IMPACT OF IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT ON JOB SATISFACTION, MEDIATING ROLE OF LEADER MEMBER EXCHANGE, MODERATING ROLE OF POLITICAL SKILLS

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the relationship between impression management and job satisfaction, examining the moderating role of political skills between impression management and Leader Member Exchange (LMX); LMX being the mediator between impression management and job satisfaction. Data was gathered, using convenient sampling technique, from 120 employees working in private sector organizations in Pakistan. Significant results were found for the proposed model. Practical implications were also discussed.

INTRODUCTION

"Politics is the process, the action, the behavior through which potential power is utilized and realized" (Pfeffer, 1981). Politics is inherent in organizations as claimed by many researchers (Ferris & Judge, 1991; Ferris & Kacmar, 1992). Traditionally, it is viewed negatively as political behaviors are assumed to have unsanctioned influence that focus on self-interest at the expense of organizations, and are related to negative outcomes such as job dissatisfaction, job anxiety and low commitment (Ferris & Judge 1991; Ferris & Kacmar 1992). Organizational politics is the fact of organizational life and to survive with this reality, political skills and developments of influential relationships are two possible ways (Ferrius & judge, 1991; Kimura, 2012).

Prior research suggests that a political skill is a positive trait necessary for survival in today's political environment (Ferris et al., 2007). Political skill is "the ability to effectively understand others at work and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives" (Ferris et al., 2005). High political skilled individual has the ability to adapt according to the situation in a better manner and think rationally about their exchanges to well engage in most beneficial behaviors to achieve personal and organizational goals (Harrius.K, Harrius.R, & Brouer, 2009).

When employees perceive that politics is inherent in their organization, they may use impression management. Impression management is a specific type of political behavior that employees adopt to enhance their influences (Ferrius & Judge, 1991). It has recently been argued that employees may also use impression management to convince their supervisors that they are willing to go an extra mile for their organizations by in putting extra efforts (Bolino, Varela, Bande & Turnley, 2006), that supervisors view them as good soldiers (Bolino, 1999). Many studies support that politically skilled employees can form favorable impressions for themselves (Blickle, Schneider, Liu & Ferrius, 2011; Ferris, Perrewe, Anthony, & Gilmore, 2000). Considerable research exists to support the viability of using political skills and impression management to secure desired outcomes but likelihood of any one individual skillfully employing impression management tactics in a political environment remains uncertain, and thus require further research (Harris et al., 2009). This study aims to fill this gap by examining how subordinates' political skills impact the relationship between impression management and LMX, to overcome negative outcomes of organization politics, e.g. job dissatisfaction.

The LMX have received wide attention in previous studies because exchanges are often the most important workplace relationships. There is need to identify the factors responsible for development of high quality LMX; individuals at workplace keep trying to manage their impressions through use of many influence tactics to develop high-quality relationships (Goffman, 1955). Employees who are politically skilled can develop and enjoy more benefits of high-quality work relationships (Laird, Zboja, & Ferrius, 2012) by choosing the right influencing tactics on their supervisors and the situations. Research has recognized the importance of high quality exchange relationships as it is one of the important determinants to job performance, satisfaction with

supervision, overall satisfaction, commitment, member competence (Wayne, Shore, & Liden,1997; Bauer & Green, 1996; Gerstner, Charlotte,& David, 1997; Chen & Fang, 2008; Volmer, Niessen, Spurk, Linz & Abele, 2011). Employees enjoying high LMX are more likely to be satisfied with their jobs due to favors they get from their supervisors.

Job satisfaction is the level of contentment an employee feels concerning his job. Employee job satisfaction is derived from a number of factors, and researched has placed high quality interpersonal relationships between supervisors and employees as one important factor (Graen, Novak, & Sommer kamp, 1982). Social Exchange Theory supports the exchange relationship in a way that subordinates in high quality exchanges have increased access to share ideas with their supervisors, and communicate frequently. They are provided more support by their supervisors, share higher levels of trust, and in exchange the in-group members work harder, are more committed to their work, share more responsibilities, show better performances, and exhibit lower turnover intentions (Graen et al., 1982). Consequently, subordinates feel more satisfied with their jobs (Gerstner & Day, 1997; Harris. K, Harris.R & Eplicon,2007)

