

Self-Presentation Strategies By Non-Standard Workers To Enhance Their Work Experiences

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Article Received: 11-05-2024, Article Accepted: 20-06-2024

Abstract

This study explores self-presentation strategies utilised by non-standard workers at a multinational firm in Zimbabwe to improve their work experiences. Semi-structured face-to-face interviews were relied upon to collect data from nine research participants who had worked for the multinational firm in Zimbabwe for at least five months. The study found that non-standard workers at the case multinational firm in Zimbabwe use a number of self-presentation strategies to improve their work experiences. The three main self-presentation strategies utilized by most of the research participants include self-promotion, exemplification and ingratiation. Only a few research participants indicated that they utilize supplication to improve their work experiences. These participants indicated that they flaunt their weakness and give the impression that they are helpless, hoping that their managers will think they need work related favors. Hence, as it is, non-standard workers at the case multinational firm in Zimbabwe use a variety of self-presentation strategies to improve their work experiences. The current study recommends that non-standard workers know when, where and how to use self-presentation strategies in order to reduce self-damage. The study also recommends managers at the case multinational firm in Zimbabwe to be aware of the self-presentation strategies used by non-standard workers and motivate them to use appropriate self-presentation techniques that does not harm the organization.

Keywords: Work experience, non-standard worker,

multinational firm, self-presentation, strategies

JEL Classification: J22, L61, M54

1. INTRODUCTION

Non-standardized working arrangements are not new in industrialised and emerging countries (Dey et al., 2022; Fapohunda, 2021; Van Doorn et al., 2023; Zindiya, 2022). The use of non-standard labour is thought to have increased globally over the last three decades, although some countries are beginning to replace permanent employment with non-standard workers (Ture & Ravi, 2022; Ferrari & Graham, 2023; ILO, 2022). A number of authors have argued that non-standard labour relations have spread as a flexible employment strategy across global industry (Teodorovicz et al., 2024; Durach et al., 2023; Karlstedt, 2023; Brega et al., 2023). Although they have been used in the Global South for many years, non-standard work arrangements are more prevalent in Zimbabwe as a cost-cutting and flexibility strategy (Ukpere et al., 2023; Zvavahera & Chirima, 2023; Mapira et al., 2023; Labour Force Survey, 2023; Labour Market Outlook, 2024). Crucially, the precarious nature of non-standard employment is the source of conflict between trade unions, companies, and workers, making it a hot topic and cause of great concern (Oyetunde et al., 2022; Nguyen et al., 2022; Kalejaiye, 2021). Non-standard work arrangements are seen by trade unions and workers as a form of slavery of the new millennium and evidence of the transition from formal employment to informal and precarious work (Broschak & Davis-Blake, 2021; Kelly & Kalev, 2022; Retkowsky et al., 2023). Mitonga-Monga et al. (2023) state that given the insecure and precarious nature of non-standard work arrangements, atypical workers are forced to invest in alternative mechanisms to improve their work experience. Similarly, Rho et al. (2023) assert that because non-standard workers' jobs are inherently precarious, atypical workers should utilise self-expression techniques more than permanent employees to improve their work experiences. Bolino et al. (2014) defines self-presentation as a collection of techniques that can be used to make a positive impression. Similarly, Bourdage et al. (2015) define self-presentation as the process by which employees act in a certain way in different contexts to shape or influence the opinion of others. For Schlenker (2019), self-presentation is the conscious and unconscious efforts to

control images portrayed in actual or presumed social interactions. Doherty (2021) states that the ability to consciously utilise self-presentation techniques can help people gain a positive impression of themselves and open doors for career advancement. Given the record high take-up of non-standard work arrangements and the insecure nature of paid employment, there is a need for a study to explore self-presentation strategies used by non-standard workers to deal with the precarious nature of their work. Many studies on the self-presentation techniques used by non-standard workers to cope with the precarious nature of their work have been conducted in the global North (Pareke et al., 2024; Ni et al., 2023; Bourdage et al., 2015; Doherty & Schlenker, 2019) and few in the global South (Chinyamurindi, 2018; Delport et al., 2022). This means that the research area of self-presentation in the Global South is comparatively under-researched. Against this backdrop, a study should be conducted to explore self-presentation strategies of non-standard workers in the Global South. This study explores self-presentation strategies used by non-standard workers in a multinational firm in Zimbabwe to enhance their work experiences.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

This section presents self presentation theories that guide this study and self-presentation strategies used by workers.

