INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF DEVELOPMENTAL ISSUES IN EDUCATION AND HUMANITIES (IJDIEH)
Online ISSN: 3135-7296
Volume 02, Issue 05 September–October 2026, pp. 76-96
DOI: https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.23881654
www. ubueajournals.org

RAMIFICATIONS OF DUTIFULNESS ON THE SELF-PRESENTATION OF EMERGING ADULTS IN HIGHER LEARNING INSTITUTIONS IN BUEA-SUB DIVISION

Kemah Mirabel Mbeng & Shey Patrick Fonyuy
Department of Educational Psychology,
Faculty of Education of the University of Buea Cameroon

Abstract

Dutifulness, a personality trait characterized by a sense of obligation and responsibility, has been linked to various outcomes, including mental health, relationships, and career development. However, its impact on self-presentation, a critical aspect of identity formation during emerging adulthood, remains under studied. This study investigated the ramifications of dutifulness a core dimension of conscientiousness on the self-presentation behaviours of emerging adults in higher learning institutions within Buea Municipality, Cameroon. Specifically, it examined how two subcomponents of dutifulness commitment to obligations and dependability predict self-presentation. Guided by an exploratory sequential mixed-methods design, the study involved 610 university students and four institutional guidance counsellors drawn from 15 higher education institutions. Data were collected through questionnaires, focus group discussions, and interviews. The reliability coefficient of the questionnaire was 0.914. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics and multinomial logistic regression in SPSS Version 27, while qualitative data were thematically analysed using Atlas. ti. Results indicated that 47.3% of participants exhibited strong self-presentation behaviours, whereas 52.7% did not. Additionally, 55.7% demonstrated high commitment to obligations, and 55.0% were rated as dependable. Logistic regression analysis revealed that both commitment to obligations (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.532$, $p < .001$) and dependability (Nagelkerke $R^2 = 0.501$, $p = .002$) significantly predicted self-presentation. Qualitative findings further illustrated that dutiful students were perceived as trustworthy, reliable, competent, and socially admired. In contrast, those lacking in dutifulness exhibited poor academic engagement, increased anxiety, and superficial self-presentation strategies. These findings highlight the importance of fostering dutifulness among emerging adults to promote their psychosocial adjustment and academic success. Implications for counselling, personality development programs, and higher education policy are discussed.

Keywords:

Dutifulness, Commitment to Obligation, Dependability, Self-Presentation, Emerging Adulthood, Conscientiousness

Copyright: © The Author(s), 2026. Published by **Faculty of Education, University of Buea**. This is an **Open Access** article, distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 License (http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/), which permits unrestricted use, distribution and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited.

Résumé

Le sens du devoir, un trait de personnalité caractérisé par le sentiment d'obligation et de responsabilité, a été associé à divers aspects du développement humain, notamment la santé mentale, les relations interpersonnelles et l'évolution professionnelle. Toutefois, son influence sur la présentation de soi, une dimension essentielle de la construction identitaire au cours de la période de transition vers l'âge adulte, demeure insuffisamment étudiée. Cette étude examine les répercussions du sens du devoir, une composante fondamentale de la conscienciosité, sur les comportements de présentation de soi des jeunes adultes émergents inscrits dans les établissements d'enseignement supérieur de la municipalité de Buéa, au Cameroun. Plus précisément, elle analyse dans quelle mesure deux dimensions du sens du devoir, à savoir l'engagement envers les obligations et la fiabilité, permettent de prédire les comportements de présentation de soi. L'étude s'appuie sur une approche méthodologique mixte séquentielle exploratoire et porte sur 610 étudiants universitaires ainsi que quatre conseillers d'orientation issus de 15 établissements d'enseignement supérieur. Les données ont été recueillies au moyen de questionnaires, de discussions de groupe et d'entretiens. Le questionnaire présentait un coefficient de fiabilité de 0,914. Les données quantitatives ont été analysées à l'aide de statistiques descriptives et de la régression logistique multinomiale, grâce au logiciel SPSS, version 27, tandis que les données qualitatives ont fait l'objet d'une analyse thématique à l'aide du logiciel ATLAS.ti. Les résultats révèlent que 47,3 % des participants manifestaient des comportements marqués de présentation de soi, contre 52,7 % qui ne présentaient pas de tels comportements. Par ailleurs, 55,7 % des participants démontraient un engagement élevé envers leurs obligations, tandis que 55,0 % étaient considérés comme fiables. Les analyses de régression logistique indiquent que l'engagement envers les obligations (R^2 de Nagelkerke = 0,532 ; $p < 0,001$) et la fiabilité (R^2 de Nagelkerke = 0,501 ; $p = 0,002$) constituent des facteurs prédictifs statistiquement significatifs de la présentation de soi. Les résultats qualitatifs montrent également que les étudiants faisant preuve d'un sens élevé du devoir sont perçus comme dignes de confiance, fiables, compétents et socialement appréciés. En revanche, ceux présentant un faible sens du devoir manifestent un engagement académique limité, des niveaux d'anxiété plus élevés et des stratégies superficielles de présentation de soi. Ces résultats soulignent l'importance de promouvoir le sens du devoir chez les jeunes adultes émergents afin de favoriser leur adaptation psychosociale et leur réussite académique. L'étude met également en évidence des implications importantes pour les pratiques de conseil et d'orientation, les programmes de développement de la personnalité ainsi que les politiques éducatives dans l'enseignement supérieur.

Mots-clés : *Sens du devoir, engagement envers les obligations, fiabilité, présentation de soi, émergence de l'âge adulte, conscienciosité.*

Introduction

Self-presentation is a vital skill used by humans during socialisation to create and manage the way they perceive themselves and are being perceived by others. Self-presentation is a component of self-concept, which is the total of beliefs that people have about themselves. Other elements of self-concept include self-knowledge, self-control, and self-esteem (Aronson, Wilson, & Akert, 2013). According to Skogen and Knudsen (2021), self-presentation may be defined as individual practices related to how one presents oneself to others and is generally thought to be motivated by a wish to make a socially desirable impression on others, while remaining true to one's beliefs and ideals. Additionally, self-

presentation is the innate tendency to attempt to manage how others perceive us, and it entails presenting a desired image of oneself with the hope of gaining positive feedback and social approval from others (Bazarova & Choi, 2014; Leary, 2019).

Self-presentation is developed through the roles people play, the social identities they form, the comparisons they make with others, how others judge them, and the surrounding culture they experience in their daily lives (Myers, 2003). It is through aspects of self-presentation during online or face-to-face interactions that others make judgments about us, and as such, self-presentation stands as a gauge for how others perceive us. And because people are judged by how others see them and perceive them; people are very conscious of the way they present themselves to their audiences. After all, there's an adage that says the "first impression matters". Thus, self-presentation is the use of behaviour to communicate some information about oneself to others. On the contrary, when it comes to emerging adults, many of them present themselves in ways that do not actually reflect who they are, just to keep up with peers or societal trends. Moreover, many of them aim to achieve and appear higher in society, but their ability to work hard, accompanied by a strong desire, is lacking. On this note, dutifulness should be an essential aspect of conscientiousness that emerging adults must possess if they intend to present themselves as higher in society or to their peers.