Concerning the culture in Pakistan where power distance is high (Hofstede, 1983) and power is worshipped, to be an in- group member, individuals have to strive an extra mile, thus, the development of high quality relationship between leader and member in Pakistan needs more attention. This study focuses on private sector organizations where there are factors like higher job insecurity, pay and promotion based on degree of relationship with supervisors, which forces employees to present positive image and show loyalty, sincerity and trust, which in return strengthen their relation with supervisors (Blau, 1964). Secondly, LMX literature focuses strongly on the outcomes of high-quality leader-member exchange, but less attention has been given on how to build high-quality exchange relationships in organizations; this paper focuses on the development of high quality LMX which is imperative to employee job satisfaction. Previous research shows negative relationship between organizational politics and job satisfaction, but this study stresses that this relationship differs depending on the degree to which employee is politically skilled and engage in political behavior.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Impression management and LMX

According to Goffman (1959) impression management is "individuals attempt to shape others' images of oneself". Many researchers defined Impression management as an attempt by individuals to have control over their images in social interaction, and enhance their self-image and others' perception of them (Wayne & Liden, 1995; Bolino, 1999). This objective is achieved by tactically exhibiting behavior that will lead others to view them as more favorable (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997). Many frameworks have been developed to categorize impression management (e.g Jones & Pittman, 1982; Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984; Wayne & Ferris, 1990). Jones and Pittman (1982) identified five impression management strategies; ingratiation tactic make an individual appear more likeable and attractive through self-enhancement, other-enhancement, opinion conformity and favor doing behaviors. Self-promotion tactic make individual appear more competent. Intimidation tactic gives an image of the individual as dangerous and fearful. Exemplification tactic portrays an image of being admired, disciplined and honest. Through Supplication tactic, a person promotes his weaknesses in order to get sympathy.

Gordon (1996) found that ingratiatory behaviors were positively related to performance evaluations; likewise, Stevens and Kristof (1995) suggested that self-promotion may lead to favorable outcomes as they are likely to be seen as likeable, competent, and dedicated by others. A supervisor who perceives his subordinate as honest, competent and respectful, he/she will be more attracted to that subordinate (Wayne & Laiden, 1995). Some more studies have also shown that these behaviors enhance the supervisors' likings towards their employees (Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Wayne & Liden, 1995).

The Leader-Member Exchange is a dyadic relationship between supervisors and subordinates. In-group enjoys support, help, access to supervisor, access to information and resources. In exchange these in-group members work harder, are more committed to their work, share more responsibilities, exhibit better performances, exhibit lower turnover intentions, feel greater satisfaction at work (Graen at al., 1982). In order to develop a quality relationship, and to be an in-group member, it is likely that subordinates will go beyond required in-role behaviors (Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007), and impression management in organizational settings is a most commonly used behavior (Kacmar, Wayne, & Wright, 1996). Through impression management, subordinates convince their supervisors that they will go the extra mile for their organizations (Bolino et al., 2006). Numerous studies highlight its significance as impression management is a behavior that employees usually adopt to enhance their relationship with supervisors, and in return they

enjoy higher performance ratings, better salary, and better chances at promotions (Wayne & Ferris, 1990; Wayne & Liden, 1995; Higgins, Judge, & Ferris, 2003). On the basis of prior research and theory, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 1. There is a positive relationship between impression management and development of high quality LMX.

Political skill as a moderator between impression management and LMX

Political skill is defined as: "The ability to effectively understand others at work and to use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance one's personal and/or organizational objectives" (Ferris et al., 2005). Politically skilled individuals are socially alert and adjust their behaviors according to the situational demands in a better manner (Ferris et al., 2005). Those who practice these skills behave in a polite and engaging manner that develop a feeling of sincerity, trust, respect and genuineness (Ferrius et al., 2005) and these factors aid in development of high quality relationship (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995). Subordinate high in political skill can develop high-quality relationship and choose the right influencing tactic on the supervisor and the situation (Harris et al., 2009). Political skill is an important determinant of leadership, career advancement and early career success (Blickle et al., 2011). Political skill of an employee aids in scanning the environment, and make a better fit in the organizational environment. This skill enhances the strength of impression management by adopting the most appropriate tactic that best suit the situation, and develop a favorable impression in front of supervisors.