2.1. Wicklund and Gollwitzer (2013)'Symbolic Self-Completion Theory

The theory of symbolic self-completion assumes that people actively search for and display symbols that are closely related to the situation and the ideal self (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 2013). The assumption means that employees try to categorise themselves with different labels. Employees who believe themselves to be competent and hardworking may go above and beyond in the workplace to fit the image they wish to project (Wicklund, 2013). Similarly, Wicklund and Gollwitzer (2018) assert that employees who try to live up to a certain concept of themselves often behave in such a way that their superiors recognise and support the identity portrayed. Furthermore, Schlenker (2019) argues that people occasionally act in a self-presentational manner to create a private identity for themselves. Furthermore, Baumeister (2019) explains that private identities are formed through a self-construction process. In the self-construction process, employees convince managers and others that they

have certain characteristics in order to gain social recognition (Borcherding & Schumacher 2014). For an employee, this could mean rising above themselves and demonstrating their commitment to their job (Arthur, 2019). Identity-relevant symbols give people a sense of self-completion when they are recognised by the target and by others; they give them the feeling that they possess an identity or trait (Wicklund & Gollwitzer, 2013).

2.2. Alexander and Lauderdale's (1989) Situated Identities Theory

The theory of situated identities assumes that every social context has a certain pattern of social behaviour (Alexander & Lauderdale, 1989). The theory also assumes that employees want to present the best possible situated identities to others with whom they interact. For example, an employee wants to appear professional, knowledgeable, and dedicated at work, but relaxed and casual at social events and when socialising with friends (Wieland, 2010). This illustrates many techniques of self-presentation that are used in different contexts (Wieland, 2010). The viewpoints mean that people adopt different roles in different social and cultural contexts (Alexander & Wiley, 2017). The behavioural patterns of employees often change depending on the circumstances and the people with whom they interact (Alexander, 1989). Situated identity theory is much more tied to a specific situational context and points to a variety of tactics that individuals use to direct and control the image they present to others (Alexander & Lauderdale, 1989).

2.3. Goffman's (1959) Impression Management Theory

Impression management theory provides a framework for analysing and evaluating regular social encounters (Goffman, 1959). In order to carefully develop and shape their public perceptions, people negotiate and authenticate their identities in face-to-face contacts, as Goffman's (1959) theory of impression management shows. Since the way a person appears, behaves and presents themselves in social and professional contexts affects how they are seen, evaluated and treated, employees often try to manage and direct these impressions (Tashmin, 2016). Furthermore, impression management theory states that a person's behaviour, actions, mannerisms and appearance can reveal aspects of their conscious or unconscious intentions and goals (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). The theory further states that people have control over their impressions, but goals have

power over how actors' impressions are perceived (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Grove & Fisk, 2013; Picone, 2015).

2.4. Conceptualization of Self Presentation

Employees usually behave in a way that makes them likeable to others by endeavoring to attract attention and convey a positive image through self-presentation techniques (McFarland et al., 2023; Bolino et al., 2016). Brouer et al. (2016) define self-presentation as an intentional or unintentional process by which people attempt to influence others' opinions of themselves. Similarly, Metts et al. (2013) assert that self-presentation refers to any action that a person undertakes in an effort to influence or control how others see them. A number of self-presentational behaviors are instrumental and goal-directed, that is, they are goal-oriented (Gummer, 1994; Rao et al, 1995; Metts & Grohskopf, 2003; Chen & Fang, 2008). Kamau (2012) argues that self-presentation also includes non-verbal signals with different meanings such as smiling, touching, eye contact and facial expressions. It is important to note that self-presentation affect several dimensions, including supervisor evaluation and career success (Bolino et al., 2016; McFarland et al., 2023; Judge & Bretz, 2020). A few researchers have found that self-presentation is high in occupations and situations where there is a need to impress and influence others and to present oneself better (Gardner & Martinko, 2018; Rao et al, 2019; Kamau, 2012; Metts & Grohskopf, 2021).

2.5. Self-Presentation Strategies

Employees use an infinite variety of techniques to present themselves. It is important to remember that many scholars have categorised self-presentation techniques in different ways (Bolino & Turnley, 1999; Lewis & Neighbors, 2005; Drory & Zaidman, 2007). Allen et al, 1994; Schütz et al, 2011) Self-presentation techniques were categorised by Palmer et al (2001) as manager-, business- or person-oriented and by Okkonen (2019) as "assertive, offensive, protective and defensive tactics". Jones (1990) divided self-presentation techniques into two categories: defensive and assertive. As there are a number of self-presentation strategies, the following sections present some of the common classifications of self-presentation strategies from the existing literature.