Industriousness, also known as dutifulness, refers to the tendency to work hard, aspire to excellence, and persist in the face of challenge. Several studies have identified a separate persistence factor (De Raad & Peabody, 2005; MacCann, Duckworth, & Roberts, 2009), which can be thought of as a construct that bridges conscientiousness and ambition, a facet of extraversion. Given that the aspect of industriousness also correlates with components of extraversion (Roberts et al., 2004), it might be appropriate to categorise persistence as a form of industriousness (Roberts et al., 2012). A central psychological challenge of emerging adulthood is the construction and internalisation of a self-defining life story or narrative identity. In becoming an author for one's own life, the emerging adult needs to develop a personal narrative that selectively reconstructs the past and imagines the future in such a way as to provide life with purpose, meaning, and a sense of temporal coherence (Mc Adams, 2013). Thus, our study aims to find out the impact of dutifulness on emerging adults' self-presentation in higher institutions of learning in Buea Municipality.

Conceptualising Dutifulness

Dutifulness refers to a personality trait characterised by a strong sense of responsibility, obligation, and commitment to one's duties, roles, and relationships. Individuals with high dutifulness tend to prioritise their obligations and responsibilities over personal desires and interests. There are many benefits of being dutiful, such as building trust and credibility, achieving goals and success, maintaining relationships, and developing self-discipline. Specifically, it has been argued that dutifulness can foster strong, long-term relationships built on trust, loyalty, and commitment, and that persons with high dutifulness tend to be reliable, responsible, and committed to their work, which can lead to career

advancement and success in every dimension of their life. Moreover, practising dutifulness has been linked to helping individuals develop self-discipline, self-awareness, and a sense of purpose (Roberts, 2006).

However, there is a need to strike a balance when striving to be dutiful to avoid potential drawbacks in life, such as prioritising duties over personal needs and desires, which can lead to burnout, anxiety, depression, and neglect of one's well-being. Rigid adherence to obligations and responsibilities can limit adaptability and creativity, while an excessive focus on meeting others' expectations can result in an overdependence on approval and validation. Nonetheless, to be truly dutiful, one should be able to set clear goals and priorities, establish routines and schedules, practice self-reflection and self-regulation, and take accountability.

From a theoretical point of view, dutifulness can be learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement, as well as motivated by intrinsic factors, such as personal values and goals, or extrinsic factors, such as social pressure and expectations (Deci, 2000). We must be aware that dutifulness is a crucial aspect of moral development, as it entails a sense of responsibility and obligation to others (Kohlberg, 1981, as cited in Dolazel, 2015).

It is essential to understand that dutifulness has varying perspectives, such as philosophical perspectives like Deontology (Kant), Confucianism, Virtue Ethics (Aristotle), and Utilitarianism (John Stuart Mill). The psychological perspectives on dutifulness can be explored through moral development (Lawrence Kohlberg) and personality psychology: Certain personality traits, such as conscientiousness, are linked to dutifulness. Conscientious individuals are generally organised, responsible, and diligent in fulfilling their obligations. Finally, from a sociological perspective, dutifulness can be viewed through the lens of socialisation, with some sociologists asserting that individuals learn about their duties and responsibilities through socialisation processes, including family, education, and social institutions (Roberts et al., 2006).

The dutifulness and self-presentation during emerging adulthood is a complex area, as this period (roughly ages 18-29) involves identity exploration, instability, and significant transitions. During this time, individuals navigate their roles and responsibilities while also trying to define who they are and how they wish to be perceived. It is important to recognise that emerging adults often feel a strong sense of duty to meet their parents' expectations regarding education, career, and life choices. This can influence their self-presentation, as they may attempt to portray themselves in a way that pleases their parents, even if it does not fully align with their own desires (Nelson & Barry, 2005).

Furthermore, dutifulness can motivate emerging adults to pursue careers that are perceived as stable, respectable, or financially rewarding, even if they lack passion for them. Their self-presentation may then highlight their competence, ambition, and dedication to professional success (Galambos et al., 2011). Once again, emerging adults are becoming increasingly aware of social norms and expectations concerning appearance, behaviour, and online presence. Therefore, dutifulness to these norms can lead some of them to present themselves in a

socially acceptable way and to avoid negative judgment (Moreau et al., 2020). There are moments when many emerging adults struggle to balance their desire to be authentic with the need to present themselves strategically in different social contexts (Vignoles et al., 2011).

Understanding Dutifulness and Emerging Adults Self-Presentation

Historically, Emerging Adulthood was first introduced by Jefferey Jensen Arnett. In the late 1990s, Arnett started postulating that a new developmental period had evolved called emerging adulthood. After much debate, it is now more widely accepted from both a developmental and sociological perspective that individuals between 18 and 29 years are in a new period of life, often classified as emerging adulthood (Coté, 2014). According to Arnett (2007), these individuals are experiencing normative transitions, including identity exploration, instability, self-focus, and feelings of being in between, while navigating a wide range of life opportunities and possibilities. Syed and Mitchell (2013) called these ''five pillars,'' a rubric of emerging adulthood. More so, Nelson and Barry (2005) also found characteristics associated with emerging adulthood to include issues with independence, identity, depression, and risky behaviour. Furthermore, on a historical note, the concept of self-presentation or impression management has its roots in sociology and social psychology. In 1959, Erving Goffman (1922-1982), a Canadian sociologist, drew inspiration from the words of William Shakespeare, who four hundred years ago likened life to the theatre. In academia, Goffman was the first to use the theatre metaphor to describe and analyze a method of human self-presentation in everyday social interactions occurring face-to-face (Merunkova & Slerka, 2019) in his seminal book, titled, "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life", published in 1959 thus, laid the foundation for the modern understanding of self-presentation (Miller, 2012).

As a sociologist, Goffman was primarily interested in the role that self-presentation plays in the construction of social reality. He defined self-presentation as the process by which people attempt to control the impressions others form of them through conscious and/or unconscious manipulation of information during socialisation. Using a dramaturgical metaphor, he posited that people engage in self-presentation much like actors performing on a stage. He assumed that actors attempt to control their interactions with others by expressing themselves in ways that lead targets to act voluntarily by their own plan. However, according to Schlenker, research on self-presentation has experienced significant growth over the past 25 years. Today, self-presentation has emerged as an important topic in social psychology, as well as in counseling and clinical psychology (Kelley, 2000), developmental psychology (Emler & Reicher, 1995), sports psychology (Leary, 1992), organizational behaviour and management (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997) and political science (McGraw, 1991). Although people sometimes create false impressions of themselves (Weiss & Feldman, 2006), they often manage their impressions to convey accurate information that other people might not otherwise know (Murphy, 2007).

Moreover, because people are multifaceted, with diverse and sometimes contradictory attributes and interests, they tend to present only those characteristics that are most relevant to their immediate goals. Thus, rather than

being necessarily deceitful and manipulative, people's self-presentations are often honest, albeit tactical efforts to foster specific images in others' eyes. By adulthood, most people likely have established familiar styles of presenting themselves, but may find it challenging to make a desired impression under novel or pressured conditions. However, at times, people communicate information about themselves to others in a seemingly effortless manner and easily convey the desired image (Vohs, Ciarocco, & Baumeister, 2005). Industriousness or dutifulness is one component of conscientiousness. On a broader note, conscientiousness refers to socially prescribed impulse monitoring that enables goal- and task-directed behaviour, such as thinking before acting and doing, deferring gratification, respecting norms and rules, and planning and organising tasks (Boudouda & Gana, 2020).