Impression management plays an important role in the development of high quality LMX, but use of deceptive impression management tactics would likely result in the supervisor viewing subordinate as a deceiver (Carlson. J, Carlson. D, & Ferguson, 2011). Conversely, those individuals who use logic in exhibiting influence tactics have a greater chance of success (Higgins et al., 2003). Therefore, it is suggested that political skills moderates the relationship between using impression management and developing high quality relationship; impression management being a valuable tool which, if used skillfully, helps in enhancing employee satisfaction and commitment to its organization (Singh & Vinnicombe, 2001). Prior studies support the moderating role of political skills, e.g. research conducted by Brouer, Duke, Treadway and Ferris (2009) illustrated political skills as a significant moderator on LMX relationship quality between racially dissimilar supervisor–subordinate

dyads. Another study by Treadway, Hochwarter, Kacmar and Ferris (2005) showed political skills as a significant moderator between political behavior and emotional labor. Yet another study focusing on interactive moderating effects of political skills and quality of leader–member exchange (LMX) on the relationship between perceptions of organizational politics and affective commitment was analyzed (Kimura, 2012). On the basis of past literature, it is hypothesized that:

Hypothesis 2. Subordinate Political skill moderates the relationship between Impression management and development of high quality LMX.

Impression management and job satisfaction

Job satisfaction is simply how content an individual is with his or her job. It is the most widely investigated job attitude. One of the important factors to influence job satisfaction is the quality of relationship between supervisors and their subordinates (Meller & Kim, 2008). The way in which subordinates perceive their supervisor's behavior can positively or negatively influence his job satisfaction. Subordinates who enjoy high quality relationship with their supervisor are more likely to be satisfied with their job and work environment, therefore, in working environment subordinate try to build better relation by managing their images in front of their supervisor, and impression management is used to portray the positive image. Many studies has shown that employee engage in impression management to receive results like getting a job, receiving a good performance evaluation and promotion (Wayne & Kacmar 1991; Wayne & Liden, 1995), and these self-presentation tactics are positively related to work outcomes like job satisfaction and career success (Higgins et al., 2003; Hosoda, Stone-Romero, & Coats, 2003). When individuals perceive that they have control over their work environments and images, it can be source of satisfaction for employees (Harrell Cook, Ferrius, & Dulebohn, 1999; Vigoda, 2000).

Research shows that engaging in impression management is positively related to getting promotion, and high ratings (Dansereau, Graen, & Haga, 1975) Employees show dedication to the organization in hope of getting promotions (Ligen & Feldman, 1983). Hence, when subordinates are successful in portraying their positive image in the workplace, it becomes a source of satisfaction for them.

Hypothesis 3. Impression Management is positively related to job satisfaction of employees.

**Mediating role of LMX between impression Management and Job satisfaction**

Theory of LMX states that leaders form different relationships with different subordinates (Liden & Graen, 1980), the quality of these relationships is dependent on the amount of effort and social support exchanged between the supervisor and the subordinate (Liden, Sparrowe, and Wayne, 1997). Greater the effort and energy invested by both, higher would be the quality of the relationship, such that there would be a greater degree of mutual understanding, loyalty, respect and sincerity between them (Liden & Maslyn, 1998). Therefore, subordinates attempt to build strong relationship with their supervisors by applying different influential tactics to create their positive image in front of their supervisors by showing them that they are very hard working and committed (Kipnis & Vanderveer, 1991). They often engage in OCB (Bolino, 1999), and impression management helps in portraying a positive image (Wayne and Liden 1995; Lunenburg,2010).When supervisor view them as hard workers, committed good soldiers, honest, competent and respectful, they are attracted more towards those subordinates (Wayne & Laiden, 1995;Bolino, 1999), and make them members of in-group. Leaders have power and influence over their subordinates, and they help them achieve their goals, and provide them rewards. These benefits are enjoyed more by in-group members as compared to out-group members.

Numerous prior studies emphasized the importance of high quality relationships. Employees who have high-quality exchange relationships with their supervisors have higher job satisfaction, career success, high performance ratings and higher productivity. They are more motivated and often engage often in OCB (Graen et al., 1982; Bauer & Green, 1996; Lunenburg, 2010).Strength of the relationship also depends on how followers view their relationship with their leader. By means of high-quality LMX relationships, employees get access, help and support from their supervisors. As the LMX theory argues that leaders often develop close relationship with trusted followers, as a result of high quality relationship employees are given more favors by their supervisors, and in this way LMX could be a useful mean for employees' commitment and satisfaction, thus resulting in positive outcomes for leaders, followers and the entire organization (Graen & Uhl-Bien, 1995; Liden & Maslyn, 1998). On the other hand, employees experience the feeling of deprivation that have low-quality LMX (Bolino & Turnley, 2009), and are less satisfied with their

jobs. Therefore, it can be concluded that impression management helps in creating a positive image and development of highly quality LMX, which becomes a source of job satisfaction for the subordinates.

