

A Conceptual Framework On Constructs Of Impression Management – A Review Study With Special Reference To Academicians

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ABSTRACT

This article attempts to understand the constructs of impression management strategies adopted by academicians. It presents a framework model of the constructs, with the reviewed literature on impression management. The model conceptualises the constructs of impression management, as the power of the individual and the sex difference. The main factor, motive of the individual sets the context of choice of impression management by the academician, whether it is hard or soft influence tactics to be adopted for the desired impression to be created. The model also adds another construct, knowledge and competence of the academician to create an impression as for an academician it is the most important factor that creates high standards about them. Therefore the proposed framework contributes on understanding the constructs of impression management and why are they employed.

INTRODUCTION

Impression management (IM) “is concerned with the behaviours people direct toward others to create and maintain desired perceptions of them” (Gardner & Martinko, 1988, p.321). It relates to a behaviour which individuals consciously (or) subconsciously portray to others for their personal benefit Karam, Sekaja, & Geldenhuys (2016). It also focuses on different ways in which an individual engages in behaviour to alter another’s perception of them. It refers to shaping the perceptions another forms about the individual in regard to the individual’s behaviour, intelligence and future potential. Impression management is built up through self-monitoring, self- presentation and certain influential tactics. It is situational as the impression management tactics applied by the individual in the aim of creating a desired image depend on the ability, habit and the situation. Nartgün, Ekinci, Limon, & Tükel, (2017) where the individual in an interaction changes, the intention of the impression management tactics changes, as people do not apply the same tactics to every situation, different people apply different tactics to the same situation.

Goffman (1959) the pioneer of Impression Management says we create impression by expression, called as sign vehicle, which considers both language and body language. It is the expression we give – which we have control over and the expression we give off- which we have less control off. Expression plays the role of conveying impressions of self.

THE DRAMATURGICAL MODEL

The dramaturgical model give a better idea on the nature and impact of impression management. It provides insight on various aspects that contribute to impression management. Firstly the surface of appearance, people generally judge the book by the cover. It gives an impression, as people create appearance and people are also taken by appearance, which sometime may be decisive. Secondly impression management are tactics to exercise influence and power. Thirdly individuals become more self-aware, as they reflect on whom they want to be seen as in the other person’s eye (Goffman, Self Presentation and the Dramaturgical Perspective, 2017). Fourth deals with the many social influences on how you and other people act as the society systematises dramaturgical, For e.g. when we walk down a street we cast people into roles and also recognise that we need to comprise to behave in a certain way, whether we like it or not. Fifth reason it adds a new interdisciplinary approach to your skill set.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT AND ACADEMICIANS

Impression techniques adopted by individuals differ on the motives to be achieved. Recent research studies claim academicians generally adopt self promotion and ingratiation as impression tactics at workplace with the desire to attain career growth Chaubey & Kandpal (2017). However it is perceived by the academicians that “knowledge and intellect” are the necessary factors to impress the other in this field Rosenfeld, (1995).

The common tactics used by an individual is ingratiation, by using ingratiation; the individual influences the others liking of him or her. It is at this scenario the power an individual holds influences his/her actions. The individual with lower power might exhibit or imitate the behaviour of the individual in the higher power to be accepted by the others. Schlenker (1980) in his book mentioned individuals attempt to make themselves for likeable by the others by appreciating them for their achievement. However too much of ingratiation may lead to dislike by the others if detected.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT AND CLASSROOM

As an individual we are constantly communicating about who we are to the others through our performance. Goffman (1959) defines performance as “all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his conscious presence before a set of observers and which has some influence on the observers” (p.13). For an academician a classroom functions as a stage for performance, to whom the instructor wishes to, create a desired impression about them are the students. For this purpose instructors need to appear knowledgeable and competent in whatever they deliver as they are held to high standards.

As for an instructor the classroom being the stage for performance they often use their own influential or favourite teacher’s behaviour to create an identity or impression as there influential teacher created on them. They generally adopt and show that persona which suits the situation. As Goffman pointed out in the social world, we put on a front in order to project a certain image of ourselves – social identity, which is create by manipulating the setting in which we perform, our appearance and our performance (Goffman, 1956).

JONES AND PITTMAN TAXONOMY

Impression Management by Jones & Pittman (1982) is listed as self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification, intimidation and supplication. Constructs closely related to impression management are influence tactics, self-monitoring and self-presentation.

Ingratiation is an ever-present phenomenon in self-presentation. It is defined by Jones & Pittman (1982) “as a class of strategic behaviour illicitly designed to influence a particular other person concerning the attractiveness of one’s personal qualities Jones & Wortman (1973).”