Conscientiousness is a broad domain of traits that subsumes multiple lower-order facets. According to research, there are approximately five facets that are considered components of conscientiousness, which include industriousness (dutifulness), orderliness, impulse control, reliability, and conventionality (Jackson et al., 2009). However, different models of personality define and measure conscientiousness in varying ways. Individuals who are low in conscientiousness tend to be more impulsive, spontaneous, easy-going, irresponsible, disorganised, lazy, reckless, and indifferent (Kern, 2020), while those with high conscientiousness follow authority and conform to group norms as positive engagement within task-related endeavours (Ashton & Lee, 2001). Hence, conscientiousness lies on a continuum, that is, it is a spectrum of constructs that describe individual differences in the propensity to be self-controlled, responsible to others, hardworking, orderly, and rule-abiding, with most people falling somewhere in the middle of two extremes (Roberts et al., 2009). On a specific note, industriousness encompasses the tendencies to work diligently, strive for excellence, and persevere in the face of challenges. Several studies have identified a separate persistence factor (De Raad & Peabody, 2005; MacCann, Duckworth, & Roberts, 2009), which can be thought of as a construct that bridges conscientiousness and ambition, a facet of extraversion. Given that the aspect of industriousness also correlates with components of extraversion (Roberts, Bogg, Walton, Chernyshenko, & Stark, 2004), it might be appropriate to categorise persistence as a form of industriousness (Roberts et al., 2012).

The African world view conceives of youths as growing out of childhood and poised for an adulthood that lies in the future. It is a transitional period when individuals are neither adolescents nor fully adults. The transition from adolescence to young adulthood is frequently referred to as the period of emerging adulthood (Arnett, 2013), and the transition itself is often referred to as "youth transitions" (Cieslik and Simpson, 2013). Nsamenang in his theorisations on social ontogeny described young people as a "way station" between social apprenticeship in childhood and full social integration into the third decade of life, beginning with social entrée, a brief transitional period that marks the beginning of adulthood. In the African subregion, in general, and in Cameroon, in particular, the transition to adulthood is an arduous task characterised by several challenges (Lo-oh, 2009). Social and economic inequalities on the African continent continue to pose significant challenges to the life courses of Africa's youth (Lo-oh, 2016).

Notably, in Cameroon, health care services, economic resources, and social services are unevenly distributed. As a result, the majority of Cameroonian youth are left languishing in abject poverty, unemployment, under-education, and a challenging labour market economy (Lo-oh, 2017). There is an increase in the number of emerging adults pursuing post-secondary education in Cameroon in general and in the Buea Municipality in particular. As such, understanding factors that influence wellbeing, specifically in university students, is an important goal.

Situating Emerging Adults within Existing Literature

Emerging adulthood refers to the developmental stage between adolescence and young adulthood. According to Arnett's theory, the distinct features of this period set it apart as a different stage of development, separate from both adolescence and adulthood. He further conceptualised college (university) first-year students as emerging adults rather than adolescents, given that identity development is a continuous process and is crucial for both groups (Arnett, 2014). Although development during this stage shares many similarities with that of the preceding or following stages, other important features make this period of emerging adulthood quite distinctive. These features include feeling in-between (emerging adults do not see themselves as either adolescents or adults), identity exploration (especially in the areas of work, love, and world views), focus on the self (not self-centered, but simply lacking obligations to others), instability (evidenced by changes of direction in residential status, relationships, work, and education), and age of possibilities (optimism in the potential to steer their lives in any number of desired directions) (Nelson, 2009).

Unlike adolescents, emerging adults are not undergoing puberty and are not considered minors under the law, as they have reached physical and sexual maturity. They are also highly diverse in their educational and occupational combinations and trajectories (Arnett, Zukauskiene, & Sugimura, 2014). Arnett (2004, 2015) further posited that social, cultural, and economic changes over the latter half of the 20th century have led to an elongation of the pathway to adulthood, particularly in the most economically developed nations. He cites four specific societal changes that have contributed to the phenomenon: the technological revolution, the sexual revolution, the women's movement, and the youth movement. The transition to adulthood appears to be becoming increasingly prolonged due to social and economic changes, with a high number of young people staying in education longer, marrying later, and having their first child later than in the past. Thus, it would be most likely in countries that are highly industrialised or postindustrial, those that require a high level of education for entry into the information-based professions and postpone marriage and parenthood until well after schooling is completed (Facio & Micocci, 2003).

However, Arnett further emphasised that emerging adulthood is culturally constructed. It exists only in cultures that postpone entry into adult roles and responsibilities until well past the late teens. And as such, emerging adulthood may not be a universal period of human development, suggesting that this period exists only under certain conditions that have occurred relatively recently and are limited to some cultures (Arnett, 2004). A plethora of studies have been conducted, with evidence from various countries, confirming that a significant

proportion of young people exhibit these characteristics (e.g., Arnett, 2001, 2003; Facio & Micocci, 2003; Mayseless & Scharf, 2003). In Argentina, as in the United States and other industrialised countries, a substantial proportion of young people have postponed the timing of marriage and parenthood. In this study, only 46 per cent of women and 22 per cent of men aged twenty-five to twenty-seven had at least one child. Similar to the United States and other industrialised countries, 66 per cent had continued their education after graduating from high school. Half of these (33 per cent of the total sample) had completed four years or more of postsecondary education. Additionally, to affirm Arnett's concept, Swanson (2016), after going through a myriad of literature, supports emerging adulthood as a global and cross-cultural developmental period and field of study. Gilmore (2019) claims the concept of emerging adulthood elicited an extraordinary response in the research community because identity in emerging adults is a complex and organising aspect of self-presentation. Psychologically, emerging adulthood is a stage during which an individual's cognitive abilities reach their peak in their fourth decade and possibly beyond (Schaie, Willis, & Caskie, 2004).

Self-presentation of Emerging Adults

Self-presentation is a term that refers to conscious and unconscious strategies for managing how others perceive an individual, both in terms of appearance and behaviour (Dolezal, 2015). It has been conceptualised as the process through which people intentionally try to influence how they are perceived and judged in social situations (Culos-Reed et al., 2002). Therefore, we can understand that controlling others' perceptions of oneself is called self-presentation or impression management (Leary, 2019). Additionally, Myers (2013) argued that self-presentation involves expressing oneself and acting in ways that aim to create a positive impression aligned with one's ideals. The impressions formed by others significantly affect how they perceive, evaluate, and treat individuals, and can also impact their self-concept and psychological well-being. As a consequence, people tend to monitor and regulate their perceived image. It is also important to recognise that many emerging adults, particularly in developing contexts like ours, sometimes give false appearances to their peers, which can lead to negative outcomes such as low self-esteem when their true selves are eventually uncovered and shared with others.

