



Impact of impression management on job attitude: Framework development

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Abstract

In this complex and competitive business world, there are losers and gainers of the competition. How is this judged? Not just by their performance but also by the impression they set in the minds of the evaluators. This study focuses on the strategies of Impression Management IM (Ingratiation, intimidation, exemplification, self-promotion and supplication) and tries to find whether there is a relationship between IM and job attitude of an individual, looking into the aspects of Job satisfaction, job involvement, organisational commitment and self efficacy.

Keywords: ingratiation, intimidation, exemplification, self-promotion and supplication Job satisfaction, job involvement, organisational commitment and self efficacy

Introduction

The word impression can be defined as the opinion one possess on an individual, place, situation or an object. Impression management (IM) refers to the activity of controlling information in order to steer others' opinions in the service of personal or social goals. Although people can manage impressions of almost anything (e.g., a clothing brand, a political position, etc.), people most commonly manage the impressions others form of themselves, a sub-type of impression management that is often termed *self-presentation*.

It has been an observation in the past of many philosophers that individuals generally engage in task of impressing others as Shakespeare wrote, "All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players; they have their exits and their entrances, and one man in his time plays many parts." The sociologist Erving Goffman added further to this idea, arguing that ordinary people in their daily life strive hard to convey desired impressions about themselves around them, just the way the actors on a stage present their characters to audiences.

The earlier research findings reflected that the actors pretend to be people they are not, this reflects Impression management to be in purpose and treacherous. It is also observed by the other researchers that people tend to engage in the activity of IM even when they don't intend to do so. For instance, one feels like just being himself, before his mother and before is close friend, the difference in behavior can be felt. He will behave very differently with both of them without his conscious. The reason for the same could be that the friend and the mother have different expectations or demands out of one person. Thus, engaging in impression management helps one to maintain a smooth relation with many kinds of

relationships in society.

IM tactics seem to be very impactful when the supervisor is forming an initial impression about his subordinate and not otherwise when the impression is already formed in the long run. Wayne and Ferris (1990) [57]. Authors have made an attempt to understand that IM will loosen its power in case of repeated use.

Self-presentation

Self-presentation refers to conveying some kind of information about oneself. It's an attempt to tell others that this is one's personality. Most often, people project positive, powerful or sympathising image of one. Maintaining a positive self image is considered imperative in organisations (Rosenfeld *et al.*, 1995) [47]. There are motives behind self-presentation

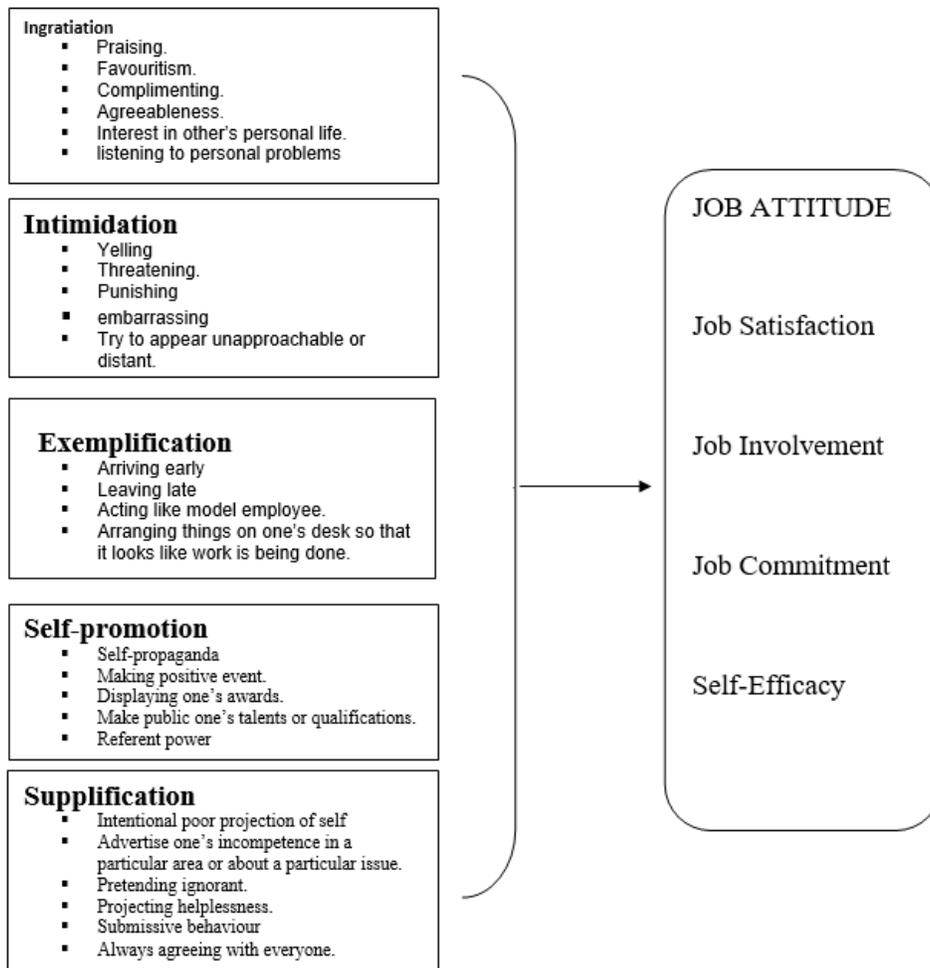
- To match up ones behaviour to his expectation of self.
- To match up ones behaviour to others expectation of self.