2.6. Classification of Self Presentation Strategies

Schütz et al. (2011) argue that self-presentation tactics can be defensive, assertive or actor-initiated, long-term (strategic) or short-term (tactical). All of the aforementioned classifications have been incorporated into the 2×2 taxonomy developed by these authors. Their 2x2 taxonomy includes strategic-defensive tactics (substance abuse, alcoholism), tactical-assertive self-presentation methods (ingratiation, self-promotion), and tactical-defensive tactics (excuses, apologies). Similarly, Terrell and Kwok (2011) have developed a 2×2 taxonomy of organisational self-presentation methods that includes direct, indirect, assertive, and defensive tactics. Assertive strategies are utilized to enhance good image, while defensive strategies are associated with reducing or repairing image damage (Terrell & Kwok, 2011; Yan & Ho, 2017). Using intimidation, pleas, justifications or apologies, defensive impression management seeks to reduce or enhance negative perceptions (Bolino & Turnley, 1999; Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). On the other hand, assertive impression management aims to maximise positive perceptions through self-presentation (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). Depending on the actor's target audience, other studies have categorised different techniques of self-presentation. According to Wayne and Ferris (1990), self-presentation strategies can be directed at the employer, the supervisor, and the self. Supervisor-focused self-presentation tactics include actions and comments aimed at the supervisor (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). These are ingratiating behaviours aimed at improving the perception of the employee's likeability towards the supervisor (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). According to Terrell & Kwok (2011), the techniques that focus on the supervisor are aimed at receiving a favour in return. In self-centred presentation techniques, an employee speaks well about themselves to gain respect (Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). Employees who use self-focused strategies attempt to demonstrate actions that are consistent with role modelling (Schütz, 2011; Yan & Ho, 2017; Lewis & Neighbors, 2005). The aim of these methods is to make an employee appear more competent by emphasising the positive aspects of their work performance through comments and actions that are strongly focused on self-promotion (Lewis, 2005). In addition, Turnley (1999) states that self- and job-focused self-presentation strategies convey the image of an exemplary employee who is amiable, co-operative, productive and industrious. It is important to note that there are countless self-presentation strategies and that they

overlap. Some of the most important classifications of self-presentation strategies are presented below.

2.6.1. Lee et al's (1999) Self Presentation Strategies Categorization

Lee et al. (1999) developed 13 tactics taxonomy of self-presentation. Table 1 below shows the thirteen self presentation strategies and conditions under which they are used as given by Lee et al. (1999).

Table 1: Lee et al.'s (1999) Thirteen Self Presentation Strategies

Self-Presentation Strategy	Situation for use
Excuse	Attempting to reduce intentionality
Apology	Accepting responsibility and seeking forgiveness
Justification	Attempting to legitimizing behavior
Disclaimer	Providing explanations before difficulties occur
Self-handicapping	Creating complications to the success of an action to prevent others from being asked about it
Entitlement	Attempting to take credit for a successful achievement
Enhancement	Attempting to show that your actions are more positive than expected
Blasting	Creating bad image on others with whom you associate with
Basking	Trying to be associated with the people who are perceived as good by others
Ingratiation	Need to be seen as likeable
Exemplification	Attempting to appear as morally superior and righteous
Intimidation	Trying to appear powerful by creating an image of a ruthless and dangerous person
Supplication	Aim to appear helpless and when seeking sympathy

Source: Researchers' compilation

2.6.2. Gardner and Martinko's (1988) Verbal Self

Presentation Strategies

Gardner and Martinko (1988) proposed eight verbal self-presentation strategies. Table 2 below summarizes Gardner and Martinko (1988)'s verbal self-presentation strategies.

Table 2: Gardner and Martinko's (1988) Verbal Self Presentation Strategies

Verbal Self presentation Strategy	Meaning
Self-descriptions	Using descriptive statements about oneself in circumstances where you do not know a person well
Organizational descriptions	Giving thick descriptions and details about your organization and describe different departments of the organization with which you are associated
Opinion conformity	Attempting to gain approval of someone else by agreeing with them
Giving accounts	Making excuses, defending oneself and justifying behavior
Apologies	Expressing remorse and regret for an undesirable action or event with the intention of attaining forgiveness
Acclaiming	Associating with yourself with positive occurrences
Rendering favors	Performing a good act to someone of influence with the aim of receiving favors in return
Other enhancement	Engaging in flattering acts

Source: Researchers' compilation

2.6.3. Jones and Pittman's (1982) Five Basic Self Presentation Strategies

Jones and Pittman (1982) introduced five basic self-presentation used by workers aiming at protecting and maintaining their image. The taxonomy developed by Jones and Pittman (1982) includes ingratiation, intimidation, self-promotion, supplication and exemplification.