The scientific study of self-presentation began with the work of sociologist Erving Goffman, followed shortly by social psychologist Edward Jones in 1982. Although Goffman wrote many essays relevant to the study of human interaction, his major contribution was "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life." For Goffman, a full understanding of human behaviour requires that we pay attention to public images (Leary, 2019). To Goffman, people control how others treat them by influencing others' definitions of the situation. They influence others' definitions of the situation by giving others the kind of impression that will lead them to act voluntarily in accordance with their objectives. Thus, when an individual appears in the presence of others, there will usually be some reason for him to mobilise his activity so that it will convey an impression to others which it is in his interests. To Jones and Pittman (1982) as cited in Leary (2019), the primary goal of self-presentation is not to be perceived positively per se, but to influence other people to respond in desired ways. That is, successful self-presentation requires that

people accurately assess the impact of their behaviour on others' impressions of them, but people do not always know the kinds of impressions they convey. Self-presentation, thus provides a constraint within which most behaviours occur.

Self-presentational behaviours depend on both the individual and the situation. The types of impressions people aim to convey are influenced by their motives and personality, as well as by the immediate social environment. In other words, people act like social chameleons-they modify their behaviour in response to external circumstances (Gangestad & Snyder, 2000). To varying extents, we continuously manage the impressions we leave. Myers (2013) emphasises that self-presentation occurs because we aim to project a desirable image both to an external audience (others) and to an internal audience (ourselves), which explains why we sometimes excuse, justify, or apologise as necessary to bolster our self-esteem and reinforce our self-images. Few aspects of people's behaviours are unaffected by self-presentational motives; at times, individuals act in certain ways primarily to create a specific impression.

Self-presentation plays an important role in social settings by ensuring that individuals present a consistent public image, where appearance and behaviour remain predictable over time and across different contexts (Dolazel, 2015). Even when people's behaviour is driven by other objectives, they generally pursue these goals in ways that do not damage their image in the eyes of others. Although some self-presentations are exaggerated and others are outright lies, most of the impressions people create are not deceptive. We are all complex individuals, and in any given situation, we can project many different, yet true, images of ourselves. Rather than lying, people usually choose the images they want others to form from their range of genuine self-portraits. This choice is often strategic, based on their objectives in the situation and their beliefs about which impressions will best help them achieve those goals (Leary, 2019).

With all this, emerging adults in our context need to present themselves properly so that others do not judge them negatively. In other words, our emerging adults should show their true selves to the public to avoid being perceived as fake. This is because, in the Buea Municipality in Cameroon, which features many higher institutions of learning and students trying to compete due to societal pressures, a significant number of them adopt a lifestyle that does not align with their inner selves. Consequently, this has pushed many of our emerging adults into lifestyles that do not conform to our societal norms, values, traditions, and customs. In any interaction, individuals may worry about how they are perceived in terms of friendliness, competence, dependability, approachability, dominance, cautiousness, attractiveness, and other factors. A failure in self-presentation on any of these dimensions can have serious implications.

Theoretical Framework

Jones and Pittman's Theory of Strategic Self-Presentation

This study was guided by the theory of self-presentation of Jones and Pittman (1982). The works of Erving Goffman, especially The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life (1959), exemplify the symbolic interactionist tradition and are seminal contributions to the study of impression management and self-

presentation. According to Jones and Pittman (1982), Goffman crystallised one viewpoint on impression management with his dramaturgical account that essentially gave them the label self-presentation. However, Goffman's emphasis was on the subtle ways in which actors project or convey a definition of the interaction situation as they see it. Attempts on the part of the actor to shape others' impressions of his personality received secondary emphasis (Jones and Pittman, 1982). On the other hand, Jones and Pittman's theory focused on our interest in getting others to like us and developed a theoretical framework that combined motivational, cognitive, and evaluative features.

According to Lewis and Neighbors (2005), Jones and Pittman have demonstrated that people employ various strategies aimed at shaping the impression others form of them. Jones and Pittman suggest that self-presentation involves an individual manipulating their responses to create a specific impression. Moreover, Jones and Pittman argue that it is unlikely to find a set of responses that are inherently or universally self-presentational. Instead, self-presentation is probably closely linked to social responses that carry other significances as well. The self-presentation theory by Jones and Pittman (1982) offers a taxonomy of tactics, outlining five strategies with different aims. This taxonomy includes ingratiation, intimidation, self-promotion, exemplification, and supplication.
The first is ingratiation, which is undoubtedly the most common of all self-presentational behaviours. Much of our social conduct is influenced by our desire for others to like us and see us as warm, humorous, reliable, charming, and physically attractive. Ingratiation can backfire if it is too obvious. If the audience realises they are being manipulated, they may come to distrust or dislike the person engaging in it. The second stage is intimidation. While the ingratiator tries to convince a target that they are likable, the intimidator aims to persuade a target that they are dangerous. Successful ingratiation diminishes the target's power by encouraging them to avoid actions that might harm or cost the actor, whereas the intimidator projects their power to inflict pain, discomfort, or psychological harm. The idea of threat is central to understanding intimidation, but most interpersonal threats rely on the manipulation of how the actor is perceived by those they seek to control. As a result, intimidation often pushes people apart and creates pressures for the target to withdraw and avoid.

According to Jones and Pittman (1982), intimidation most often occurs in relationships with non-voluntary roles, such as families, marriages, student-teacher relationships, employer-employee connections, and military service. The third strategy is self-promotion. Self-promotion includes proudly highlighting one's achievements, speaking directly about one's strengths and talents, and making internal rather than external attributions. Although Jones (1964) used self-descriptions to enhance one's attractiveness as a form of ingratiation, Jones and Pittman (1982) differentiate self-descriptive communications aimed at attributing competence rather than likability. They refer to this as self-promotion, where an individual describes themselves with the ulterior goal of increasing personal attractiveness. Exemplification is another form of self-presentation. Unlike the other strategies, exemplification involves strategic qualities and a specific connection to emulation, guilt, and shame. Through exemplification, individuals aim to create the impression that they are morally superior, virtuous,

or righteous. However, to succeed, they must avoid crossing into self-righteousness; for social effectiveness, they must exemplify morality rather than merely claim it.

Furthermore, supplication serves as another self-presentational strategy. Lewis and Neighbors (2005) suggested that supplication occurs when individuals reveal their weaknesses or shortcomings to gain compassion from others. Typically, supplication is employed by those who lack the resources implied by previous strategies (Jones & Pittman, 1982). By highlighting their inability to support themselves and stressing their dependence on others, the supplicant underscores a norm of obligation or social responsibility that is more or less binding on those with greater resources. Generally, supplication is most effective when there is an element of randomness or chance in the power imbalance. However, people sometimes exaggerate their incompetence and vulnerabilities if it helps them achieve their goals.

This theory is relevant to the study because it explains five different ways in which emerging adults can present themselves to others. However, it is important to note that emerging adults who are dutiful will not want to present themselves or be perceived as weak by supplicating themselves to others. Nevertheless, dutiful emerging adults are more likely to create self-presentation through strategies like integration, by doing things that will make their peers like or admire them. However, they must be careful not to create an impression that they are overly righteous, because no human is perfect. Therefore, they can use exemplification to make their peers see them as morally superior and better than others.