Self-presentation theory Self-presentation is behaviour, in an attempt to convey some information about oneself (or) some image of oneself to other people. The general principle is to present oneself so as to create particular and useful impression on the audience. It shows a class of motivation in human behaviour Baumeister & Hutton (1987). There are two types of self presentational skill: audience pleasing and self-construction. Audience pleasing is behaviour to match one self-presentation to the expectation of the other. It is directed towards the audience to create a favourable (or) unfavourable impression. Self-presentation is to match one’s presentation of self to one’s own ideal self.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT AND SOCIAL ROLE THEORY

Social Role theory is related to the sex differences and the similarities in social behaviour. The gender role expectations which are shared within culture, influence the behaviour of both sexes to conform to these beliefs Eagly & Wood (2016). Behaviour is consistent to the gender role, confirming with the expectation or the belief of the society. As a behaviour which is inconsistent to the society often elicits a negative impression like dislike or social exclusion.

People also self-regulate their behaviour by judging’s one’s own behaviour to the gender norms, to the extent of adopting gender norms in their self –concept. They also evaluate themselves, so that they conform to these social gender norms. As they are subjected to communal role of men being vigorous and women compassionate.

These gender norms have an impact on the impression management as they establish normative expectations on the individual behaviour Yadanifard, Suppiah, Bartaripour, & Parhizkar (2013). As when an individual violates the perceived gender norms or role it is termed as a “backlash consequence”, creating a strong negative reaction from a large number of people.

Influence Strategies In general men and women consider aggressive tactics of influence as negative and women are highly rated when they use friendly influence strategies. Women also value relational behaviours than task related contribution.

On the other hand impression management is a continuous activity. New comers use it to be accepted in the organisation and older employees use it to be influential in the organisation. Individuals continuously communicating messages to the others about who they are based on their performance or the way they look or act. It causes the audience to form ideas and impression about the identity of the individual which he later strives to maintain and make it believable to the audience.

HARD AND SOFT INFLUENCE TACTICS

Influence Tactics are behaviours used to change the opinion, attitudes or behaviour of the other person. Initially nine influence tactics were recognised: legitimizing, rational persuasion, inspirational appeals, ingratiation, pressure and coalition. Later these were categorised as “hard” and “soft” influence tactics based on the resistance level of the target in relation to influencer.

Although little is known about the differences among males and females and how they use these influence tactics Leong, Bond, & Fu (2006). At the managerial level gender imbalance is most prominent resulting in differences in the use of influence tactics. However the frequently used influence tactics: threats, appeals to legitimate authority, reasoning and persuasive arguments, reciprocity reflected in exchange of rewards (or) favours and manipulation.

Generally the softer tactics reasons (or) reciprocity are common in “upward” influence attempts and the “harder” tactics of threat, manipulation or appeal are common in “downward” influence attempts.

The POIS (Profile of Organizational Influence Strategies) inventory by Kipnis and Schmidt (1982) measures eight dimension of influence tactics: assertiveness (to demand forcefully and persistently), ingratiation (to please and befriend), rationality (to use reason and logic), exchange (to use the principle of reciprocity), upward appeals (to deploy power derived from authority), coalition (to mobilize support from allies), sanctions (to threaten withdrawal of benefits), and blocking (to stop the target from acting).

In streaming down these tactics various researches are concerned with unveiling the various dimensions of the influence tactics. The greatest of those dimensions is the “tactics strength”. Tactics strength is the extent to which the use of a particular influence tactics takes control over the situation and the target, without offering any latitude for the target to comply. Based on the strength dimension, the tactics can be clustered into hard and soft influences.

Hard influences tactics are relatively controlling and coercive. Pressure and assertiveness, coalition, legitimating and blocking are some of the hard influence tactics. Differing to it, soft influence tactics entails tactics like ingratiation, inspirational appeals and rationality; it shares a relative amount of latitude for the target to choose to comply. Knippenberg & Steensma (2003) the practice of either of the tactics on the individual or group can be based on various determinants. However there as always been a preference of soft over hard tactics to influence the target. This preference can be explained on the relationship between the agent (the influencer) and the target as the use of hard tactics on the target will be an experience disagreeable creating a strain in the relationship between the agent and the target.