2.6.3.1. Ingratiation

The goal of ingratiation is to persuade someone else that

one's unique characteristics are attractive (Drory & Zaidman, 2007; Ralston & Elsass, 2013). The goal of the ingratiation is to be viewed favorably by others, gain their approval and achieve positive outcomes (Jones & Pittman, 1982). To be successful, workers need to support others, be favorable to them and be in agreement with what they do and say (Erdogan & Liden, 2006). Arif et al (2011) state that ingratiation has its own negative effects on the ingratiation. When actors repeatedly resort to ingratiation under the same circumstances, targets begin to question the actors' motives, leading to an ingratiation dilemma (Bolino et al., 2008; Varma et al., 2006). This means that ingratiation is only effective when the targets are unaware that they are the object of this tactic (Pichler et al., 2006). Bolino et al. (2008) argue that ingratiation can backfire if it is overt, i.e. if the target realises that you are trying to fake your image, they may begin to despise or distrust you. Furthermore, Keeses et al (2017) state that ingratiation can lead to employees' time, energy and financial resources being depleted, which can lead to unethical behaviour in the workplace.

2.6.3.2. Self-Promotion

Another self-presentation strategy described by Jones and Pittman (1982) is self-promotion. According to Jones and Pittman (1982), self-promotion is the attempt to present oneself to others as a knowledgeable, competent, professional, and experienced person. One can use self-promotion to emphasise one's skills, knowledge, intelligence, competence, and high level of performance (Bolino et al, 2008; Jones & Pittman, 1982; Trammell & Keshelashvili, 2005; Klotz & Daniels, 2014). Rudman (2008) argues that self-promotion can be shown in person, in speeches to an audience or even in our body language, posture, voice or attire. Self-promoters often believe that their efforts will be well received by others (Jones & Pittman, 1982). According to Vonk (2000), employees are more likely to resort to the technique of self-promotion if their employer considers them inept. Several researchers have found that candidates who are seen as highly talented and likeable are greatly favoured by contract renewals and career advancements (Long & Turnley, 2016; Sezer, 2022). Sezer (2022) notes that people who use the self-promotion strategy tend to be liked initially, but their popularity gradually declines. Similarly, a study by Turnley & Bolino (2008) showed that trying to persuade others of your abilities and suitability can lead to them loathing you. Elsass

(2013) takes the same view, claiming that artists who promote themselves run the risk of coming across as conceited, irritating to others, self-righteous and even manipulative. Furthermore, Klotz and Daniels (2014) argue that a danger in self-promotion is that self-promotional claims of competence do not match reality.

2.6.3.3. Exemplification

Exemplification occurs when employees attempt to project an image of moral superiority and righteousness (Long, 2017; De Cuyper et al., 2014). Jones (1990) identified exemplification as one of three power-oriented persuasion strategies. Employees who use the exemplification strategy portray themselves as dedicated, industrious, disciplined, and self-sacrificing, which in turn makes other employees feel inferior to them (Jones & Pittman, 1982). They use this strategy to give others the impression that they are a model citizen by, for example, coming to work earlier than others, leaving later than others and taking work home with them (Michele et al., 2016; Harris et al., 2007). They work harder than everyone else, so it is only natural that they expect different types of rewards (Kacmar & Tucker, 2016). Metts & Grohskopf (2003) state that workers who make greater sacrifices than others expect to receive greater benefits, and when they are not rewarded, they make managers feel guilty. Role modeling and job insecurity are related, as workers may perceive role modeling as helpful in situations where their jobs are insecure (De Cuyper et al., 2014; Kacma & Tucker, 2016). Similarly, Long (2017) claims that employees believe that role modeling reduces the likelihood of contract termination. De Witte (2014) warned actors of the shortfalls of repeated use of exemplars as a self-presentation strategy. Jones (1990) states that workers who regularly use examples run the risk of being perceived as hypocritical and sanctimonious. Furthermore, Jones (1990) recommended that actors who use exemplification should know how to use exemplification effectively by identifying relevant circumstances or instances in which it is appropriate to display admirable or praiseworthy behavior.

2.6.3.4. Supplication

Workers who use supplication as a strategy of self-representation advertise their weakness and seek sympathy (Wang & Highhouse, 2016; Nagy et al., 2011). Researchers have noted that workers resort to supplication as a last resort after they have exhausted all other strategies of self-

presentation (Bolino et al., 2003; Wang, 2015; Nagy et al., 2011). To evoke a sense of obligation in the target, the employee who uses supplication as a self-presentation strategy often projects an image of helplessness and neediness (Jones & Pittman, 1982). Similarly, Lundell (2019) argues that workers who plead for help belittle themselves, highlight their flaws, and emphasize their incompetence so that others believe their help is essential. In contrast, Bolino et al. (2003) postulate that appearing needy can be advantageous in the short term. In the long term, however, exploiting the emotions of others, constantly feeling sorry for oneself, and looking pitiful can create antipathy towards the actor and lead to marginalization.

