The Role Applicant Self-Monitoring on Applicant Ingratiation and Self-Promotion During Recruitment

Nabilla Azzahra Sayidina[1], Triana Fitriastuti[1,2*], Muhammad Noval Ridho Abdilah[1], Alia Kiranti[1], Marselina Panandu[1]

[1]Department Management, Mulawarman University, Samarinda, Indonesia
[2]Faculty of Economics and Business Administration, Ghent University, 9000 Gent, Belgium

*triana.fitriastuti@feb.unmul.ac.id
*triana.fitriastuti@ugent.be

Abstract. Applicant influence tactics are critical in shaping recruiters' perceptions during selection and assessment processes. Building on impression management theory, this study investigates how applicant self-monitoring influences two key influence tactics, self-promotion and ingratiation, which applicants use to regulate impressions in evaluative settings. Data were obtained from 189 subordinates in Indonesia who reported on applicant-like behaviors observed in workplace interactions. Using multiple linear regression analysis, the results show that self-monitoring has a significant positive effect on both self-promotion and ingratiation. These findings indicate that individuals high in self-monitoring strategically adjust their behavior to appear competent and likable, activating both assertive and affiliative influence strategies. The study extends prior research by highlighting self-monitoring as a key antecedent of influence-tactic use within the Indonesian context. Practical implications suggest that recruiters and, more generally, HR managers should consider applicants' adaptive self-presentation tendencies when interpreting influence behaviors during organizational assessments.

Keywords: Applicant Self-Monitoring; Self-Promotion; Ingratiation; Influence Tactics; Impression Management; Recruitment Behavior; Indonesia.

1 Introduction

In this era of increasingly fierce recruitment competition, the main challenge is no longer simply whether applicants are present, but also the extent to which applicants are honest in presenting themselves. A survey cited in a Forbes article by [1] found that 70% of workers admitted to lying on their CVs, including exaggerating their job titles, length of service, or previous job responsibilities. This case underscores that managing perceptions through the physicalizing of professional identity (such as crafting exaggerated narratives of experience) is increasingly becoming a crucial part of the selection process.

In this context, self-monitoring as a psychological characteristic of applicants becomes a highly strategic tool. Self-monitoring refers to an individual's ability to observe and adjust their behavior in accordance with situational expectations [2,3]. Individuals with high self-monitoring are more sensitive to the interviewer's social cues. They are better able to use impression management tactics, such as self-promotion to highlight their competencies or ingratiation to create a pleasant impression, thereby forming a positive perception [4,5].

Empirical literature supports this view. [6] found that high self-monitors more frequently and effectively use tactics such as ingratiation and self-promotion in professional interactions. Other studies also show that high self-monitoring applicants are better able to create an ideal image during the selection process [7,8]. Thus, in a recruitment process prone to manipulation by resume lies, self-monitoring can be an adaptive mechanism that allows applicants to appear attractive while strategically polishing their image.

Although [8] demonstrated that individuals with high self-monitoring are more likely to employ impression management tactics, such as ingratiation and self-promotion, during job interviews, this study focused on

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formal, structured interview contexts. The study assessed how impression management tactics influence recruitment decisions, rather than how self-monitoring directly shapes ingratiation or self-promotion behaviour as a stand-alone outcome.

In Indonesia, impression management in recruitment is influenced by cultural values that emphasize hierarchy, respect for authority, and social harmony. The country has a high-power distance, meaning people generally accept unequal power structures and tend to act in accordance with authority figures' expectations [9]. This orientation is reflected in the concept of *asal bapak senang* (ABS), which emphasizes pleasing superiors to maintain harmony within organizational relationships [10]. Such values are also salient during recruitment, as applicants anticipate hierarchical expectations and strategically manage impressions to gain early approval from interviewers. This cultural influence is corroborated by research on human resource management in Indonesia, which emphasizes that national cultural dimensions, such as high power distance and collectivism, significantly shape HRM practices, including recruitment and selection procedures [11], shape cultural expectations for appropriate behavior toward authority figures. These practices influence patterns of social conformity and hierarchical alignment that applicants may demonstrate during recruitment interactions.

