

(In)Sincerely Yours: Ingratiation Tactics in Job Cover Letters on Selection

Kanika K. Ahuja

This study examines the effect of various ingratiation techniques - self-promotion, other-enhancement, rendering favors, and opinion conformity- used in job application cover letters by women on selection, interpersonal attributes, and credibility. The study used a repeated measures experimental design, with five within subjects conditions (four types of ingratiation plus no ingratiation), on a sample of 112 participants. Results revealed significant differences among the use of various ingratiation tactics on selection outcomes. Self-promotion, followed by other-enhancement, was found to be the most effective strategy in leading not only to highest selection recommendation, but also most positive interpersonal judgements. The present study highlights the need for greater understanding of the use of self-promotion by women, especially in patriarchal cultures.

Kanika K. Ahuja is Associate Professor, Department of Psychology, Lady Shri Ram College for Women, University of Delhi, New Delhi. E-Mail:kanikakahuja@gmail.com

Introduction

Impression management (IM), the conscious or unconscious process through which individuals influence the impressions other people form of them is a fundamental fact of organizational life. IM is more common in societies with limited economic and political opportunities (Pandey & Rastogi, 1979). In India, ingratiation is used more by job seekers than in other nations not only due to intense competition, but also differences in social class. One area that is particularly prone to IM is selection. Research has found that individuals frequently use IM tactics in selection, particularly during job interviews (e.g., Bolino, Kacmar, Turnley & Gilstrap, 2008; Higgins & Judge, 2004; Tsai, Huang, Wu & Lo, 2005), and even earlier, such as in resumes and the cover letter, in an attempt to improve the target's perceptions and evaluations (Knouse, Giacalone & Pollard, 1988; Waung, McAuslan, DiMambro & Miegoc, 2016).

In the “new normal” workplace grappling with Covid-19, selection process could get tougher due to job losses. Further, in view of social distancing, appearing for a face-to-face interview would also become difficult. In such a scenario, the cover letter- the first point of contact for job seekers with the prospective employer- assumes even greater significance. The purpose of the cover letter is to introduce oneself to the organization, demonstrate an interest in the company, make a favorable impression at the first stage of selection, and motivate the reader to interview the job seeker. Cover letter is an important tool that can emphasize the applicant’s fit with and desire for a position (DeKay, 2006). Thus, research on how effective various IM tactics used in cover letters is the need of the hour.

While several tactics of IM are used commonly (Jones & Pittman, 1982), such as ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplification, intimidation and supplication, the pervasive nature of ingratiation has made it an especially important topic of study. Ingratiation is a “class of strategic behaviors illicitly designed to influence a particular other concerning the attractiveness of one personal qualities” (Jones, 1964: 11). Jones and Wortman (1973) offered a useful taxonomy of four classes of ingratiation tactics. The first, other-enhancement, is designed to convey the impression that the ingratiator thinks highly of the target person. In the second, opinion conformity, the ingratiator expresses agreement with the beliefs and attitudes he presumes or knows the target possesses, to appear likeable. The

third, rendering favors, helps to convey to the target person that the favor-doer not only regards his welfare as important, but also that the favor-doer is a kind and thoughtful person. The last tactic, self-presentation, involves describing ones’ positive attributes to a target in order to increase ones’ attractiveness.

Does Impression Management Work?

Some experimental studies have found ingratiation in cover letters and resumes to lead to increased perceptions of job and organization fit (Waung, McAuslan, DiMambro & Miêgoæ, 2017), positive judgments of self-confidence, but negative ratings on employability (Knouse et al., 1988). Varma, Toh, & Pichler (2006) found the effect of ingratiation on hiring intentions to be significant. Applicants who demonstrated self-enhancement received higher qualification evaluations and selection recommendations than applicants who engaged in opinion conformity and rendering favors.

All IM tactics will be effective in all situations.

Past research has shown that not all IM tactics will be effective in all situations. The success of ingratiation will depend upon the target, the characteristics of the ingratiator, and the conditions under which the behavior occurs. Further, gender influences both the extent and the types of IM tactics used (Bolino et al., 2008; Sanaria, 2016). There is evidence that while men are more likely to

use relatively aggressive and self-serving forms of IM (such as self-promotion and intimidation); women utilize less aggressive and other-oriented forms of IM (such as ingratiation) more frequently than men (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007).