2.6.3.5. Intimidation

Intimidation as a technique of self-presentation aims to convey an image of a powerful and threatening person (Bolino et al., 2003). The goal of intimidation is to control encounters through the use of power, which makes it the opposite of ingratiation. Aggressive, threatening, coercive and harassing behavior are examples of intimidation (Arif et al., 2011; Harris et al., 2013; Jones & Pittman, 1982). Wu et al. (2020) find that intimidation in the workplace is more often associated with bullying or harassment than with a self-presentation strategy. When there is no easy way out of an involuntary relationship, intimidation is often resorted to (Jones and Pittman, 1982). For example, a manager may want to give the impression of being strong, fearsome or unforgiving in order to increase productivity and quell employee demands (Bolino et al., 2003). The five basic self-presentation strategies, the impression sought, and the risk associated with each self-presentation strategy, as described by Jones & Pittman (1982), are summarized in Table 3.

Table 3: Summary of Jones and Pittman's (1982) Self Presentation Strategies

Self-Presentation Tactic	Impression Sought by the actor	Associated behaviors	Associated risks
Ingratiation	Likeable	Opinion conformity Flattery Deviant acts Favors	Insincere Deceitful
Self-promotion	Competent Experienced	Boasting Taking credit	Arrogant Manipulative

	Intelligent	Showing off	
Exemplification	Righteous Virtuous Morally superior	Dedication Self-sacrifice Self-discipline	Reviled Sycophants
Supplication	Needy	Self-denial Helplessness Seeking sympathy	Deceitful Demanding
Intimidation	Powerful	Threats Instilling fear Appear tough	Avoided Hated

Source: Researchers' compilation

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Research Philosophy

According to Bajpai (2011), the research philosophy is the process of collecting, evaluating and analyzing data. Mkansi, et al (2012) explains that the goal of research philosophy is to investigate how knowledge is developed. The researchers used the meaning-orientated interpretive research philosophy. Rather than prejudging variables, interpretivist philosophy focused on human reasoning and sought to explain the subjective underlying motivations and meanings behind their social activities (Kaplan & Maxwell, 1994). Interpretivist research philosophy was chosen in the present study as it helps the researchers to explore the self-presentation strategies used by non-standard workers in a multinational firm in Zimbabwe to enhance their work experiences.

3.2. Research Approach

Creswell (2018) distinguishes three main types of research approaches: mixed, qualitative, and quantitative. The author describes the qualitative research approach as a way of studying to understanding the meaning that people attach to a social context and the ways in which people understand their social environment. Kielmann (2012) argues that a qualitative research approach allows the researcher to gain a comprehensive understanding of a subject, issue or meaning through personal experience. The researchers adopted a qualitative research approach since the study aims to explore self-presentation strategies utilized by non-standardized workers in a multinational firm in Zimbabwe.

3.3. Sampling Method

Convenience sampling and purposive sampling are the two primary non-probability sampling methods identified by Berndt (2020). Convenience sampling is the process where participants were selected on the bases of their proximity, accessibility, and willingness to partake in the study (Etikan et al., 2016). Purposive sampling is described by Shapiro (2003) as a sampling strategy in which the researcher purposefully selects individuals. Purposive sampling was the approach of choice for the researchers because of the nature of the investigation.

3.4. Sample Size

A sample, according to Bonett and Wright (2015), is a subset of the total population chosen to take part in a study. In a similar vein, Saunders et al. (2009) characterize a sample as the precise number of individuals selected to partake in the study. Morse (2000) states that sample sizes in qualitative research are typically smaller since these methods prioritize developing in-depth knowledge (Dworkin, 2012). Nevertheless, several authors expressed disagreements over the ideal sample size for qualitative research and suggested that sample size be determined by data saturation concept (Lakens, 2022; Berger et al., 2014; Dell et al., 2002). In light of this, the data saturation concept was used in this study to determine the sample size of nine participants.

3.5. Research Instrument

Schmidt (2004) identified questionnaires and interviews as two primary methods of gathering data. Denzin (2017) identified interviews as the major data collection instrument in qualitative research. For the above reason, Face-to-face semi-structured interviews were used by the researchers to gather data from study participants. Semi-structured interview is a qualitative research approach that combines the interviewer's freedom to go deeper into the conversation with a pre-planned set of questions (Adams, 2015; Longhurst, 2003; Fylan, 2005). In order to ensure that participants' responses are accurately transcribed, face-to-face semi-structured interviews were recorded by the researchers for future use.