Hypothesis 4. High quality LMX will mediate the relationship between use of impression management tactics and job satisfaction.

FIGURE 1
Theoretical framework
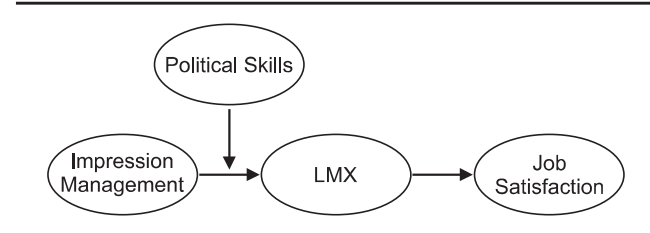
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Data was collected from a sample size of 120 respondents from three major telecom companies in Pakistan including Mobilink, Telenor and Warid, and from three different regions: Islamabad, Lahore and Quetta. Data was collected using convenient sampling technique. There were 77.4 percent males and 22.5 percent female respondents. Mean of tenure in the organization was 1.6 years (s.d.0.608). Education levels ranged from high school completion to receiving a Ph.D degree, 41.9 percent of the respondents were graduates, 51.6 percent were having masters degree, and 6.5 percent were having post graduate degree.

Measures

Data was obtained through online and self-administered questionnaire. Participation was entirely voluntary. All responses were kept strictly confidential and individual results were not reported to the organization. Response rate was 77 percent.

Impression Management

In order to measure impression management practiced by subordinates, 22-items scale developed by Bolino and Turnley (1999) was used. Based on Jones and Pittman Taxonomy, subordinates reported how often they had engaged in 5 types of impression management behavior on a five-point scale where 1=Never behaved this way and 5=Often behave this way. Example items included "Make people aware of your talents or qualifications". The Cronbach

alpha reliability of this scale for this study was alpha=0.71.

Leader-Member Exchange

A 7-item scale developed by Graen and Uhl-Bien (1995) was used. Responses were noted on a 5 point likert scale where 1 = rarely and 5 = Very Often. Example items included "Do you know where you stand with your leader", "do you usually know how satisfied your leader is with what you do". The Cronbach alpha reliability of this scale for this study was alpha 0.773.

Political Skills

Ferris et al.'s (2005) 18-item measure was used to measure employee political skill. Sample items included "I am particularly good at sensing the motivations and hidden agendas of others" and "I always seem to instinctively know the right things to say and do to influence others". Subordinates rated their agreement with the items using a five-point scale where 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree .The alpha reliability for this study was 0.883.

Job Satisfaction

The measure used was developed by Schriesheim and Tusi (1980) comprising of six items. Sample items included: "how satisfied are you with the nature of work you perform". Responses were obtained on a 5 point likert scale where 1= strongly disagree and 5= strongly agree. The alpha reliability for this study was .801.

Control Variable

Tenure, gender, work experience, work with other organizations were used as control variables as previous empirical studies have shown that these variables are related to job satisfaction.

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, correlations, and internal reliability estimates, i.e., cronbach alphas' among the variables are shown in Table 1. The mean and standard deviation for variables were Impression Management = 3.19 (S.D=.458), Political Skills = 3.96 (S.D = 139), LMX = 3.8(S.D = .167) and Job Satisfaction = 3.90(S.D=.1466).The bivariate correlation matrix gave provisional support for hypotheses as correlation between impression management and job satisfaction= .470, which gave support to the third proposed hypothesis, whereas LMX correlated with job satisfaction at .870.

Several hierarchical regression analyses were performed to formally test the hypotheses. Age, tenure, gender and occupational experience with organization were used as control variables in the first step of regression analysis. One of the hypothesis predicted that impression management is directly related to job satisfaction; to check this, a linear regression analysis was run. As a result β=0.443 and p <.015, which supported hypothesis 3 as shown in Table 2.

Impression Management on LMX was regressed, the results supported the first hypothesis (β=.389 and p=.032).