However, the majority of impression management research has focused on either the direct effects of ingratiation and self-promotion on recruiter perceptions and hiring outcomes [8,12] or faking behavior and impression management strategies within formal interview settings [13,14]. As a result, little research has examined how candidate self-monitoring influences ingratiation and self-promotion as distinct behavioral outcomes, particularly outside controlled interview settings.

Thus, the purpose of this study is to systematically examine how applicant self-monitoring influences impression management practices in the hiring context. This study specifically aims to examine how self-monitoring influences candidates' use of self-promotion and ingratiation as impression management strategies and explore how self-monitoring functions as a personal psychological trait that impacts how professionals strategically present themselves outside of formal interview settings.

This study contributes to the literature in three important ways. First, rather than focusing solely on recruiter perceptions or hiring outcomes, this approach enhances impression management research by presenting applicant self-monitoring as a psychological disposition that directly influences ingratiation and self-promotion during recruitment. Second, it provides a more comprehensive understanding of how dispositional qualities influence strategic self-presentation throughout the recruitment process by examining impression-management behaviors beyond formal interviews and scripted scenarios. Third, this study employs multiple regression analysis to empirically demonstrate the dispositional underpinnings of impression management practices.

2 Theoretical Background and Hypothesis Development

2.1 Applicant Self-Monitoring

The concept of self-monitoring, proposed by social psychologists, emphasizes an individual's ability to observe, regulate, and modify their expressive behavior in response to social demands. Self-monitoring is not only related to self-awareness but also reflects social acuity and interpersonal flexibility, enabling a person to present themselves strategically. Individuals with high self-monitoring are susceptible to situational norms, able to accurately read social cues, and adjust their behaviour to optimise social acceptance [3]. They scan the social environment to identify the target's expectations, then display the behavior most likely to elicit positive evaluation. Conversely, low self-monitoring involves expressing oneself in line with internal values, is less responsive to social cues, and therefore limits the ability to adjust one's self-presentation.

In the context of recruitment, this ability becomes increasingly important because the selection process is an evaluative situation fraught with pressure to make a good impression. Several studies confirm that applicants with high self-monitoring tend to use more impression-management strategies to influence

interviewers' assessments [8,15]. They not only adjust their verbal responses but also tailor their gestures, intonation, and emotional expressions to align with the organization's expectations.

Furthermore, prior studies emphasize that self-monitoring cannot be separated from impression management theory [16,17]. Applicants with high levels of self-monitoring tend to be more strategic in forming impressions of competence and likeability, the two most prominent impression goals in the selection process. They understand that success in recruitment is not only determined by objective abilities, but also by how they present themselves. Conversely, applicants with low self-monitoring often struggle to manage their emotions, body language, and responses to questions, resulting in less effective self-presentation that influences the recruiter's perception.

2.2. Ingratiation

Ingratiation is a key tactic in impression management, aimed at creating a positive impression of oneself through actions like agreeing with others, giving compliments, and being helpful [18]. This strategy is employed to enhance the target's perception of liking, typically a superior or recruiter, thereby leading to more positive interpersonal assessments [19,20]. Although effective, [17] emphasize that ingratiation carries social risks: efforts to appear pleasant may be valued as interpersonal warmth, but they may also be interpreted as manipulative or sycophantic behavior.

Although ingratiation is often used as an adaptive impression management strategy, to cope unpleasant workplace such organizational politics [10], prior research indicates that its effects are conditional and may become detrimental over time. Sustained impression management may indirectly lead to workplace exclusion by fostering workplace deviance, especially when individuals feel fatigued or do not meet expectations after receiving like-based rewards [21]. However, evidence from Indonesia suggests that ingratiation does not uniformly lead to dysfunctional outcomes; rather, its potential risks may be socially regulated within high-quality relational contexts, such as strong leader–member exchange relationships [22]. These findings highlight ingratiation as a double-edged strategy, underscoring the importance of self-monitoring to calibrate its use effectively.