3.6. Data Analysis

The data that was gathered was examined using thematic content analysis. Thematic content analysis, according to

Park et al. (2017), is the descriptive display of textual data. Vimal (2020) argues that thematic content analysis enables researchers to find themes, examine them, and provide a report. With the help of the NVivo system, the researchers followed data analysis steps recommended by Braun and Clarke (2006) during thematic content analysis.

3.7. Trustworthiness

The goal of trustworthiness is to prevent bias from inadvertently creeping into the design and conduct of a qualitative enquiry. Guba and Lincoln (1998) identified credibility, dependability, conformability, and transferability as the conditions for trustworthiness in qualitative study.

Table 4 below presents the four criteria used to ensure trustworthiness in qualitative research.

Table 4: Guba and Lincoln (1998)'s Criteria to ensure Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness criteria	Ways to achieve the criteria
Credibility	Member checking Rigorous data checking process
Conformability	Reflexivity. Audit trail
Dependability	Clear description of the data analysis process
Transferability	Thick descriptions

Source: Researchers' compilation

3.8. Ethical Considerations

The researchers observed and considered ethical issues throughout the research. Actions taken by researchers' to observe ethics in research include giving research participants pseudonyms to protect their identities, informing participants about the goals of the study and their rights. The researchers also assured participants that their participation is voluntary and that their privacy is protected.

3.9. Profiles of Research Participants

The letter "SP" represents pseudonym of the participants who participated in this study. Table 5 below shows the demographic characteristics of the research participants.

Table 5: Research Participants' Characteristics

No.	Pseudonyms	Age	Sex	Experience	Highest Qualification	Interview Time
1	SP1	19	M	6months	O level certificate	10mins
2	SP2	21	F	7 months	A level certificate	9mins
3	SP3	19	M	5 months	O level certificate	11mins
4	SP4	27	M	24months	Diploma	10mins
5	SP5	28	M	36months	Bachelor's degree	12mins
6	SP6	25	F	11months	Diploma	11mins
7	SP7	24	F	17months	Diploma	12mins
8	SP8	31	M	48months	Bachelor's degree	8mins
9	SP9	29	M	39 months	Bachelor's degree	7mins

Source: Authors' fieldwork

4. FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

The study sought to explore self-presentation strategies used by non-standard workers to improve their work experiences. The research participants identified a number of self-presentation strategies they utilized to improve their work experiences. The researchers organized the study's findings into themes and sub-themes. Table 6 presents the themes and sub-themes from the study.

Table 6: Emerging Themes and Sub-themes

Themes	Sub-themes
Self-promotion	-Completing tasks on time -Hard working and appear as competent -Appear to be experienced and intelligent
Supplication	-Looking like you need help from bosses -looking pathetic -Seeking sympathy from your managers
Exemplification	-Showing excellent work ethics -Appear righteous -Showing self discipline and sacrifice
Ingratiation	-Agree with what supervisors say and do -Make sure you are liked by supervisors -Appear friendly and showing supportive behavior

Source: Authors' fieldwork

4.1. Data Frequency

The number of research participants who identified each theme is shown in Table 7 below.

Table 7: Themes and Data Frequency

Themes	Frequency
Self-promotion	8
Ingratiation	7
Exemplification	5
Supplication	3

Source: Authors' fieldwork

4.2. Theme 1: Self Promotion

A majority of research participants indicated that they try their level best to appear competent, intelligent and hard working so that their supervisors may view them experienced and talented workers not to let go once their contracts ends. Table 8 below shows participants' quotes in this respect.

Table 8: Participants' Quotes on Self Promotion

Pseudonym	Quotes
SP2	'I make sure my supervisors consider me as one of the experienced workers by work related statements and suggestions I give when doing my job close to him. Appearing experienced means that your contract is likely to be renewed my brother'
SP3	'I try my level best to put maximum effort when doing my job. Remember employers prefer hard working workers'
SP4	'I try my level best to appear competent and talented. Remember supervisors want to work with talented and competent workers whom they delegate work when situation permits'
SP5	'Mukoma unotoshanda chose kuitira kuti mashefu afare' (You work hard to please your managers)
SP6	'I portray myself as experienced and competent to carry out a number of tasks at our company'
SP7	'Remember I have a class 2 drivers' license but for the time being I am driving that small car which needs a class 4 driver's license, so I keep on reminding my supervisor that I am an experienced class 2 driver such that if an opportunity for a class 2 driver arises, I am

	the one to be considered'
SP8	'I pretend to be a hardworking worker by running around when the supervisor is present, kkkkkkkkkkkk (laughs)'
SP9	'I simply appear as talented and experienced''

Source: Authors' fieldwork

4.3. Theme 2: Ingratiation

The study's findings show that seven of the nine research participants indicated that they use ingratiation self-presentation strategy to improve their work experiences. Their related quotes are presented below.