The literature reviewed is somewhat mixed with respect to how effective IM is in job selection. Some research has indicated that ingratiation leads to significantly higher ratings of applicants (Proost et al., 2010; Waung et al., 2017), and increases their likelihood of receiving an offer (Zhao & Liden, 2011). On the other hand, Higgins and Judge (2004) found the effect of self-promotion on hiring recommendations to be generally weak and non-significant. Still others (e.g., Knouse et al., 1988) showed the counterproductive role of IM. Waung et al. (2016), for instance, reported that higher intensity self-promotion led to increased perceptions of manipulation. Therefore, the current hypotheses formulated were kept non-directional.

Hypothesis 1: There will be a significant difference on selection recommendation for job applicants using different ingratiation tactics in their cover letters.

Hypothesis 2: There will be a significant difference in the judgments of credibility made for job applicants using different ingratiation tactics in their cover letters.

Hypothesis 3: There will be a significant difference in the judgments of interpersonal attributes made for job applicants using different ingratiation tactics in their cover letters.

The Present Study

The present study examines the effect of various ingratiation techniques (self-promotion, other-enhancement, rendering favors, opinion conformity) used in cover letters on selection decisions, perception of interpersonal attributes, and credibility. In doing so, it seeks to fulfil the existing gap in literature in the following ways: First, instead of assessing the effectiveness of IM in selection interviews, the current study focuses on cover letters, a hitherto ignored area of research. Second, the study compares various tactics of ingratiation used by applicants using a robust experimental design. Third, the study not only examines the impact of ingratiation on selection recommendations, but also includes two other important outcomes- that of interpersonal attributes, and credibility.

Participants

A total of 112 university undergraduates (52 men and 60 women) were selected through convenience sampling. The participants' mean age was 19.6 years. They belonged to a variety of courses like Sociology, History, Hotel Management, Journalism, Commerce, Engineering and Economics. Out of the 112 participants, 54 had been a part of some hiring process, while 58 had never faced any kind of hiring process.

Experimental Design

The study used the repeated measures design, with five within-subjects conditions (four types of ingratiation-

self-promotion, other-enhancement, opinion conformity, rendering favors; plus control condition of no ingratiation). The independent variable was the type of ingratiation tactic used in the application cover letters (see Appendix). Three dependent variables were chosen, selection recommendation, perceived credibility and interpersonal attributes of the applicant. Variables that were controlled were overall quality of resumes, length and format of resumes, order of presentation, and length of the cover letter. The applicants were denoted by the letters V, W, X, Y and Z to control for caste, region and religion. Two pilot studies were conducted to ensure that while the five resumes were similar to each other, the cover letters captured the different manipulations adequately (described later).

Procedure

Participants were told that they were invited to select one student for the paid position of Research Assistant for a UGC Sponsored Project on 'Gender Gap in Mathematics: Real or Imaginary' to be carried out by the Professor, the author of this study. They were told that applications had been invited for this position in a prescribed format, and after receiving an overwhelming response, five applicants were shortlisted. The participants were asked to evaluate the five applicants for their suitability for the post. Lastly, they were informed that their responses will be kept anonymous. Each participant was given an informed consent sheet to sign. A pre-determined counterbalanced order was used in the presentation of the cover letters and re-

sumes (stapled together). The participants were asked to read details about the post of Research Assistant and each application, and then rate each applicant on her selection recommendation, credibility and other interpersonal attributes. Participants were then thanked and debriefed. Participation was voluntary, and no monetary compensation was given.

Measures

Selection recommendation. A single item (Varma et al., 2006) was used to assess the participant's recommendations for selection of the applicant. The question read "Based on the applicant's material you just reviewed, please give us your recommendation on whether this candidate should be selected for the position of Research Assistant." A five-point scale was used, where 1 is definitely do not select and 5 is definitely select.