Statement of Problem

Self-presentation in emerging adults plays a crucial role in identity development, exploration, clarity, and a coherent sense of self, particularly when many are in the status of identity moratorium (Kroger, Martinussen, & Marcia, 2010), as they eagerly explore themselves in their new environments. Self-presentation contributes to higher self-esteem as it allows emerging adults to selectively present an optimised self-image, a coherent sense of self, and thus become aware of characteristics they can be proud of (Gonzales & Hancock, 2011). However, both offline and online, emerging adults strategically present themselves to others in order to be judged favourably, using self-presentational strategies such as self-promotion, ingratiation, intimidation, exemplification, and supplication. Through these strategies, they convey information to their audiences as being competent, dependable, organised, hardworking, trustworthy, and goal-directed. Because they are not authentic, doing so, they experience identity multiplicity, and diverse personalities that make it difficult for them to establish an integrated and coherent sense of self.

Consequently, because emerging adults are too concerned and intentional in the way others see and judge them, their psychological development is greatly affected leading to less coherent sense of self and lowers elf-esteem which then makes them engage in reckless behaviours such as impulsive spending (Jackson et al., 2020), unsafe sexual activities (Quinn & Fromme, 2010), illicit drug use and abuse, impulsivity, sensation-seeking, increase stressed level (Lin, Ma, Wang, &

Wang, 2015) increase levels of anxiety, panic attacks, depression, eating disorders, promiscuity, juvenile delinquency, drunk driving. Thus, leading to school dropouts, morbidity, and even deaths. It is against this backdrop that this study aims to investigate the impact of dutifulness on the self-presentation of emerging adults in the Buea Municipality, Fako Division, Southwest Region, Cameroon.

Objective of the Study

Generally, the aim of this study is to examine the impact of dutifulness on the self-presentation of emerging adults in the Buea Municipality.

Specifically, the study is guided by the following;

1. To find out the impact of commitment to obligations on emerging adults' self-presentation in the Buea Municipality.
2. To examine the impact of reliability /dependability on emerging adults' self-presentation in the Buea Municipality.

Methodology

Research Design: The sequential exploratory design was used in the study, whereby a focus group discussion was first conducted with a few students, and the findings from the focus group were used to design a closed-ended questionnaire to sample more students. This approach allowed the researcher to develop a questionnaire that best reflects the local realities of the students.

Population of Study: The parent population consisted of emerging adults aged 18-29 years in the 25 higher education institutions within Buea Municipality in the South West Region of Cameroon, along with guidance counsellors.

Target and Accessible Population of Study: The target population of the study consists of emerging adult students from 15 of the higher education institutions in the Buea Municipality, and the number of students who make up the accessible population was 35,877, along with guidance counsellors.

Sample Size and Sampling Techniques: The sample size of the study was estimated to be 610 students using Epi-Info 7.0, with a design effect of 1.6, an expected prevalence of 50%, and a 95% confidence interval. Additionally, four guidance counsellors were sampled. The students were sampled using purposive, convenience, and proportionate sampling techniques across the 15 institutions.

Instruments: Questionnaire, focus group discussion, and interview guide were the instruments used for data collection. Data collected using the focus group discussion and interview guide, which were first analysed, and the findings were used to formulate the questionnaire for subsequent data collection. The four-point Likert scale was used to measure the closed-ended questions.

Validity and Reliability of the Instrument: All questions on the initial instrument for each variable were developed through a literature review, while those for the second instrument (questionnaire) were based on the findings from the initial instrument (focus group discussion and interview guide). Despite using relevant literature and initial findings, both instruments were reviewed,

corrected, and approved by experts in the field. Additionally, to establish validity, reliability was tested via a pilot study with 10 students, yielding an overall coefficient value of 0.914. This was calculated using the Cronbach Alpha test.

Procedure of Administration of Instruments: The direct delivery method was used to collect the necessary data. Accordingly, a focus group discussion was conducted at the respondent's school premises. Each focus group discussion lasted for one hour. During this process, all discussions were recorded and active participation was encouraged among all members. As for the questionnaires, they were equally administered face-to-face to the students in their respective schools.

Data Analysis Technique: Both quantitative and qualitative data analysis techniques were used. The quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as percentages, mean, and standard deviation, as well as the Pearson test and Linear regression technique. SPSS 27 was the software used to analyse the quantitative data, while the qualitative data were analysed with the support of Atlas.ti using the thematic analysis approach. Finally, all inferential findings were presented at a 95% confidence interval.

FINDINGS

Table 1:
Demographic Information of Emerging Adults

Demographic information		Frequency	Percentage
Age range	18-20	70	11.8
	21-23	176	29.8
	24-26	345	58.4
Gender	Female	377	63.8
	Male	214	36.2
Marital status	Single	484	81.9
	Married	107	18.1

n=591

Among the 591 emerging adults whose information was valid for the study out of the 610 sampled, 58.4% (345) were aged 24-26 years, 29.8% (176) were aged 21-23 years, and 11.8% (70) were aged 18-20 years. Furthermore, 63.8% (377) of respondents were female, and 36.2% (214) were male. Lastly, the majority of respondents, 81.9% (484), were single, while 18.1% (107) were married.

Self-presentation

The self-presentation of emerging adult students was assessed using four personality traits: intimidation, supplication, exemplification, and self-promotion.

Table 2:

Appraisal of Emerging Adult Students' Self-Presentation

Items	Collapsed		Mean	Std. Dev
	SA/A	D/SD		
Intimidation				
I intimidate others	319(54.0%)	272 (46.0%)	2.57	1.185
I behave in ways that make other people afraid of me	315(53.3%)	276 (46.7%)	2.59	1.195
I do things to make people afraid of me so they will do what I want	285 (48.2%)	306 (51.8%)	2.49	1.200
I use my size and strength to influence people when I need to	321 (54.3%)	270 (45.7%)	2.62	1.219
I threaten others when I think it will help me get what I want from them	331 (56.0%)	260 (44.0%)	2.64	1.212
Sub MRS and Mean	**1571 (53.2%)**	**1384 (46.8%)**	**2.58**	**1.202**
Supplication				
I often ask others to help me**	342 (57.9%)	249(42.1%)	2.69	1.237
I tell others they are stronger or more competent than I to get others to do things for me**	250 (42.3%)	341(57.7%)	2.98	1.212
I lead others to believe that I cannot do something to get help**	227 (38.4%)	364(61.6%)	3.01	1.196
I hesitate and hope that others will take responsibility for the group task**	223 (37.7%)	368(62.3%)	3.11	1.202
I use my weaknesses to get sympathy from others**	235 (39.8%)	356(60.2%)	3.00	1.210
Sub MRS/ Mean	**1277 (43.2%)**	**1678 (56.8%)**	**2.99**	**1.211**
Exemplification				
I always set an example for others.	213 (36.0%)	378 (64.0%)	2.15	1.120
I always strive to be a model of how a person should behave.	198 (33.5%)	393 (66.5%)	2.15	1.144
I always get others to act in the same positive way I do	196 (33.2%)	395 (66.8%)	2.13	1.120
I always act in ways I think others should act	207 (35.0%)	384 (65.0%)	2.16	1.157
I always induce imitation by others by serving as a positive example.	286 (48.4%)	305 (51.6%)	2.44	1.184
Sub MRS/Mean	**1100 (37.2%)**	**1855 (62.8%)**	**2.21**	**1.145**
Ingratiation				
I often compliment others to gain approval	288 (48.7%)	303(51.3%)	2.46	1.132
I try to make others feel important to like me	268 (45.3%)	218 (54.7%)	2.40	1.162
I agree with others even when I don't fully believe, just to please them.	344 (58.2%)	247 (41.8%)	2.67	1.142
I go out of my way to do favour for people I want to impress.	350 (59.2%)	241 (40.8%)	2.79	1.143
I express admiration for others more than I truly feel, in an effort to win them over.	281 (47.5%)	310 (52.5%)	2.44	1.174
Sub MRS/Mean	**1531 (51.8%)**	**1424 (48.2%)**	**2.55**	**1.111**
Self-promotion				
I always have to look perfect	281(47.5%)	310(52.5%)	2.42	1.199
I always have to look as good as I can	291(49.2%)	300(50.8%)	2.43	1.181
I have to look like I always do things perfectly	365(61.8%)	226(38.2%)	2.66	1.156
I always look perfect when I am around others	351(59.4%)	240(40.6%)	2.64	1.235
If I always seem perfect, other people will like me more.	349(59.1%)	242(40.9%)	2.62	1.200
Sub MRS/Mean	**1637(55.4%)**	**1318(44.6%)**	**2.55**	**1.194**
Overall MRS/Mean	**7517(50.8%)**	**7258 (49.2%)**	**2.57**	**1.173**