In the context of job selection, ingratiation becomes increasingly relevant as applicants strategically adjust their behavior to appear similar, supportive, and pleasant to interviewers. When applicants demonstrate conformity or offer praise, interviewers tend to perceive a value similarity, which ultimately leads to a more positive evaluation of the candidate [23,24]. Previous research has also found that ingratiation is associated with career success [25] and improves interview outcomes [26].

Theoretically, ingratiation behavior is influenced by both dispositional and situational factors [19]. Individuals naturally desire social acceptance, but the intensity of ingratiation increases when they realize that such behavior can yield professional benefits, especially in competitive environments. Thus, ingratiation can be understood as a conscious interpersonal strategy used to achieve instrumental goals, including influencing recruiters' assessments in the selection process.

2.3. Self-Promotion

According to [8], self-promotion is a way for individuals to present themselves by emphasizing their personal strengths and achievements to foster a positive impression, especially with interviewers or superiors. This strategy becomes more effective when combined with other tactics such as ingratiation. Moreover, [27] refer to self-promotion as an effort to highlight achievements and expertise in order to be perceived as competent, especially in situations that demand a first impression. Similarly, [28] describe self-promotion as a tactic to enhance a professional image by emphasizing personal success and capabilities. From these perspectives, self-promotion is understood as a strategy to showcase one's expertise, accomplishments, and strengths to attract favorable evaluations and recognition, particularly in a professional setting.

To enhance self-promotion, highlight the value of strong communication skills, allowing individuals to present their accomplishments in an engaging yet honest way [17]. Furthermore, using professional social

media platforms offers a strategic method to showcase portfolios, skills, and experience. By regularly implementing this approach, individuals can improve their self-promotion abilities and expand their chances in a competitive job market.

2.4. The Influence of Applicant Self-Monitoring on Ingratiation

People with high self-monitoring are more attuned to social cues and can adapt their behavior to fit the situation. This makes them more prone to using ingratiation as a strategic way to interact with others. According to Snyder's Self- Monitoring Theory [2], those who are skilled at observing their social environment can adjust their self-presentation to seek acceptance from others. This ability aligns with Jones & Pittman's Impression Management Theory [17], which posits that ingratiation through praise, agreement, and cooperative behavior serves as a strategy to enhance positive impressions and be liked by the target. Individuals who understand that positive impressions can yield tangible benefits, such as better performance evaluations or increased career opportunities, become increasingly motivated to use ingratiation more intensively and purposefully [29].

Previous research has shown that high self-monitors are not only more socially adaptive but also more strategic in their use of ingratiation to influence interpersonal evaluations. [6] found that high self-monitors are consistently more adept than low self-monitors at using ingratiation to shape positive perceptions among colleagues and superiors. These findings are reinforced by [30], who explain that the level of self-monitoring influences how subordinates strategically use ingratiation to strengthen relationships with leaders. Furthermore, [31] demonstrate that applicant traits, such as self-monitoring ability, greatly affect their likelihood of using impression management strategies in the job application process. This aligns with [32], who argue that high self-monitors are better at recognizing social cues and choosing the most effective tactics to reach their interpersonal objectives.

Overall, both theory and empirical findings indicate that individuals with greater ability to monitor and adjust to their social environment tend to use ingratiation more frequently and effectively to build positive impressions and advance their personal interests. Therefore, the following hypothesis is proposed:
H_1 Applicant self-monitoring has a positive effect on ingratiation.

2.5. The Influence of Applicant Self-Monitoring on Self-Promotion

Individuals with high self-monitoring have been shown to be more effective at self-promotion than those with low self-monitoring, mainly because they are better at strategically managing social impressions. Based on [2] Self-Monitoring Theory, individuals differ in their tendency to monitor and adjust their behavior according to social demands. High self-monitors are highly perceptive of social cues, enabling them to present themselves in the most favorable manner in evaluative situations, such as recruitment processes or organizational interactions.