Interpersonal Attributes Scale. This scale, developed by Waung et al. (2016), assesses the extent to which the resume reviewer would be willing to work with the applicant, expected the applicant to be a team player, a pleasant coworker, and to have good social skills. Participants were asked to rate the applicant using a 5-point scale (not at all; a little; somewhat; quite a bit; and very much). Waung et al. (2016) reported a high Cronbach's alpha of .93 for this scale.

Credibility. To test for potential negative effects of use of ingratiation, five items that measured how "manipulative", "believable", "truthful", and "honest" the

applicant was, and to the extent to which the reviewer thought that the “applicant had exaggerated this application”, were used. The same 5-point response format used earlier was employed for this measure. These items were developed by Waung et al. (2016), who reported a satisfactory Cronbach’s alpha of .68.

Pilot Study One: Construction of Cover Letters

Five different cover letters were constructed, where four engaged in ingratiation (self-promotion, other-enhancement, opinion conformity, and rendering favors) whereas one had no ingratiation. Each cover letter was divided into three parts- introduction, main body and conclusion. The no ingratiation (control) cover letter had only the introduction and conclusion, which was kept similar amongst all five cover letters. In the four letters engaging in ingratiation, the main body was manipulated in line with the four conditions. The word limit of the body in each cover letter was kept constant (113-118 words).

The body of the self-promotion cover letter comprised statements related to high results in academics, extra-curricular activities, leadership positions, research, etc. The other-enhancement cover letter had statements that flattered the Professor, like enjoying her classes, getting inspired by her, writing an assignment where the Professor’s work was referenced, etc. In the opinion conformity cover letter, the applicant agreed with the views of the Professor as expressed in her TEDx talk and article. In

the rendering favors cover letter, the applicant expressed her flexibility in engaging in logistical and administrative tasks, like making presentations, typing out lesson plans, giving assistance in photocopying and printing of study materials (Appendix).

A pilot study was conducted to ensure that the participants in the study would capture the different manipulations, following the procedure recommended by Varma et al. (2006). Twenty first year undergraduate Psychology students were asked to read each cover letter and write a short paragraph “about what the writer of the letter is like.”

For self-promotion, some of the adjectives used were ‘takes initiative’, ‘good leader’, ‘bright’, ‘hard-working’, ‘organized’, ‘confident’, ‘competitive’, and even ‘self-centered’. For opinion conformity, the descriptions were ‘agreeable’, ‘appeases the Professor’, ‘people pleaser’, ‘good listener’, ‘no view of her own’, ‘battering the authorities’, etc. For rendering favors, adjectives used were ‘helpful’, ‘eager to help’, ‘punctual’, ‘efficient’, ‘flexible’, and even ‘nagging’ and ‘desperate for the job’. For control condition (no ingratiation), adjectives used were ‘short and crisp’, ‘straightforward’, ‘can’t say much’, ‘introvert’, ‘honest’, ‘precise’, ‘professional’, and ‘informal’. The themes derived from these four conditions mirrored the intent of their respective condition. However, for other-enhancement, the descriptions of ‘ambitious’, ‘career oriented’, ‘politically aware’, ‘determined’, ‘avid reader’, ‘passionate about research’, etc. given

by the participants showed that they could not apprehend the other-enhancement manipulation.

For further independent verification, five new students were given the statements for one of the ingratiation conditions, and asked to “name each category”, based on the descriptions they had read. These five individuals suggested “high need for achievement” for self-promotion; “motivated” for other-enhancement; “agreeable” for opinion conformity; “hardworking” for rendering favors and “frank” for the control condition. Again, it was seen that except for the other-enhancement condition, all other categories were named appropriately. Suitable changes were then made in the other-enhancement cover letter.

Pilot Study Two: Construction of Resumes & Establishing Their Equivalence

Five resumes were constructed using a common one-page format. All resumes were designed to be of second-year students of Psychology at Lady Shri Ram College for Women (the institution where this research was carried out). Their college CGPA, class X and XII marks were kept similar. All applicants were shown to have a two-month internship experience in the NGO sector. Each resume contained one position of responsibility from school (e.g., House Captain) and one in the college (e.g., Co-Editor, College Magazine). All the resumes also contained two extracurricular activities (e.g., dance, theater, sports, etc.), at least two academic projects, and two confer-

ence participations. Last, the format and font of all resumes were kept constant. The word count of all the resumes were kept similar. Feedback was taken from 12 psychology students to ensure that no resume stood out from others.