- 'My brother I try by all means to be liked by your supervisor, if it means supporting the football team supported by your supervisor let it be. Once you are liked them contract renewal becomes an automatic thing' (SP1);
- 'For me it's simply, I make sure I agree with what my supervisor says and assign me to do, no complains and resistance I just do what he says' (SP3);
- 'I appear friendly and I try to help my colleagues to finish their tasks in front of my supervisor' (SP4);
- 'I make sure my supervisor likes me' (SP5);
- 'I try to second my managers' position even if I know their suggestions are not the best. In that way I appear as if I am their discipline and when extending favors they start to anoint me kkkkkkkkkkkk (laughs)' (SP6);
- 'I show supportive behavior' (SP7) and
- 'I try to follow my supervisors' instructions and do what they say'.

4.4. Theme 3: Exemplification

Exemplification was also popular with some research participants. These participants indicated that they appear to be morally superior and righteous for them to be viewed as good by their supervisors. In this regard, SP1 remarked:

'I stay late at work just to show my supervisors that I am dedicated and committed to my work, when promotion comes no doubt they are likely to consider me'

Similarly, SP2 has this to say;

'I display good work ethics so that my managers may think that I am morally ok'

This trend continued with SP3, SP7 and SP9. Their viewpoints centered on appearing busy at work, committed and exhibiting good work ethics.

4.5. Theme 4: Supplication

Apart from self-promotion, exemplification and ingratiation, some other research participants indicated that they use supplication as their self-presentation strategy. The following quotes participants' responses in that regard.

- 'I appear financially helplessness hoping to be assisted by supervisors through contract renewal' (SP4);
- 'I create an impression of someone in serious need of continuous employment so that my supervisors will keep on renewing my contract' (SP5) and
- 'I always seek sympathy and look pathetic in front of my managers. Once you did that they can bear with you and extend some work related favors to you'. (SP8)

4.6. Discussion of the Findings

The objective of the study was to identify self-presentation strategies used by non-standard workers at the case multinational firm in Zimbabwe to improve their work experiences. Research participants' responses generated themes which are discussed below.

4.6.1. Self Promotion

The majority of the study participants stated that they do their best to appear competent, intelligent and hardworking so that their superiors see them as experienced and talented workers. In this context, SP2 said: 'I make sure my supervisors think I am an experienced worker by making work-related statements and suggestions when I do my job around them. If you appear experienced, your contract is likely to be renewed my brother'. Similarly, SP8 has this to say; 'I pretend to be a hard worker by walking around when the supervisor is present' The above quotes are supported by Long and Turney (2016) who argue that workers who are seen as highly talented and likeable receive many perks through contract extensions and career advancements. Similarly, Jones and Pittman (1982) posit that self-promoters present themselves as knowledgeable, skilled, professional, and experienced workers. Furthermore, Bolino et al. (2008) state that self-promoters emphasise their skills, knowledge, intelligence, competence, and high level of performance in order to gain favor with managers. Elsass (2013), on the

other hand, is of the opinion that high performers who present themselves run the risk of appearing conceited, irritating to others, self-righteous and even manipulative. Klotz and Daniels (2014) are also of the opinion that one danger of self-presentation is that the competences presented do not correspond to reality.

4.6.2. Ingratiation

The study's findings show that some of the research participants indicated that they use ingratiation as their self presentation strategy to improve their work experiences. For note is SP1 who said: 'My brother I try by all means to be liked by your supervisor, if it means supporting the football team supported by your supervisor let it be. Once you are liked them contract renewal becomes an automatic thing'. In addition, SP3 argued that; 'For me it's simply, I make sure I agree with what my supervisor says and assign me to do, no complains and resistance I just do what he says.' The quotes from the above research participants are supported by Drory and Zaiman (2007) who explain that the goal of ingratiation is to persuade someone else that one's unique qualities are attractive. Similarly, Jones & Pittman (1982) argue that the goal of the ingratiation is to be viewed favorably by others, gain their approval, and achieve favorable outcomes. On the other hand, Varma et al. (2006) argue that targets question the actor's motives when the actor repeatedly ingratiates himself under the same circumstances, leading to an ingratiation dilemma. Bolino et al (2008) note that ingratiation can also backfire if it is overt. That is, if the target realises that you are trying to fake your image, they may begin to despise or distrust you.

