understanding of the other personal factors that influence the impression management strategies used by the young adults in various social contexts.

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