Empirical support suggests that high self-monitors are more adept at employing impression management tactics, including self-promotion, ingratiation, and exemplification, to create a positive image in the eyes of their colleagues [6]. In line with this, [7], explain that high self-monitors are more skilled (getting ahead) in organizational environments through planned and adaptive self-presentation. These findings demonstrate that a self-monitoring orientation offers significant advantages in highlighting personal competencies and achievements. Previous research also shows the consistent use of self-promotion in the context of interviews and job selection. [26] found that self-promotion is a common tactic candidates use to differentiate themselves. However, [8] noted that the impact of self-promotion on recruitment recommendations is not always strong, especially when interviewers perceive this behavior as overly self-image-oriented. These findings show that although high self-monitors are highly skilled at self-promotion, the effectiveness of this tactic still depends on the interpersonal context and the recruiter's interpretation.

Overall, both the theoretical framework and empirical evidence demonstrate that the ability to strategically adapt behavior, a key characteristic of high self-monitors, makes them more effective at self-promotion. Thus, the hypothesis is proposed that
H_2 applicant self-monitoring has a positive effect on self-promotion.

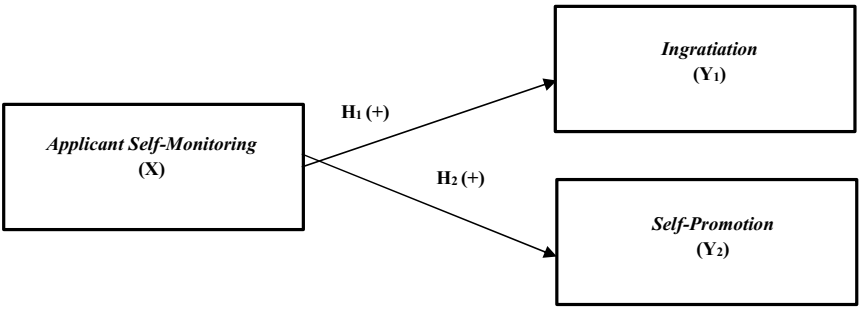


Figure 1. Research Framework: The Influence of Applicant Self-Monitoring on Ingratiation and Self-Promotion

3 Research Method

This study collected data from 189 employees working in various industrial sectors in Indonesia. The industrial sectors involved were banking, petroleum, retail, education and research, and government. Supervisors in each organization were contacted in advance and informed of the study's purpose. They assisted in identifying and recruiting eligible participants. Participation was entirely voluntary, and all responses were kept confidential. Paper-based questionnaires were administered directly at the participants' workplaces. Employees completed self-report measures of psychological behaviors experienced during the recruitment process, namely self-monitoring and its impact on the use of ingratiation and self-promotion tactics. The questionnaire took 15–20 minutes to complete. The researchers included additional demographic data, including age, gender, and length of service, which are presented in Table 1.

3.1. Measurement

All constructs were measured using scales validated in reputable literature. A Likert-type response format was used for each scale, and internal consistency was evaluated with Cronbach's alpha; all scales showed acceptable reliability ($\alpha > 0.60$).

Applicant self-monitoring was evaluated through applicant self-reports using 13 items adapted from [33], which covered acting ability and the ability to modify self-presentation. Respondents indicated how often they engaged in these behaviors during the recruitment process on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Sample items include: 'I might be a good actor' and 'When I feel that the image I present is ineffective, I can easily replace it with something more effective. The Cronbach's alpha value for this scale is 0.69.

Ingratiation was measured using 9 items from [26] with dimensions of other-enhancements, opinion conformity, fit with the organization, and nonverbal behavior. Respondents were asked to indicate things they had done during the recruitment process on a 5-point scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). Example items are: 'I praised the organization' and 'I often smiled or used friendly body language. Cronbach's alpha value for this scale is 0.81.

Self-promotion was assessed using indicators identified by [26]. Examples include: 'I explain my skills and abilities in a convincing manner' and 'I take the initiative during interviews to convey my main points.' In this study, self-promotion was measured with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = strongly disagree to 5 = strongly agree). The Cronbach's alpha for this scale is 0.70.