Most of them also struggle to strike a balance between the two. They sometimes want to live as per the expectation of self and sometimes tune their behaviour to scale up to the expectation of others. In this struggle impression gets also affected, and a dynamic and confused opinions starts building in such individuals.

The strategies used by the people for Impression Management according to Jones and Pittman are as follows:

- Ingratiation
- Intimidation
- Exemplification
- Self-promotion
- Supplication.

Conceptual framework impression management



Ingratiation

It is a technique where a person makes use of flattery words in order to impress his higher officials. Ingratiation describes strategies people use to appear likable, such as flattery, opinion Conformity, and favor-doing Jones and Pittman (1872). The literature in the past has brought about a difference between favouritism and ingratiation. Con Prendergast and Topel (1996) have examined that favouritism is costly to organizations as it has an effect on compensation and the use of bureaucratic rules. It is said that ingratiation has a positive impact on the career success (Judge & Bretz, 1994) [26] the supervisors also rate the subordinates higher due to ingratiation. the likability factor is also proven to be better. (Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Wayne & Liden, 1995; Wayne, Liden, Graf, & Ferris, 1997) [57].

Ingratiation is found to be effective, as it was found to have a positive impact on the performance appraisals. In addition, ingratiation also showed a likingness of the supervisors towards the subordinates Mark bolino (2014) study finds that the productivity of the organisation is much depended on the social connections that exists between workers and managers. They find that managers who are paid fixed wages favor workers to whom they are socially connected irrespective of the workers' ability. Many at times it is noticed that people who talk kind a sweet are always liked and accepted. But

those who are upfront and harsh are not accepted. It's a human tendency to expect good talk and not hear harsh words about self. Those who have understood this technique are victorious in gaining name, fame, position and power in the society. In the upper levels of management the incidence of ingratiatory behaviour is said to be high. (Allen *et al.*, 1979, p. 80) [1]. He makes sure he compliments them and also connects better with them in comparison to the others working with him so that he derives the benefit of creating a good image about himself in the sight of his supervisors.

The technique of using flattery works can also backfire at times when it is not backed up with some percentage of truth. For an example if a employee compliments his boss for his shirt, when the boss also knows it's not a great shirt, the colour is faded and he wore it without even ironing because he got late that morning and was unable to search another one, the boss will clearly suspect the act of ingratiation and a negative impression about his subordinate could be created instead of a positive one. The actor who chooses this technique should be genuine in his compliments otherwise it bounces back to have a negative repercussion all together.

Subordinates aim to get greater rewards from the organisation through ingratiation according to Rao *et al.*, 1995 [45]. The rewards can be good performance appraisal, and hence higher promotions resulting in higher pay. However, there were

mixed results shown in empirical evidence in concern with the relationship between ingratiation and performance appraisal in contrast to the earlier studies which showed that was a positive relationship between ingratiation and performance appraisal. (Cardy and Dobbins, 1986; Judge and Bretz, 1994; Kipnis and Vanderveer, 1971; Wayne and Ferris, 1990; Wortman and Linsenmeier, 1977) ^[8, 26, 57], whereas another latest research indicated a connection between Ingratiation and rewards is extrinsic and was found to be very little as intrinsic. (Ayree *et al.*, 1993; Martin, 1987; Rao *et al.*, 1995; Thacker and Wayne, 1995) ^[2, 45].