For the pilot study, a Google form was created and administered to eighty undergraduate students (35 men, 45 women; average age= 20.21 years), selected through convenience sampling. They were asked to give their selection recommendation (on a 5-point scale) on these 5 resumes for the post of Research Assistant. The results of within-subjects ANOVA confirmed that no significant difference existed among the five resumes on their selection recommendation, $F(4, 395) = 1.52, p = .19$, clearly showing that the five resumes were equivalent.

Results

Table 1 depicts that the highest mean on selection recommendation and interpersonal attributes was obtained in the self-promotion condition, followed by other-enhancement, with rendering favors being the lowest on selection recommendation. On credibility, the highest mean was obtained on other-enhancement, followed by rendering favors, no ingratiation, self-promotion, with opinion-conformity being the lowest.

Three repeated-measures ANOVA were performed using SPSS 22.0 to assess if there were any significant differences among the five ingratiation conditions on selection outcomes. Significant

Table 1 Means & Standard Deviations for Hiring Recommendations, Perceived Credibility and Interpersonal Attributes

	Opinion Conformity		Self-Promotion		Control Condition		Other Enhancement		Rendering Favors	
	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD	M	SD
Hiring recommendation	3.50	0.78	3.70	0.91	3.52	0.89	3.67	0.92	3.40	0.95
Credibility	17.28	2.96	17.70	3.17	18.98	3.55	27.35	3.21	25.59	3.42
Interpersonal Attributes	26.67	4.20	27.51	4.17	25.29	4.71	27.35	4.43	25.59	5.04

differences are obtained among the conditions on selection recommendation, $F(4, 555) = 2.46, p = .04$ (Table 2). Therefore, we accept H1 that there will be a significant difference on selection recommendation for job applicants who engage in different ingratiation tactics in their

cover letters. In order to find where the significant difference lies, ten t-tests were performed to compare all five conditions pair wise. Significant differences were found only between self-promotion and rendering favors; and between other-enhancement and rendering favors.

Table 2 Repeated-measures ANOVA Comparing Selection Recommendation among Various Ingratiation Conditions

Source of variation	SS	df	MS	F	<i>p</i>
Between- treatments	7.26	4	1.82	2.46	.04
Within- treatments	442.54	555	0.80		
Error	327.53	444	0.74		

Table 3 reveals significant differences among all the five conditions (four types of ingratiation and no ingratiation control condition) on judgments of credibility, $F(4, 555) = 7.69, p < .00001$, leading us to accept H2. The ten t-tests performed to compare the conditions pair-

wise show that significant differences were found only between opinion conformity and control condition; self-promotion and control condition; other-enhancement and control condition; and rendering favors and control condition.

Table 3 Repeated-measures ANOVA Comparing Judgment of Credibility among Various Ingratiation Conditions

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F	<i>P</i>
Between groups	250.3857	4	62.60	7.69	
Within groups	5935.1696	555	10.69		

Lastly, significant differences were obtained in the judgments of interpersonal attributes made for applicants using different types of ingratiation, $F(4, 555) = 7.97, p < .00001$, leading us to accept H3 (Table 4). Again, ten t-tests were per-

formed to compare all conditions pairwise. Significant differences were obtained between opinion conformity and control; self-promotion and rendering favors; self-promotion and control; other-enhancement and control; and other-enhancement and rendering favors.

Table 4 Repeated-measures ANOVA Comparing Judgment of Interpersonal Attributes among Various Ingratiation Conditions

Source of variation	SS	Df	MS	F	P
Between groups	455.63	4	113.91	7.97	.00
Within groups	11346.30	555	20.44		

Discussion

The main aim of this research was to investigate the effect of various ingratiation techniques used in cover letters on selection recommendations, perception of interpersonal attributes, and credibility. The results clearly demonstrated that ingratiation used by women applicants do impact selection decisions. The use of self-promotion, other-enhancement, and to some extent, opinion conformity led to higher selection recommendation and more positive judgments of interpersonal attributes. On the other hand, not using ingratiation led to higher judgments of credibility.