To assess the adequacy and suitability of the data sample for factor analysis, we conducted the Kaiser Meyer–Olkin (KMO) test and Bartlett's sphericity test. The KMO value was 0.828, exceeding the recommended threshold of 0.60, indicating an adequate level of sample adequacy. Bartlett's sphericity test

was significant (χ^2 (351) = 1887.824, p < 0.001), confirming that the correlation matrix was suitable for further analysis.

Table 1. Descriptive Statistics and Correlations

	Mean	*SD*	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Age	26.32	7.020	1							
Gender	.79	.410	.048	1						
Colleagues	2.31	1.234	.089	-.176**	1					
Job Exp	1.38	.793	.732**	.017	.045	1				
SPV Exp	1.19	.548	.536**	.175**	.057	.683**	1			
Applicant Self-Monitoring	3.58	.492	-.161*	-.048	.111	-.103	-.065	1		
Ingratiation	3.80	.459	.074	-.104	.139	.100	.081	.369**	1	
Self-Promotion	3.6011	.55179	.069	-.117	.234**	.094	.147*	.441**	.482**	1

*P <0.05, **P <0.01

Table 1 shows the mean, standard deviation, and correlation between variables. The mean scores and standard deviations for the main variables of the study are as follows: Applicant self-monitoring (M = 3.58, SD = 0.49), Ingratiation (M = 3.80, SD = 0.45), and self-promotion (M = 3.60, SD = 0.55). Overall, the descriptive statistics results show that the average age of respondents was 26.32 years (SD = 7.02) and the majority were female (M = 0.79). The research participants had approximately 1.38 years of work experience (SD = 0.79), while their experience working directly with supervisors was around 1.19 years (SD = 0.55). For the main variables, the average scores showed that the level of applicant self-monitoring was quite high (M = 3.58), as was the use of ingratiation tactics (M = 3.80) and self-promotion (M = 3.60).

As predicted, applicant self-monitoring shows a strong positive relationship with self-promotion (r = 0.441, p < 0.01) and ingratiation (r = 0.369, p < 0.01). This indicates that individuals with higher levels of self-monitoring tend to be more active in applying both forms of impression management tactics. Furthermore, self-promotion was positively correlated with ingratiation (r = 0.482, p < 0.01), suggesting that the two strategies often co-occur when individuals attempt to shape a particular image.

Regarding demographic variables, age is negatively correlated with applicant self-monitoring (r = –0.161, p < 0.05), indicating that younger respondents are more likely to adjust their behavior to make a positive impression. Age is also closely related to work experience and experience with supervisors (r = 0.732 and r = 0.536, p < 0.01), in line with the accumulation of experience throughout career development. In addition, the number of co-workers showed a positive correlation with self-promotion (r = 0.234, p < 0.01), which may indicate that a larger work context provides more space or necessity for individuals to highlight their competencies.

3.2. Data Analysis

To examine the effect of applicant self-monitoring on two types of impression management tactics, specifically self-promotion and ingratiation, this study employs multiple linear regression analysis. This method allows researchers to assess the impact of independent variables (X) on each dependent variable (Y_1 and Y_2) separately. The regression model used is formulated as follows:

$$Y_1 = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon$$
$$Y_2 = \beta_0 + \beta_1 X + \varepsilon$$

Before performing regression analysis, all variables are examined to ensure that there's no multicollinearity and no deviation from the basic assumptions of regression.

4 Result And Discussion

This study, grounded in the Theory of Impression Management and the Self-Monitoring concept, provides new insights into how an individual's self-regulation skills affect the two main influence tactics—ingratiation and self-promotion—that applicants frequently use to shape impressions during evaluations situations. In Impression Management, individuals attempt to control how they are perceived through strategies such as highlighting their competence or building social closeness [17]. Meanwhile [2], Self-Monitoring explains why some individuals are more adaptive in employing these tactics because they are more sensitive to social cues and able to adjust their behavior to suit the demands of the situation. Although these two theories have been widely used, research examining the influence of self-monitoring on various impression tactics simultaneously is still limited. This study fills that gap by showing that self-monitoring directly and significantly increases both ingratiation and self-promotion.