Key: SA=Strongly Agree, A=Agree, D=Disagree and SD= Strongly Disagree. Std. Dev; Standard

Deviation; MRS =Multiple Response Set; **items with reversed coding during calculation of MRS

Overall, 50.8% of emerging adults demonstrated good self-presentation, compared to 49.8% who did not, and the overall mean of 2.57 (slightly above 2.5) on a scale of 1-4 indicates a moderate level of self-presentation. Specifically, 53.2% of respondents intimidate others, while 46.8% do not, with the intimidation level having a moderate mean score of 2.58 (just above 2.5) out of 4. For example, 56.0% (331) of respondents admitted to threatening others when they believe it will help them achieve their goals. Additionally, 54.3% (321) confirmed using their size and strength to influence others. Finally, 53.3% (315) agreed to consistently behave in ways that make others afraid of them.

Regarding supplication, 43.2% of respondents always seek help from others, while 56.8% do not. The overall mean score of 2.56, rounded to 2.5, indicated that the level of supplication was moderate. For example, 62.3% (368) of respondents hesitate and hope that others will take responsibility for group tasks. Furthermore, 61.6% (364) do not believe that they can do something to get help. Finally, 57.9% (342) often ask others for assistance.

Regarding exemplification, 37.2% of respondents see themselves as an example while 62.8% do not, and the overall mean of 2.21, which is below 2.5, indicates a low level of exemplification. For example, 48.4% (286) of respondents agreed that they induce imitation by others by serving as a positive example, whereas 51.6% (305) disagreed. Moreover, 36.0% (213) stated they always set an example for others, while 64.0% (378) denied doing so. Similarly, 35.0% (207) agreed they always act in ways they think others should, while 65.0% (384) disagreed.

Regarding ingratiation, 51.8% consistently try to gain favour or approval from others, whereas 48.2% do not. The overall mean score of 2.55, slightly above 2.5 on a 4-point scale, indicates that the use of ingratiation is moderate. For instance, 59.2% (350) go out of their way to favour people to impress them, while 40.8% (241) do not. Similarly, 58.2% (344) agree to please others even when they do not fully believe in them, whereas 41.8% (247) do not. Furthermore, 48.7% (288) often compliment others to gain approval, while 51.3% (303) do not. Lastly, 45.3% (268) attempt to make others feel important to them, whereas 54.7% (218) do not.

Finally, regarding self-promotion, 55.4% of emerging adults agreed to promote themselves while 44.6% did not. However, the level of self-promotion was moderate, with a mean score of 2.55, slightly above 2.5 out of 4. For example, 61.8% (365) of respondents agreed they always look perfect, while 38.2% (226) disagreed. Similarly, 59.4% (351) agreed to always look perfect when others are around, compared to 40.6% (242) who did not. Consistently, 59.1% (349) confirmed they aim for perfection always, while 40.9% (240) did not. Lastly, 47.5% (281) agreed to always try to look perfect, whereas 52.5% (310) disagreed.

Research Question One: To what extent does commitment to obligations impact emerging adults' self-presentation in the Buea Municipality?

Table 3:

Appraisal of Emerging Adult Students' Commitment to Obligation

Items	Collapsed		Mean	Std. Dev
	SA/A	D/SD		
I always strive to maintain high standards and work towards them.	324 (54.8%)	267(45.2%)	2.48	1.254
I often accomplish a list of tasks.	289 (48.9%)	302 (51.1%)	2.42	1.205
I am always prepared.	344 (58.2%)	247 (41.8%)	2.62	1.277
I often exceed what is expected of me.	336 (56.9%)	255 (43.1%)	2.63	1.213
I always try even when uncertain.	353 (59.7%)	238 (40.3%)	2.63	1.265
MRS/Mean	**1646 (55.7%)**	**1309 (44.3%)**	**2.56**	**1.243**

Overall, 55.7% of emerging adults demonstrated a commitment to obligation, whereas 44.3% did not. The overall mean score of 2.56, which is slightly above 2.50 on a 4-point scale, suggests that the level of obligation associated with commitment is moderate, indicating a need for further improvement. Specifically, 59.7% (353 individuals) stated that they always try, even when unsure, while 40.3% (238 individuals) do not. Similarly, 58.2% (344 individuals) agreed to always prepare, whereas 41.8% (247 individuals) do not. Moreover, 57.7% (341 individuals) confirmed that they work diligently, while 42.3% (250 individuals) do not. Likewise, 56.9% (336 individuals) agreed that they often do more than what is expected of them, while 43.1% (255 individuals) disagreed. Additionally, 54.8% (324 individuals) stated that they always set high standards and work towards them, whereas 45.2% (267 individuals) disagreed. Finally, 48.9% (289 individuals) affirmed that they often complete a list of tasks, while 51.1% (302 individuals) disagreed.

Testing of Hypothesis One:

Ha1: Commitment to obligations significantly influences emerging adults' self-presentation in the Buea Municipality.

Table 4:

Multinomial Logistic Regression Depicting the Impact of Commitment to Obligation on Emerging Adults' Self-Presentation

Effect	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	Chi-Square	df	*p*-value
Intercept	202.363			
Emerging adults' self-presentation	462.431	260.068	30	.000
Pseudo R-Square **(**Nagelkerke) / Explanatory power of the model / impact	0.532 (53.2%)			

Predictor: Commitment to obligation

Statistically, the findings indicated that commitment to obligation strongly influences the self-presentation of emerging adults (pseudo-R-squared [Nagelkerke] = 0.532, p-value < 0.05). This shows that emerging adults tend to

present themselves in a highly positive light to others and themselves when they are committed to an obligation. As a result, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Research Question Two: To what extent does dependability impact emerging adults' self-presentation in the Buea Municipality?