4.6.3. Exemplification

Exemplification was also popular with some research participants. These participants indicated that they appear to be morally superior and righteous for them to be viewed as good by their supervisors. In this regard, SP1 remarked: 'I stay late at work just to show my supervisors that I am dedicated and committed to my work, when promotion comes no doubt they are likely to consider me.' SP1's sentiments are supported by Long (2017) who posits that exemplification occurs when employees try to project an image of moral superiority and righteousness. In addition, Jones and Pittman (1982) argue that employees utilizing exemplification present themselves as devoted, industrious, disciplined, and self-sacrificing, which in turn causes other

employees to feel inferior to them. In a similar vein, Long (2017) contends that employees believe exemplification lessen the likelihood of contract termination. However, De Witte (2014) states that workers who use exemplification regularly may run the risk of being perceived by as hypocritical and sanctimonious.

4.6.4. Supplication

A few of the research participants indicated that they use supplication as their self presentation strategy. In this regard SP8 state that: 'I always seek sympathy and look pathetic in front of my managers. Once you did that they can bear with you and extend some work related favors to you'. Supporting the above viewpoints is Wang and Highhouse (2016) who argue that workers who use supplication as their self presentation strategy advertises their frailty and seek sympathy. Similarly, Jones and Pittman (1982) posit that in order to arouse a sense of duty in the target, workers using supplication as a self-presentation strategy often projects a picture of helplessness and need. In addition, Lundell (2019) argues that workers who supplicate minimize themselves, highlight their flaws, and emphasize their incompetence, leading others to believe that their assistance is essential. Contrary, Bolino et al. (2003) posits that appearing needy can be beneficial in the short run, but in the long run, using the emotions of others and constantly pitying oneself, and looking pathetic can cause antipathy toward the actor and can result in exclusion.

5. CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

This study contributes to theory by offering current data on the self-presentation techniques employed by non-standard workers at a multinational company in Zimbabwe. The majority of earlier research on the topic followed a positivist paradigm; hence, the interpretivist philosophy employed by the researchers in this study will provide fresh insights. There are benefits for all human resources actors from this study as well. Since the study has made them aware of the self-presentation techniques employed by non-standard workers at the case multinational company in Zimbabwe, human resource managers stand to gain from it. Knowing self presentation strategies used by non-standard workers is valuable to managers because workplace decisions are affected by these strategies, hence managers should encourage employees to utilize self presentation strategies that are genuine and beneficial to the organization. This

study can also help non-standard workers because it will help them become more conscious of when and how often to utilize self-presentation techniques. Furthermore, this study will let academics in the future carry out comparable and related investigations with other international corporations in Zimbabwe or other nations.

6. Limitations and Direction for Future Studies

This research had its own restrictions. Male research participants predominated in this study, and it is expected that additional discoveries might have surfaced if female research participants had predominated. Even though the case organization's gender distribution is reflected in the male gender dominance, future researchers should include female research participants in studies of this kind. The researchers' use of a small sample size, which complicates generalization, is another study weakness. The study's conclusions might have been different if the sample size had been larger. The fact that only one multinational company in Zimbabwe provided research participants makes it challenging to generalize study findings. To enable comparisons, it would be beneficial for future academics to carry out comparable research including both domestic and international companies.

7. CONCLUSION

Owing to the unstable nature of their jobs, non-standard workers have been seen to make every effort to enhance their experiences at work. This prompted the researchers to explore self-presentation strategies used by non-standard workers at the case multinational firm in Zimbabwe to improve their work related experiences. The study found that non-standard workers at the case multinational firm in Zimbabwe utilize a number of self-presentation strategies namely self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification and supplication to improve their work related experiences. The three main self-presentation strategies used by non-standard workers at the case multinational firm in Zimbabwe are self-promotion, ingratiation and exemplification. Only a few research participants at the case organization indicated that they utilized supplication as a self-presentation strategy. The study recommends that non-standard workers should know when, where and how to use self-presentation strategies to reduce self-damage. The study also recommends managers to be aware of the self-presentation strategies used by non-standard workers and motivate them

to use appropriate self-presentation techniques that do not harm the organization.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all participants, who participated in this study

Author's Contributions

All authors listed have made a substantial, direct, and intellectual contribution to the work and approved it for publication.

Funding

This research was funded by the Department of Industrial Psychology and People Management, College of Business and Economics, University of Johannesburg.

Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflict of interest

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