The initial regression model indicates that Applicant Self-Monitoring significantly influences Ingratiation ($B = 0.344$, $\beta = 0.369$, $t = 5.430$, $p < .001$). This supports the idea that people with high self-monitoring tend to display socially adaptive behaviors, like offering praise and aligning their views. [6] highlight that ingratiation is used by individuals seeking to establish positive relationships and earn acceptance from evaluators. In this view, ingratiation is more than just manipulation; it serves as a relational strategy enabling individuals to conform to social norms and expectations. Moreover, identifying candidates' self-monitoring habits during the recruiting process can reveal how they might use ingratiation to blend in with the company culture and establish relationships with coworkers and superiors [34]. Organizations can identify which individuals are most likely to adopt these strategies for managing relationships at work by understanding the role of self-monitoring in ingratiation. This can be very helpful for team relations and leadership development [30,35]. The degree of self-monitoring can impact the success of ingratiation. High self-monitors are more adept at sustaining positive interpersonal interactions by using ingratiation without appearing manipulative [35,36].

The second regression model shows that Applicant Self-Monitoring also has a significant effect on Self-Promotion. The stronger effect than ingratiation indicates that high self-monitors are not only concerned with interpersonal relationships but are also highly strategic in highlighting their competencies and achievements. This finding aligns with the research of [27] and [28], who noted that self-promotion is a key strategy in professional situations, as it presents individuals as competent and worthy of selection. Self-monitoring is frequently employed by people with a careerist mindset, who are committed to developing their careers, to direct their efforts at self-promotion. To increase their visibility and perceived expertise within an organization, this perspective motivates them to engage in impression management actions, such as self-promotion [37]. From a theoretical perspective, self-promotion requires high self-control, particularly in adjusting the narrative of achievements to appear credible without seeming to exaggerate one's abilities, a skill that high self-monitors possess. This is consistent with research demonstrating a favorable relationship between new hires' job performance and self-monitoring. This implies that individuals who self-monitor could use self-promotion as a tactic to receive job offers and perform well initially [38].

Overall, the results of this study indicate that self-monitoring serves as a driving force for two forms of impression management: relational tactics (ingratiation) and competence tactics (self-promotion). Individuals with high self-monitoring do not view these two strategies as mutually exclusive, but rather as complementary channels that can be optimized to maximize positive impressions in the selection process and professional interactions. Thus, this study confirms that self-monitoring is a stable, multidimensional, and highly relevant predictor of how applicants construct their self-image in an organizational environment.

5 Conclusion

This study aims to investigate how applicant self-monitoring affects two main types of impression management tactics: ingratiation and self-promotion. The findings reveal that self-monitoring not only has a significant direct effect on both tactics but also serves as an important psychological trait that motivates applicants to strategically adapt themselves in a competitive selection context. Individuals with high levels

of self-monitoring tend to build a favorable impression through ingratiation, while also highlighting their competencies through self-promotion.

Theoretically, these results expand our understanding of the basic mechanisms of impression management by showing that self-monitoring serves as a dual driver of both relational and competence tactics. Ingratiation, often viewed as a strategy for gaining social acceptance, is used more frequently by individuals who are sensitive to situational demands. Meanwhile, self-promotion, which highlights professional achievements and credibility, also rises significantly among applicants with high self-monitoring. Therefore, self-monitoring is not only a sign of social adaptability but also a key element for successful impression management in evaluative situations.

The practical implications of these findings are essential for organizations and human resource practitioners. First, the selection process needs to be designed to account for the impression-management tactics that applicants strategically use, especially those with high self-monitoring. The use of behavior-based interview techniques, reference checks, and situational tests can help assess competence more objectively and minimize bias due to overly polished self-presentation. Second, interviewer training should cover recognizing patterns of ingratiation and self-promotion to keep candidate evaluations accurate and resistant to manipulation or overly interpersonal tactics.

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