Table 5:

Appraisal of Emerging Adult Students' Dependability

Items	Collapsed		Mean	Std. Dev
	SA/A	D/SD		
I always push myself very hard to succeed.	320 (54.1%)	271 (45.9%)	2.44	1.266
I frequently work too much.	341 (57.7%)	250 (42.3%)	2.63	1.217
I always put off unpleasant tasks.	326 (55.2%)	265 (44.8%)	2.54	1.229
I always make careful choices.	313 (53.0%)	278 (47.0%)	2.50	1.217
I always try to be the best at anything I do	325 (55.0%)	266(45.0%)	2.57	1.202
MRS/Mean	**1625 (55.0%**	**1330 (45.0%)**	**2.54**	**1.223**

In total, 55.0% of emerging adults were considered dependable, while 45.0% were not. The overall mean score of 2.54, slightly above 2.50 on a 4-point scale, indicates a moderate level of dependability, thus highlighting the need for further improvement. Specifically, 57.7% (341) reported working 'much', while 42.3% (250) did not. Likewise, 55.2% (326) of respondents admitted to always procrastinating on unpleasant tasks, whereas 44.8% (265) disagreed. Similarly, 55.0% (325) of respondents said they always try to be the best at whatever they do, while 45.0% (266) disagreed. Finally, 54.1% (320) agreed to always push themselves towards success, whereas 45.9% (271) denied doing so.

Testing of Hypothesis Two

Ha2: Reliability and dependability significantly influence emerging adults' self-presentation in the Buea Municipality.

Table 6:

Multinomial Logistic Regression Depicting the Impact of Reliability/Dependability on Emerging Adults' Self-Presentation

Effect	Model Fitting Criteria	Likelihood Ratio Tests		
	-2 Log Likelihood of Reduced Model	Chi-Square	df	*p*-value
Intercept	242.324			
Emerging adults' self-presentation	482.447	240.123	30	.002
Pseudo R-Square **(**Nagelkerke) / Explanatory power of the model / impact	0.501 (50.1%)			

Predictor: Reliability/dependability

Statistically, findings indicated that dependability significantly influences the self-presentation of emerging adults (Pseudo R-Square [Nagelkerke] = 0.501, p-value 0.002 < 0.05). This demonstrates that emerging adults are likely to exhibit high self-presentation both to themselves and in the eyes of others when they are dependable or reliable. Therefore, the null hypothesis was rejected, and the alternative hypothesis was accepted.

Table 7:
Cross Tabulation between Dutifulness and Self-Presentation by Descriptive Statistical Approach

Dutifulness	**Self-presentation**		**Total**	**Somers' d test value (symmetric/ directional test)**
	Strongly Agree and Agree	Disagree and Strongly Disagree		
Dutiful	183 (56.0%)	144 (44.0%)	327	S=0.395
Not dutiful	96 (36.4%)	168 (63.6%)	264	*p*-value 0.001
Total	279 (47.3%)	312 (52.7%)	591	

Generally, supporting the hypotheses using a descriptive cross-tabulation approach, we observe that 56.0% of emerging adults with high self-presentation were those who were dutiful (committed to obligations and dependable), significantly more than the 36.4% of those who were not dutiful (Somers' d test value = 0.395, p-value = 0.001 < 0.05). The positive test value indicates that self-presentation increases strongly as dutifulness (commitment to obligations and dependability) increases.

Table 8:
Emerging Adults and Counsellors' Opinion: How Presence and Absence of Dutifulness Influence University Students' Self-Presentation

Respondents		**Themes**	**Quotations**
Emerging adults' opinion	How the presence of dutifulness influences self-presentation	Reliable/ trustworthy	"Dutifulness makes me present as reliable; I'm the one who always shows up for group meetings or volunteers for extra tasks. This is a subtle display, showing you're committed and serious." (Respondent A)
		Boast competences	"Dutifulness makes me present as highly committed. I'll stay late in the lab to finish a project, knowing it reinforces my image as a dedicated student to my supervisors. These are 'proof points' of competence." (Respondent B)
		Hardworking	"Dutifulness helps me present as a hard worker; I'm the one always in the library or taking extensive notes in class. It's about showing that you take your studies seriously and are worth investing in, especially to lecturers and potential mentors." (Respondent C)
		Consciousness	"Even if no one reminds me, I'll submit my work early. I feel like it's my responsibility." (Respondent C) "I've been accused of 'trying to please the lecturers,' but I just don't like disappointing people." (Respondent E)
		Confident	"During a crisis in our group, I volunteered to lead because no one else would. It felt like my duty." (Respondent D)
		Respect	""I think people respect me more because I always take my commitments seriously." (Respondent E)
		Leadership	"Sometimes it's stressful. Being dutiful means, you're expected to carry the team." (Respondent F)
	How the absence/lack of dutifulness influence self-	No commitment	"Lack of dutifulness might be masked by loud discussions about study plans they never follow." (Respondent A)
		Pretentious	"A non-dutiful one might ask many questions in class to appear engaged." (Respondent B)

	presentation When absent		"A non-dutiful person might pretend to be sick to miss a deadline but then make a big show of catching up. (Respondent C)
		Examination anxiety	"If you're not dutiful, you fall behind, leading to anxiety about exams."
		Poor academic performance	"Lack of dutifulness means you don't engage, leading to poor grades and low motivation." "Poor self-control means you miss out on study time, leading to panic attacks before exams."
Counsellors' opinion	How the presence of dutifulness influences self-presentation	Commitment	"Dutifulness is displayed by consistently attending lectures, asking 'intelligent' questions, or volunteering for additional academic tasks, to be seen as dedicated. Students often conceal a lack of orderliness by quickly tidying their desks or using generic 'busy' responses. A lack of dutifulness might be hidden by 'group-riding' or feigning illness to miss commitments. This is often driven by a desire to avoid lecturer disapproval or peer judgment." (Respondent A)
		Gain favour	"Dutiful students often use ingratiation—they gain favor by being reliable and helpful to authority." (Respondent D)
		Perceived as a role model	"There's also a link with exemplification. They serve as models of responsibility." (Respondent D)
	How does the absence/lack of dutifulness influence self-presentation when absent	Lack of commitment	"Dutifulness, when low, shows up as chronic absenteeism, non-submission of assignments, and a general lack of commitment to academic requirements." (Respondent A)
		Neglecting self-care and burnout	"When excessively high, dutifulness can lead to students overworking themselves, neglecting self-care, and presenting with burnout symptoms because they feel an intense obligation to succeed." (Respondent A)
		Inflexible and rigid	"Dutifulness manifests as either hyper-adherence, where students become rigid and struggle with flexibility, or apathy, where they completely disregard their academic duties. Many students, especially first-years, struggle with the independent management required to be orderly and dutiful after leaving structured secondary school environments." (Respondent B)
		Disengagement/ apathy	"A lack of dutifulness can lead to academic apathy and disengagement. In Cameroon, where academic rigor is high and support systems can be limited, these traits are crucial for independent functioning." (Respondent A)

Furthermore, when emerging adults were asked how being dutiful and lack of dutifulness affects self-presentation of emerging adults in the University milieu, some said when a student is dutiful, others seen him/her as reliable and trustworthy as narrated "*Dutifulness makes me present as reliable; I'm the one who always shows up for group meetings or volunteers for extra tasks. This is a subtle display, showing you're committed and serious."* (Respondent A). Some added that dutifulness boasts competence, hard work, and consciousness as narrated in the statement "*Dutifulness makes me present as highly committed. I'll stay late in the lab to finish a project, knowing it reinforces my image as a dedicated student in the eyes of my supervisors. These are 'proof points' of competence." (Respondent B), "Even if no one reminds me, I'll submit my work early. I feel like it's my responsibility." (Respondent C)*.