The results clearly demonstrated that ingratiation used by women applicants do impact selection decisions.

The finding that the use of self-promotion led to highest selection recommendation is consistent with previous research (for instance, Lievens &

Peeters, 2008; Proost et al., 2010; Varma et al., 2006). Self-promotion statements increase the perceived level of competence (Jones & Pittman, 1982) and self-confidence (Knous et. al.,1988). Such tactics also limit the cognitive effort raters must go through to assess competence and instead directly provide attributional evidence for the individual’s competence. According to attribution theory (Weiner, 1985), raters constantly attempt to search for the cause of an applicant’s behavior. Self-promoters curtail the search process by taking credit for success, thereby attributing their behavior to internal causes and providing the interviewer with a ready-made causal explanation. For instance, statements used in the cover letter like “I have often been asked to take a lead in them (group projects)”, could have led to internal attributions of competence.

In the masculine Indian socio-cultural context, competitiveness, ambition, success, and power are valued (Hofstede, Hofstede & Minkov, 2010). Such characteristics were present in the cover let-

ter in the self-promotion condition, for e.g., “my contribution in organizing workshops was highly appreciated” and “my research paper was acknowledged by my teacher and I was awarded the highest marks for it.”

Our results also show that not only did ingratiation led to higher selection recommendations, it also led to judgments of more positive interpersonal attributes.

Our results also show that not only did ingratiation led to higher selection recommendations, it also led to judgments of more positive interpersonal attributes. These results can be explained using the Stereotype Content Model (Fiske, Cuddy, Glick, & Xu, 2002). According to this model, there are two universal dimensions of social cognition, warmth and competence. Since people perceived as both warm and competent elicit positive emotions and behavior, ingratiators seek to elicit both these perceptions. While the use of self-promotion led to perceptions of competence, the use of other-focused ingratiation tactics could have evoked perceptions of warmth. Statements such as “I enjoy attending your classes as they are both insightful and engaging” (other-enhancement) and “Your area of research is quite similar to what I wish to explore further. I viewed the TEDx talk where you spoke about the conventional standards about beauty and the social pressure on us to be thin” (opinion conformity), may have led to perceptions of warmth.

Interestingly, the use of any form of ingratiation resulted in lower ratings on credibility. This is in line with the classic “self-promoter paradox” (Jones & Pittman, 1982), that contends that overt claims about one’s competence may lead the perceiver to assume that the applicant might compensate for the lack of competence, leading to reduced perceived credibility. Paradoxically, even when ingratiation makes the candidate appear less credible, it still improves her selection outcomes. Previous literature also suggests that even though application letters and resumes with IM produce lower perceptions of applicant truthfulness and likeability, when compared to the basic letter which uses no tactic, self-confidence of the applicant is perceived to be higher (Knouse et. al., 1988). Our study thus provides empirical evidence that while hiring, raters give more importance to confidence and competence than credibility.

Implications

Various practical inferences from our study are highlighted. First, there is a need for greater understanding of how ingratiation tactics influence the decisions of employers who rely on written applications, or a combination of letters and interviews. Second, our results demonstrate that when applicants have similar qualifications, the cover letter has a significant decisive effect on selection outcomes. Therefore, HR professionals should pay close attention to the content of these letters for potential bias. Third, from the perspective of the job seeker, it makes sense to invest time in

drafting cover letters. Even though employers may say that they do not take cover letters into account, it is the first document that is read, and thus affects selection decisions. Fourth, using rendering favors at best, does not add anything to the person's judgements, and at worst, may actually have a negative impact.

Encouraging women to use self-promotion could help women climb the organizational ladder.

Lastly, our study carries significant implications for the use of self-promotion by women. This study questions the belief that women should not use self-promotion, especially in patriarchal cultures such as India, where women are required to be modest and show humility, in order to act in culturally appropriate ways. Past research has noted a persistent gender gap in self-promotion (Exley & Judd, 2019). Further, women face a dilemma: while a self-confident woman receives high performance evaluations, she is not liked by her peers. Our results, hearteningly, suggest that when a woman applicant used self-promotion, not only was she rated highest on selection recommendation, but also judged most positively on interpersonal attributes. Encouraging women to use self-promotion could help women climb the organizational ladder, hopefully cracking the glass ceiling. These findings are of value to human resource and diversity practitioners to help in attracting and developing women talent.