Past research also provides information on personalities types also determine the choice over the IM tactics. High in Machiavellians use more of ingratiation than the individuals low in Machiavellianism Pandey and Rastogi (1979, p. 224). likewise individuals who are controlled by internal factors such as hard work, sincerity, self belief etc. (internal locus of control) don't depend on ingratiation when compared to the individuals who are controlled by external factors such as luck, God, family, society etc. (external locus of control). (Vecchio and Appelbaum, 1995, p. 97) ^[56].

Intimidation

The word Intimidation as per the Cambridge English dictionary is to frighten or threaten someone, usually in order to persuade them to do something that one wants them to do. Some use this strategy to create a dreadful and a threatening image of oneself in the eyes of the other. They feel that by using this strategy they become powerful and mighty and others will automatically obey them and worship them.

This behaviour can be noticed everywhere in the world. For example when people are lined up in a queue for billing in a store during peak business season, some may quietly stand and pay their bill and move out silently. Whereas the people who chose to use this strategy of intimidation will make sure others notice them. They will express their displeasure of standing in the queue, later slowly they will raise their voice against the system and management. And will generally land up in a quarrel by shouting at the cashier, customers and the managers. Unable to control this customer's behaviour, the cashier would first accept his bill and send him as a priority even before others who came before him to the store.

Intimidation is described in the literature frequently as a process (Musselman, MacRae, Reznick & Lingard, 2005; Nadzam, 2009; Tibbo, de Gara, Blake, Steinberg, & Stonehocker, 2002) ^[38]. In medical education, "intimidation and harassment are not considered as isolated events but taken to be a part of an ongoing powerful cycle which is deeply rooted, endemic, and affects all levels of practitioner" (Musselman *et al.*) refer to the use of intimidation in medical education as a "rite of passage".

There are factors such as an individual's background and maturity level which acts as protective factors (Seabrook, 2004) ^[50]. Specifically "the context, the characteristics, the outcomes, and the reason for the behaviour" (Musselman *et al.*, 2005) ^[38] are considered when attempting to rationalize the reason for intimidation. Kerfoot (2008) identifies additional strategies as protective behaviors within the individual, such as: "take care of yourself, always take the high road, etc could be the added reasons for intimidation.

Intimidation tactics of IM is more adapted by people who are not likely to be sentimental, compassionate or having a wish to be liked by others Jones & Pittman. it is a harder tactics where aggression is used while dealing with subordinates, harassing and embarrassing becomes a common technique to bring in fear among the subordinates. The communication will be heading towards making their (subordinates) life miserable (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). people who are in need of affiliation will rarely use intimidation with the fear of alienation.

Exemplification

The Impression Management tactic that aims to make others view one in a positive light – that is, to be seen as exemplary and doing things beyond the job duties (Jones and Pittman, 1982) ^[25].

Authors have focussed on ingratiation and self-promotion very often while discussing the IM tactics (Ferris *et al.*, 2002) ^[13], but very less on intimidation and exemplification.

As there is saying "Beauty strikes the eye, but goodness moves the heart." The best way to impress others is by doing good actions. When people do good things so that others notice them and address them as good individuals are categorised as exemplifiers in IM.

Exemplifiers go out of their way to help others. They will project themselves as courteous and kind. They would like to project to others as people with high work ethics and values. They will strive hard to create and sustain their image of being Mr. Right/Ms. Right. Their image in the office will be undisputed. Almost everyone will possess a good impression of them.

They will arrive early to office before others and make sure that everyone knows that they are the early birds. They will maintain their desk clean and tidy and keep impressive things such as highly intellectual books, good thoughts for others to notice, enough of files to exhibit they are working etc. They would like others to idealize them as a role model. They can do anything for their image and would strive hard to retain that good image.

Gardner and Cleavenger (1998) ^[18] reported that ingratiation and exemplification were positively related, and intimidation and self promotion were negatively related, to perceptions of idealized influence (socialized charisma).

Self-promotion

It is one of the Impression Management strategies Harris *et al.* (2007) ^[20], is concern with highlighting one's own achievements and success, emphasizing on one's abilities, while at the same time downplaying one's failures in order to elicit attributions of competence.

Individuals who possess this trait often assure that they are highlighted, their potential is higher, and their achievements are highlighted, and gain superiority over others in all sense. They will hesitate to showcase their limitations as they would never like themselves to fall in others eyes at any circumstances.

They will announce their strength and exhibit their talent and project their knowledge with an expectation that people should praise them and accept them to be great individuals.