To elucidate, some respondents opined that dutifulness promote confidence, respect by others, and leadership as explain in the statements "*Sometimes it's stressful. Being dutiful means, you're expected to carry the team.*" (Respondent F), "*I think people respect me more because I always take my commitments seriously." (Respondent E)*

On the contrary, the emerging adult students reported that lack of dutifulness, lack of commitment, pretentiousness, increased examination anxiety, and result in poor academic performance as depicted in the statements "*A non-dutiful person might pretend to be sick to miss a deadline but then make a big show of catching up. (Respondent C), "Lack of dutifulness means you don't engage, leading to poor grades and low motivation.", "Lack of dutifulness might be masked by loud discussions about study plans they never follow." (Respondent A)*

On the side of the guidance counsellors, they equally said dutifulness led to a sense of commitment, role model, and gaining of favour as depicted in the statement "*Dutifulness is displayed by consistently attending lectures, asking 'intelligent' questions, or volunteering for additional academic tasks, to be seen as dedicated. Students often conceal a lack of orderliness by quickly tidying their desks or using generic 'busy' responses. A lack of dutifulness might be hidden by 'group-riding' or feigning illness to miss commitments. This is often driven by a desire to avoid lecturer disapproval or peer judgment*." (Respondent A)

And a student not being dutiful was reported by guidance counsellors to lack commitment, poor self-care and increase burn out, academic apathy, and rigidity and inflexibility as depicted in the statements "*Dutifulness, when low, shows up as chronic absenteeism, non-submission of assignments, and a general lack of commitment to academic requirements." (Respondent A), "Dutifulness manifests as either hyper-adherence, where students become rigid and struggle with flexibility, or apathy, where they completely disregard their academic duties. Many students, especially first-years, struggle with the independent management required to be orderly and dutiful after leaving structured secondary school environments." (Respondent B*).

In conclusion, a student who is dutiful is seen as trustworthy, reliable, hardworking, conscious, confident, a good leader, competent, committed, role model, and gains respect and favour from others, while a lack of dutifulness was reported to increase examination anxiety, lack of commitment, poor academic performance, and pretentious attitude.

Discussion

The findings showed that commitment to obligation and dependability have a strong impact on the self-presentation of emerging adults, indicating that emerging adults will present themselves highly to others and to themselves when they are committed to obligation and are dependable. In fact, emerging adults with high self-presentation are those who are dutiful (committed to obligation and dependable) significantly more than those who are not dutiful. Additionally, students who are dutiful are regarded as trustworthy, reliable, hardworking, conscious, confident, good leaders, competent, committed, role models, and tend

to gain respect and favour from others. Conversely, a lack of dutifulness was reported to increase examination anxiety, lead to a lack of commitment, poor academic performance, and pretentious attitudes. Therefore, a significant proportion of emerging adult students with low self-presentation, a lack of commitment to obligation, and who are not dependable need to improve their dutifulness for a better self-presentation. According to Lewis and Neighbour's Strategic Theory of Self-presentation (2005), people employ various strategies designed to influence the impression others form of them.

While self-presentation involves an individual shaping their responses to create specific impressions, it is crucial to recognise that when an emerging adult demonstrates consistent commitment and dependability, they send a particular message to others and are judged accordingly. Thus, respondents who show a lack of commitment and are unreliable are often undermined publicly because of the unfavourable self-image they have created. Therefore, as self-presentation encompasses conscious and unconscious strategies to control or manage how one is perceived by others in terms of appearance and behaviour (Dolezal, 2015), all emerging adult students are encouraged to consciously cultivate a positive self-image so that others will hold them in high esteem. To achieve this, they need to be dutiful, which involves setting clear goals and priorities, establishing routines and schedules, practising self-reflection and self-regulation, and taking responsibility. Although dutifulness can be learned through observation, imitation, and reinforcement, as well as motivated by intrinsic factors like personal values and goals or extrinsic factors such as social pressure and expectations (Deci, 2000), it is important to recognise that dutifulness is a key aspect of moral development, involving a sense of responsibility and obligation to others (Kohlberg, 1981, as cited in Dolezal, 2015).

Recommendations

This study shows that dutifulness, a part of conscientiousness, greatly affects how emerging adults in higher education present themselves. Dutiful individuals are more likely to use strategies such as exemplification and self-promotion, which boost their credibility, leadership skills, and social integration. These findings indicate that personality-based interventions could enhance student development and academic success. To achieve this, we suggest the following:

1) Higher education institutions should include personality development programmes in orientation and counselling services, focusing on promoting dutifulness.
2) Counsellors and student support services should adapt interventions to increase awareness of self-presentation, particularly among students with lower levels of conscientiousness.
3) Future research should investigate the long-term impacts of dutifulness on self-presentation throughout different academic stages and its connection with digital impression management.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the findings showed that a significant proportion of emerging adults lack dutifulness. In other words, they are not committed to obligation and are not dependable. Consequently, their self-presentation to others is generally low. Therefore, while the findings have demonstrated that self-presentation increases with rising dutifulness, it is imperative that our emerging adult students always endeavour to be dutiful. However, they must be cautious not to be fake in their dutifulness, as this can bring shame when the truth is revealed. Being dutiful is rewarding for self-presentation, but precautions need to be taken to avoid burnout, fatigue, and excessive anxiety, which are sometimes associated with dutifulness. In other words, emerging adults need to recognise their limits and strive for a balance.

References

Arnett, J. J. (2000). Emerging adulthood: A theory of development from the late teens through the twenties. *American Psychologist*, 55(5), 469–480. https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066X.55.5.469

Jones, E. E., & Pittman, T. S. (1982). Toward a general theory of strategic self-presentation. In J. Suls (Ed.), *Psychological perspectives on the self* (Vol. 1, pp. 231–262). Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Leary, M. R. (2019). *Self-presentation: Impression management and interpersonal behaviour*. Routledge.

Lo-oh, J. T. (2017). *Youth transitions and career dilemmas in Cameroon: Challenges and policy implications*. Langaa RPCIG.

MacCann, C., Duckworth, A. L., & Roberts, R. D. (2009). Empirical identification of the major facets of conscientiousness. *Learning and Individual Differences*, 19(4), 451–458. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.lindif.2009.03.007

McCrae, R. R., & Costa, P. T. Jr. (1999). A five-factor theory of personality. In L. A. Pervin & O. P. John (Eds.), *Handbook of personality: Theory and research* (2nd ed., pp. 139–153). Guilford Press.

Roberts, B. W., Jackson, J. J., Fayard, J. V., Edmonds, G., & Meints, J. (2009). Conscientiousness. In M. R. Leary & R. H. Hoyle (Eds.), *Handbook of individual differences in social behaviour* (pp. 369–381). Guilford Press.

Skogen, J. C., & Knudsen, A. K. (2021). Self-presentation and social media use. *Current Opinion in Psychology*, 44, 101296. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.copsyc.2021.08.009

Vohs, K. D., Ciarocco, N. J., & Baumeister, R. F. (2005). Self-regulation and self-presentation: Regulatory resource depletion impairs impression management, and effortful self-presentation depletes regulatory resources. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 88(4), 632–657. https://doi.org/10.1037/0022-3514.88.4.632