The Masked Employee: A mixed-methods investigation of unethical behaviour in the workplace

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PhD Research: An Overview

• Commenced February 2010: An investigation of the relatively new concept of false performance (FP) in UK public service organisations.

• Mixed Methods: Focus Group & Questionnaire.

• Qualitative Phase: Eight Focus Groups conducted within four diverse organisations – data analysed using Grounded Theory.
Variables Under Investigation

- (a) Trust in Co-Workers
- (b) Trust in Management
- (c) FP in Interviews
- (d) FP in Performance Appraisals
- (e) Impression Management (IM)
- (f) Self-Monitoring
- (g) Job Performance
The Organisational Charlatan

- **Organisational Charlatans:** Those individuals who seek to improve their perceived performance at the expense of their actual performance (Parnell and Singer, 2001).

- More recent research in this specific area (Gbadamosi, 2006; Gbadamosi, Ndaba, & Oni, 2007) has adopted the equivalent term, *false performer*, when referring to these individuals.

- The false performer is an individual in the workplace who deliberately conceals their true performance ability in order to portray themselves as being better able to perform a given role than they are actually are.

- Through this deception, they obtain positive advantages from the organisation, via superiors, in terms of performance evaluation, financial gain & general positive image.
Definitional Issues: IM Versus FP

- Very little scientific research conducted into FP, although FP does relate to the established area of impression management (IM).

- **IM**: The process whereby one seeks to establish a favourable perception of oneself or one’s ideas in the minds of other individuals (Schlenker, 1980).

- False performers are distinctive from impression managers by virtue of the fact that they are actually **incompetent**, skilful only in promoting the impression that they perform well. This inability to do the job distinguishes false performers from impression managers, who may well be competent performers.
### The IM-FP Model of Self-Presentation Behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>High Self-Presentation</th>
<th>FALSE PERFORMERS</th>
<th>Impression Managers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undesirable Employee</td>
<td>Undesirable/Desirable Employee (Possibly Context Dependent)</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Low Self-Presentation</th>
<th>Transparent Self-Presentation</th>
<th>Transparent Self-Presentation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Undesirable Employee</td>
<td>Desirable Employee</td>
<td>Desirable Employee</td>
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<table>
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<tr>
<th>Low Competence</th>
<th>High Competence</th>
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“My résumé is not all lies! My name is correct!”
The Wizard of Oz: False Performer?

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=YWyCCJ6B2WE
Phone Hacking Scandal
Banking: Barclays Scandal
Related Literature

- Goffman’s (1959) *The Presentation of Self* – impressions. Job interview as an example of when one will “give much preparation and thought to his performance.”

- Snyder (1987) *Public Appearances, Private Realities* – “social chameleons” or high self-monitors are champions at making a good impression.

- Ellis, West, Ryan, & DeShon (2002) - self promotion positively related to interviewer evaluations.

- Wayne & Liden (1995) - IM has a significant effect on performance ratings.
False Performance Literature

- Parnell and Singer (2001) - investigated FP in order to develop the Organisational Charlatan Scale (OCS) – measure of FP.

- Gbadamosi (2006) - investigated major variables which correlate with & predict & explain FP. This research again confirmed some measure of construct validity & support for the OCS.

- Gbadamosi, Ndaba, & Oni, 2007 - employees more likely to exhibit charlatan behaviour tendencies when they lack trust in the management of their organisation.
The Organisational Charlatan Scale

1. It’s more important to look busy than to be busy
2. It’s better to figure out how the organisation will evaluate you & work accordingly than to figure out what the organisation needs and do it
3. I am only concerned about what the organisation expects from me, not what the organisation should be doing
4. It’s better to do what your boss tells you than worry about whether it’s correct or not
5. I try to dress better when I’m going to be seen by key organisational decision makers
6. You should make a special effort to enhance your appearance when you’re going to be seen by those with the most power in your organisation
7. In today’s competitive world, maintaining a strong positive image is critical to career success
8. It’s a good idea to do what will result in strong evaluations even if it’s not exactly what the organisation needs to be done
9. Problems often arise when you have a confrontation with someone important in your organisation
Method: The Story So Far...

- Sequential, mixed methods approach i.e. Focus Groups & FPQ.

- Qualitative data has been gathered using four focus groups & transcripts analysed using grounded theory.

- Eight 60-90 minute focus groups: Management & Non-Management employees (two groups per condition).