Stevens and Kristof, (1995) ^[53]; Turnley and Bolino (2001)

^[54]. By making valid claims of competence one can generally be effective in proving it in likewise behaviour which is an acceptable strategy, but exaggerating one's competence can be risky as it inflates and distorts the information about behavior or performance, as a result it could lead to faulty decisions and erroneous conclusion about the person when it comes to selection, performance appraisal, rewards, and career advancement Bolino *et al.* (2008).

Self promoters create and sustain an image that can project their abilities. The motive to project a high self image is coined by the term 'Performance Orientation' Janssen and Prins, 2007 ^[54]; Van Yperen and Janssen (2002). 'Performance Orientation' refers to the extent at which people are motivated to form a superior image about themselves and their abilities Vande Walle (2001) ^[55]. They are said to have an extrinsic motivation achieved in case, they are successful in building an high image about themselves Heintz and Steele-Johnson (2004) ^[22], Janssen and Van Yperen (2004), Vande Walle (2003). there are also possibilities of manipulation rather than the truth while exhibiting their abilities, which leads to wrong ful decisions arrived. hence forth the management should very the facts provided to them with right evidences.

Supplication

The only strategy of Impression Management which is involved in exhibiting one's weakness in order to achieve the desirable self-image is called supplication. The actor intentionally projects his/her weakness so that others may feel sympathetic and render help. The individual advertises ones incompetence so that he derives some benefit out of that. For an example when a job is assigned to him to work in Microsoft excel, he immediately takes his foot back saying he doesn't know Microsoft excel. Or if any other computer based work even he'll try to escape with the reason that he doesn't know how to operate the programs. This way they portray a picture of weakness and thereby land up in reducing his work.

The actor should not underestimate the social norms and responsibility while he is choosing this IM tactics. For example a well built person complaining of tiredness and fatigue when asked to work or a financially sound person complaining of no money when asked to spend. This tactics can turn to be negative if not applied with care. For instance with the objective of proving weak and gaining sympathy if one constantly seeks assistance and help, the perceiver can perceive him to be lazy and lethargic and hence the purpose of IM is not served Jones and Pittman (1982: 248) ^[25].

A Person wants others to perceive him as weak, powerless and submissive (Schlenker, 1980) ^[49]. Gove, Hughes, and Geerkin (1980) ^[17] have found that individuals who have preferred this strategy of IM were most often suffering from poor mental health, unhappiness and individuals with low self esteem. It is still not clear as to how supplicants are perceived by others in the work place (Turnley & Bolino, 2001) ^[54].

Supplication is found to be quite opposite to Self-promotion, since while using the self promotion strategy the employee exhibits his strength to a greater extent whereas while using supplication, the employee exhibits his weakness and inabilities due to which he may not be preferred or a said job, instead another person who is constantly accepting work will be overburdened with work. This is the only IM strategy due

to which the organisation may find it difficult to completely utilize its work force capacity. in comparison the other strategies of IM such as ingratiating, exemplification, intimidation and self promotion, supplication has not received much research attention (Crane & Crane, 2002; Harris, Kacmar, Zivnuska, & Shaw, 2007; Turnley & Bolino, 2001) ^[9, 20, 54].

The study connects the IM techniques to the job attitude of the employees in work place. Job attitude components are Job Satisfaction, Job Involvement, Job Commitment and Self-efficacy of an employee.

The study also aims to connect IM techniques to job satisfaction. By adapting the IM techniques does the employee like his job? Is he happy with the facilities offered to him in his job, is he satisfied with the people around him in his workplace? Is he contended with his growth opportunities and career advancement and overall his satisfaction towards his job.

The study aims to connect IM techniques to job involvement. At times when he is involved in the IM tactics is he satisfied with his job? Satisfied with the people working with him/her? Satisfied with his superior? Does the employee feel as a part of the office? Does he enjoy enough of importance and value in his workplace due to which he takes active participation in his job.

The study connects the IM techniques even to the organisational commitment. With the usage of IM strategies does an employee get a firm connect with his job and the organisation and the connection gets so strong that it builds a strong bondage between the employee and the company.

Job attitude

Job attitude can be defined as an evaluative statements made towards one's job, his/her feelings and beliefs and a sense of belonging towards his/her job. His attitude depends on factors such as pay, working conditions, supervisors, peers, work timings, nature of the job and so on.

Herzberg *et al.* (1959) study proposed that in order to understand the aspects of employee's motivation to work one must understand the attitude of that employee. The major job attitudes are as:

- Job Satisfaction.
- Job Involvement.
- Psychological Empowerment.
- Organizational Commitment.
- Perceived Organizational Support (POS)
- Employee Engagement.