Limitations & Future Research Directions

The first limitation of the study emerges from the use of college students as participants. While previous research has reliably used inexperienced students as recruiters in lab investigations (e.g., Proost et al., 2010; Varma et al., 2006), it does reduce the generalizability of the study to real-life selection situations. Future researchers can use actual personnel professionals as participants. Further, since IM has a greater impact on ratings in lab settings than in real life situations, it cannot be assumed that such a strong effect of self-promotion would also be found in actual employment settings. Lastly, since the context of the study allowed for use of cover letters ostensibly written by only women (the institution being an all-women's college), the effect of applicant's gender on selection could not be studied. It would be worthwhile to investigate whether the gender of the ingratiation has an effect on the success of various ingratiation techniques. Another important area that deserves research attention is attributes of the evaluator such as gender, need for achievement, power status, rater training, etc. We hope that the empirical investigation of the use of ingratiation in cover letters on selection will open up new vistas of research and generate interest amongst practitioners and academics to investigate this further.

Conclusion

The use of cover letters and resumes in screening candidates shall become

more pertinent in coming times as companies will invite fewer candidates for interview to follow the norms of social distancing in a Post-Covid world. Contrary to earlier belief, our results suggest that women should be encouraged to use self-promotion to appear more competent, confident, and even more likeable. Impression management plays a crucial role in selection, which if not understood, may ultimately affect the organization's ability to survive and thrive.

Acknowledgements

The author wishes to gratefully acknowledge the assistance of Psychology (Hons) batch of 2020, especially for data collection and designing of pilot studies

References

- Bolino, M. C., Kacmar, K. M., Turnley, W. H. & Gilstrap, J. B. (2008), "A Multi-level Review of Impression Management Motives and Behaviors", *Journal of Management*, 34(6): 1080–1109. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0149206308324325>
- DeKay, S. (2006), "Expressing Emotion in Electronic Job Cover Letters", *Business Communication Quarterly*, 69: 435–39. doi:10.1177/108056990606900419.
- Exley, C.L. & Judd B.K. (2019), "The Gender Gap in Self-promotion", *NBER Working Paper Series*, No. 26345.
- Fiske, S. T., Cuddy, A. J. C., Glick, P. & Xu, J. (2002), "A Model of (Often Mixed) Stereotype Content: Competence and Warmth Respectively Follow from Perceived Status and Competition", *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 82(6): 878–902. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.82.6.878>
- Guadagno, R. E. & Cialdini, R. B. (2007), "Gender Differences in Impression Management in Organizations: A Qualitative Review", *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*, 56(7-8): 483–94. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11199-007-9187-3>
- Higgins, C. A. & Judge, T. A. (2004), "The Effect of Applicant Influence Tactics on Recruiter Perceptions of Fit and Hiring Recommendations: A Field Study", *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 89(4): 622–32. <https://doi.org/10.1037/0021-9010.89.4.622>
- Hofstede, G., Hofstede, G. J. & Minkov, M. (2010), *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*, New York: McGraw-Hill.
- Jones, E. E. (1964), *Ingratiation: A Social Psychological Analysis*, New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts.
- Jones, E. E. & Pittman, T. S. (1982), "Toward a General Theory of Strategic Self-presentation", in J. Suls (Ed.), *Psychological Perspectives of the Self*, Hillsdale, NJ: Erlbaum.
- Jones, E. E. & Wortman, C. (1973), *Ingratiation: An Attributional Approach*, Morristown, NJ: General Learning Press
- 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- 49, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01014492>
- Lievens, F. & Peeters, H. (2008), "Interviewers' Sensitivity to Impression Management Tactics in Structured Interviews", *European Journal of Psychological Assessment*, 24: 174-80. [10.1027/1015-5759.24.3.174](https://doi.org/10.1027/1015-5759.24.3.174).
- Pandey, J. & Rastogi, R. (1979), "Machiavellianism and Ingratiation", *The Journal of Social Psychology*, 108(2): 221–25, <https://doi.org/10.1080/00224545.1979.9711635>
- Proost, K., Schreurs, B., Witte, K. & Deros, E. (2010), "Ingratiation and Self promotion in the Selection Interview: The Effects of