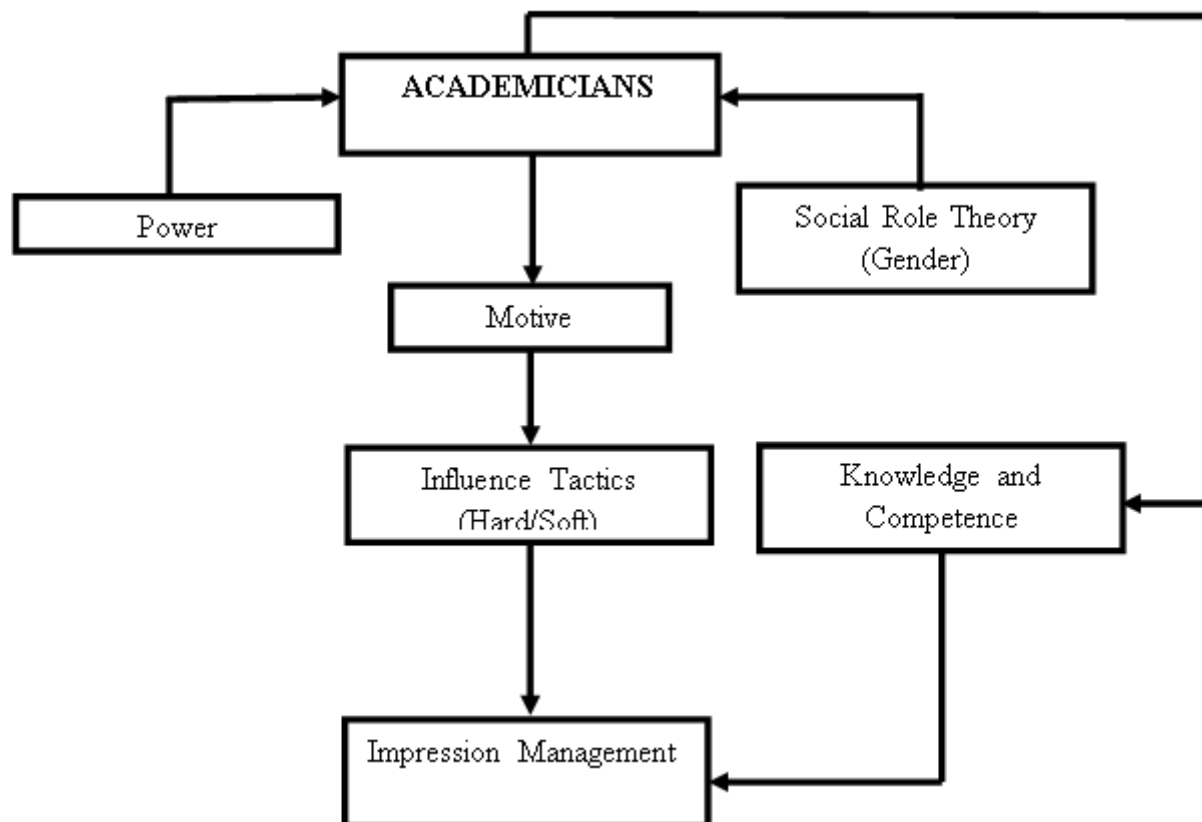


Fig 1

Source: Author's Own

Furthermore the use of hard influence tactics need an explanation/justification than the use of soft influence tactics, as given the situation, the control exerted, leads to a greater consequence i.e. either a positive or negative impression Knippenberg, Eijbergen, & Wilke (1999). individuals less confident are more prone to accept the influence of others and in a group the use of hard influence forces the less competent member to comply, whereas the use of soft influence tactics enables the less competent member to benefit from the insights and advice of the better performing group members.

The researcher as constructed a framework model based on the concepts reviewed. In Fig1 it can be seen the power of the individual, the gender role of the academician influences the impression management strategies.

The motive to be achieved by the academician is the next factor manipulating the impression strategies that are to be adopted as they differ for each individual and each profession.

For an academician there is always a mix of the influence tactics adopted by them as the aspects of job requirements demands of them. Whilst these factors are moderately considered, an academician needs to appear knowledge and competence to deliver and create high standards about them, to the others.

CONCLUSION

Most of the Impression management researches have been conducted within organisational contexts; the current article has provided a conceptual understanding of impression management only in terms of academicians. A conceptual framework on inductive, has been derived through the analyses of the existing literature review of impression management. From the review it is known there are very few researches exploring the impression management with academicians as the actor? However it is understood that self-presentation and ingratiation are the mostly adopted impression management strategies and the power of the individual encourages the type of influence tactics chosen. Finally knowledge and competence of the academician has also been identified as those create an impression of the academician on the other.

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