Job Satisfaction

Job satisfaction JS refers to the extent to which one likes his job. In other words it refers to the attitude towards his job, comprising of affective (emotions and feelings), behavioural and cognitive (thoughts and beliefs) components of attitude. JS has always been one of the most important reasons for attrition or retention.

Many researchers have found an interesting fact about job satisfaction that it depends largely on the personality type to which they belong.

Job satisfaction and performance are observed to have close relationship (Kahya, 2008) ^[27]. its a world wide phenomenon

(Nabirye, Brown, Pryor, Marles, 2011) ^[39]. Of course performance depends on various other factors too such as values of an individual, the pressure to perform well and so on. (Gutierrez, Candela, Carver, 2012) ^[39].

A considerable amount of attention is been laid on the relationship between individual personalities and job satisfaction. As the workplace behaviour much depends on the personality type they belong. It is clearly observed variance in job satisfaction across individuals attributed to personality types such as extroverts and introverts, type A or type B, Narcissist and so on.

Job Involvement

Job involvement can be judged by how people are able to contribute to the organisations growth and with ideas concerned to it. It is concerned with how the people are involved in the day to day functioning of the office.

As it is well known that a man spends major portion of his life in his work environment. His /her job contributes majorly to his attitude, personality and self-growth. The employees who are highly involved at their job makes their job as a central part of their character Hackett *et al.*, (2001) ^[21]. Job determines their personality as they tend to appear secured financially and emotionally. As stated by Hackman and others (1971) ^[23] a positive state of intense psychological identification with one's job also leads to positive personal results of motivation, goal directed behaviour, personal growth and work satisfaction. It is also remarked that individuals try to focus into the activities of the company in order to satisfy their psychological needs.

Employees years of stay in the workplace also becomes one of the major determinants for job involvement. Das (1983) ^[10] found that Managers with work experience of more than 15 years usually involved more with their jobs. Managers who had spent between 10 to 15 years in the job had the lowest job involvement. A study conducted by Mogaji (2002) reveals the relationship between job involvement and organizational climate, work satisfaction, age, type of industry, tenure and organizational climate variables like responsibility and warmth are the significant factors that can influence job involvement. It is also proven that job satisfaction was higher in the lower levels of management when compared to higher levels of management Rajendran (1987) ^[44]. Job involvement will result in reducing the labour turnover of the employees (Kahn, 1990; Kanungo, 1979; Lawler, 1986; Pfeffer, 1994) ^[31, 29, 33, 41] and those who are not much involved with their job quit the organisations due to undesired work environment. (Kanungo, 1979) ^[29].

Job involvement is found to have positive impact on the performances of the employees (e.g. Brown, 1996; Brown and Leigh, 1996; Diefendorff *et al.*, 2006; Lassk *et al.*, 2001; Lawler and Hall, 1970; Mathieu and Farr, 1991; Vroom, 1962) ^[6, 7, 11, 36]. Job involvement also created a identity and framed a self concept to the employees and had a positive influence on their quality of worklife (Lodahl and Kejner, 1965) ^[35].

Job commitment/Organisational commitment OC

Job Commitment refers to the loyalty aspect of the employee which makes him work with dedication and care and hence leads

to better performance of the employees, leading towards organisational growth. Lawrence's (1958) ^[34] study threw light on the importance of OC nearly four decades ago. In today's scenario the relevance of it is still higher due to changes in the internal and external work environment. The work environment is complex because of growing opportunities and never ending desires of comfort. Individuals don't stick on to the same organisation for many days because of the above stated reasons. Hence there is a challenge to bringing OC in the workforce much more than the past.

Lawrence's study, has focussed on conceptualising and exploring OC, namely

1. The Attitudinal Approach: Porter *et al.*, defined OC as an individual's strength lies in attaching himself to the image of the organisation
2. The Behavioural Approach: the idea behind the employee to be committed to the organisation is that he has spent long time with that particular organisation, gained many friends there, his further stay would lead to benefits rather than loss. Hence he continues to be committed to the organisation.
3. The Normative Approach: this approach holds good when the objectives of an employee matches with that of the organisation. Hence he feels more committed towards the organisation (Wiener, 1982).
4. The Multidimensional Approach: the latest developed approach which states that OC is developed in an employee because of all factors mentioned in the previous approaches such as emotional attachment, moral obligation and perceived costs. Kelman (1958) ^[32] stated that the basic principles that forms the base for OC are Compliance, identification, and internalisation: three processes of attitudinal change".

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