- Using Single Tactics or a Combination of Tactics on Interviewer Judgments”, *Journal of Applied Social Psychology*, 40: 2155-69. 10.1111/j.1559-1816.2010.00654.x.
- Sanaria, A. (2016), “A Conceptual Framework for Understanding the Impression Management Strategies Used by Women in Indian Organizations”, *South Asian Journal of Human Resources Management*, 3(1): 25-39. 10.1177/2322093716631118.
- Tsai, Wei-Chi, Chen, Chien-Cheng & Chiu, Su-Fen (2005), “Exploring Boundaries of the Effects of Applicant Impression Management Tactics in Job Interviews”, *Journal of Management*, 31:108-25. 10.1177/0149206304271384.
- Varma, A., Toh, S. M. & Pichler, S. (2006), “Ingratiation in Job Applications: Impact on :Selection Decisions”, *Journal of Managerial Psychology*, 21(3): 200–10. doi: 0.1108/02683940610659551
- Waung, M., Mc Auslan, P., Di Mambro, J. M. & Miêgoæ, N. (2016), “Impression Management Use in Resumes and Cover Letters”, *Journal of Business and Psychology*, 32(6): 727–46. doi: 10.1007/s10869-016-9470-9.
- Weiner, B. (1985), “An Attributional Theory of Achievement Motivation and Emotion”, *Psychological Review*, 92: 548-73. 10.1037/0033-295X.92.4.548.
- Zhao, H. & Liden, R. C. (2011), “Internship: A Recruitment and Selection Perspective”, *Journal of Applied Psychology*, 96(1): 221–29. <https://doi.org/10.1037/a0021295>

Appendix: Ingratiation Manipulation in (the Body of) Cover Letters

1. Self-promotion Condition:

Academics has always been important to me as can be seen in my consistently high results. I have strived to maintain a balance between academics, extra-curricular activities, leadership positions, and research. As Head Girl of my school, I took several initiatives, like awareness campaigns for the rights of LGBTs. In group projects my team members have found me to be a reliable and valuable contributor, and I have often been asked to take a lead in them. At Sangath, where I interned, my contribution in organizing workshops was highly appreciated. Further, my research paper on social media’s influence on acceptance/rejection of homosexuality’ was

acknowledged by my teacher and I was awarded the highest marks for it.

2. Other-enhancement Condition:

I firmly believe that working with you would be a great learning opportunity for me given your strong background in research and your approachable nature. I enjoy attending your classes as they are both insightful and engaging. While conducting research for my class projects, I was fortunate to come across some of your articles in various journals. I found your paper on Identities of Muslim Adolescents in Conflict in Kashmir to be very informative and a highly relevant topic of research, keeping in mind the current political scenario. It inspired me to write an assignment, where I also referenced your work. I would consider it my privilege if I am chosen for this position.

3. Opinion Conformity Condition:

Your area of research is quite similar to what I wish to explore further. I viewed the TEDx talk where you spoke about the conventional standards about beauty and the social pressure on us to be thin. I completely agree with your view that it is not the media but us who are our worst enemies, as we are the ones who constantly engage in the fat talk ritual. When you asked us to read your article regarding 'Leadership Selection and Group Performance', I found myself to be in full agreement with your view that organizations should have a process that ensures 'leaders are made in legitimate ways that are more transparent, democratic, and credible'.

4. Rendering Favors Condition:

In addition to my responsibilities as a Research Assistant, I am comfortable and flexible in expanding my duties to include logistical and administrative tasks. I can make Power Point presentations for your class and type out your lesson plans. I can assist you with the photocopying and printing of study materials like text books and readings. If the need arises, I can also help you to contact the college's administrative office to obtain records. I am mostly free on weekends and in the evenings, so we can meet as per your convenience. I reside within two kilometers of the college and therefore I will only be a call away.