- A total of 51 employees in eight focus groups asked about their perceptions & experiences of FP. Each employee had at least two years total work experience. **Data Analysis carried out for Eight Focus Groups.**
## Focus Groups: Demographic Information by Management & Non-Management Status

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focus Group</th>
<th>Total No.</th>
<th>Female</th>
<th>Male</th>
<th>Mean Age (Yrs)</th>
<th>Mean Years in Org.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Management</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>48.1</td>
<td>29.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-Management</td>
<td>25</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Perceived FP Behaviours

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Major Categories &amp; Subcategories</th>
<th>Storylines of Participants’ Perceptions of FP</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived FP Behaviours</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claiming Credit for Others’ Work</td>
<td>Taking credit for work done by co-workers or the team</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Boss Over-Delegation to Subordinates</td>
<td>Manager over-delegating work to mask incompetence &amp; inability</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Shifting the Blame</td>
<td>Blaming other people and/or factors for any mistakes</td>
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### Formal Context FP

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<td><strong>Formal Context FP</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lying About Qualifications</td>
<td>Embellishing, exaggerating, or lying about qualifications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Over-Talking as a Smoke-Screen</td>
<td>Over-talking to divert attention/prevent detection of FP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Claiming Credit for Others’ Work</td>
<td>Claiming undeserved credit during interview/appraisal</td>
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Perceived FP Behaviours

- **Perceived FP Behaviour** as being about concealment:
  
  "I tend to think of somebody who’s got a facade, who’s hiding things, and the temptation is always to try and find out what they’re hiding. Not really listen to what they’re talking about or doing, the action. It’s about, for me, it’s about what’s the hidden bit?"

- **Main Sub-Category of Claiming Credit for Others’ Work:**
  
  “It’s when you see somebody else’s signature on the bottom of something...Certainly, over the years, within the local authority, you’re asked to write something, reports mainly, which it involved a lot of work, and then someone else’s signature goes on the bottom of it. And you think, come on, there’s not even a reference to yourself."
Formal Context FP

- Main Sub-category of Lying About Qualifications:
  - “They exaggerate, they exaggerate, you know. They probably say they’ve got more GCSEs, more A-levels and all that. Probably not. But cause it’s there and it looks good, and they’re giving this overall confident interview. They’re going to go, oh great, we’ll have him...or her...
  - “Well, if they’ve got a job based on qualifications they’ve lied about, their performance in the job is going to be limited ‘cause they’re not going to have the skills to do the job, the skills required.”
Breaking News: Monster Study

- A 2011 Monster homepage poll asked, "Could you do your current (or most recent) boss's job better than he or she does?"

- 70% believe they could do a better job than their boss.

- 41% describe their employer as “totally incompetent.”

- Poll of over 9,000 workers in 52 countries found that only 18% of British workers believe their boss is more “capable” than they are.

Clearly, FP is a topical & ongoing issue!

The cost of not picking up deception in job applications can cost employers £4k-£6k per mistake

- CIPD Research: 25 per cent of employers had to withdraw job offers last year after finding candidates misrepresented themselves in their applications.
- Reported 39 per cent of UK organisations have experienced a situation where their employee screening procedures have allowed an employee to be recruited who was later found to have lied or misrepresented themselves in their application.
- Recent high profile cases against former NHS executives highlight the fact that CV fraud is not limited to junior candidates and that it can be committed by people in well paid, senior positions.
- Paul Ekman International @ www.ekmaninternational.com
Conclusions: First Phase

- The first phase represents a substantial, qualitative contribution to the scarce theoretical and empirical support in the literature.

- The results of the qualitative phase have supported the existing literature by further establishing the concept of FP, as well as beginning to clarify its relationship to interview performance, co-worker trust, and work relationships.

- The practical implications of the entire research include, but are not limited to: a) better selection processes b) fairer performance evaluation processes & c) a more ethical work environment characterised by more trust among workers.

- Qualitative results have been used to inform the second phase of quantitative research: The development & distribution of a False Performance Questionnaire (FPQ) – an instrument designed to detect false performers.
The False Performance Questionnaire

- Using data gathered in the qualitative phase, the FPQ has been developed in two quantitative phases.

- Following on from the first phase of distribution within several public service organisations, the FPQ has been refined and a second-phase 21-item scale constructed for distribution.

- Here is a link to the questionnaire: https://www.surveymonkey.com/s/WorkplaceBehaviourQuestionnaire_CBC

- FREE PRIZE DRAW for 3 x M&S GIFT VOUCHERS
To Whet Your Appetite…

- It is NOT fair to claim credit for work which has been done by others.
- In a job interview, lying about qualifications may help with career success.
- Using your sexuality is NOT a good way of compensating for a lack of ability in the workplace.
- It's a good idea to acquire impressive sounding qualifications/letters after your name, regardless of the quality of the credentials, so as to appear more competent than you are.
References

Contact

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