TABLE 1
Means, Standard Deviations, Correlations, and Reliabilities

Variable	Mean	S.d.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. Gender	1.22	0.42	1								
2. Qualification	1.64	0.6	-0.196	1							
3. Job Status	2.9	0.9	-0.028	-0.185	1						
4. Work Other Orga	2.77	0.84	0.24	0.228	-0.203	1					
5. Work Experience	2.7	0.97	0.003	0.158	-.37*	-0.123	1				
6. Impression Management	3.19	0.45	0.088	0.125	-0.038	-0.099	0.347	1			
7. LMX	3.8	0.16	-0.132	-0.252	-0.054	-.400*	0.285	.409*	1		
8. Political Skill	3.96	0.13	-0.238	0.03	-0.223	-0.312	0.161	.559**	.780**	1	
9. Job Satisfaction	3.9	0.14	-0.003	-0.231	-0.131	-0.346	0.307	.470**	.870**	.806**	1

*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).
**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

TABLE 2
Results of Regression Analyses for Outcomes

Predictors	Job Satisfaction			LMX		
	β	R²	ΔR²	β	R²	ΔR²
Step 1						
Control Variable		0.25			0.278	
Step 2						
Impression Management	.443*	.416*	.166*	.389*	.406*	.128*
Predictor: Political Skills						
Step 1						
Control Variable					0.278	
Step 2						
Political Skill				. 774***	.751***	.473***
Predictor : LMX						
Step 1						
Control		0.25				
Step 2						
LMX		.779***	.528***			

n=120, control variable=tenure, gender, other organization, occupational experience with organization
* p< .05, ** p < .01, ***p<.001

TABLE 3
Result of moderation and mediation Regression Analyses

Predictor	LMX			Job Satisfaction		
	β	R²	ΔR²	β	R²	ΔR²
Moderation:						
Step1						
Control Variable		0.278				
Step 2						
Impression Management	-0.67					
Political Skills	.548*	.763***	.485***			
Step 3						
IM × Political Skills	.438***	.867***	.104***			
Mediator Analyses						
Step 1						
Control Variable					0.25	
Step 2						
LMX				.794***	.779***	.528***
Step 3						
Impression Management				0.134	0.791	0.012

n=120, control variable= tenure, gender, other organization, occupational experience with organization
* p< .05, ** p < .01, ***p<.00

Moderated regression analysis as shown in table 3 was used to examine the interactive effects of impression management and political skills on LMX. Firstly, control variables were entered into the model, in the second step the impact of impression management and political skills were controlled, then, in the last step, the interaction term was entered, and the result was significant as shown in table 3. The result of interacting factor (beta = .438 and p = .000) shows that political skill moderates the relationship between impression management and LMX. Hence, it provided support to the second proposed hypothesis that political skill moderates the relationship between impression management and LMX.

The fourth hypothesis stated that LMX mediates the relationship between impression management and job satisfaction. To find the mediating role of LMX between impression management and job satisfaction, a three steps linear regression analysis, adopted from Barren and Kenny's method was used. In the first step, job satisfaction was regressed on independent variable impression management, and the relationship was found significant (β = .443 and p = .031). In the second step, the mediating variable LMX was regressed on independent variable impression management, significant relationship was found as β = .855 and p=.000. Finally, a hierarchical regression analysis was performed when job satisfaction was regressed on the impression management, controlling the impact of LMX such that β value reduced (β = 0.134, p = .254), which showed the mediating role of LMX between impression management and job satisfaction, hence supporting the fourth hypothesis.

DISCUSSION

Overall, the proposed theoretical model was supported. Concluding, political skills moderate the relationship between impression management and development of high quality LMX, and LMX mediates the relationship between impression management and job satisfaction.

As Organizations are considered a political arena, Mintzberg (1985) argued that an individual needs political behavior and political skills to be successful. The current study represented the empirical attempt to integrate Mintzberg's notion, the role of political skill in the workplace for development of high quality LMX. The results indicate that impression management is a powerful tool if, used rationally, helps in development of high quality relationship with supervisors, which tends to increase job satisfaction for employees.

Researchers have argued that political skill act as a moderator on the politically influenced behavior-

work outcomes (Perrewe et al., 2000; Ferrius & judge 1991; Kimura, 2012).The current study represents an attempt to empirically evaluate this relationship, and demonstrate the moderating role played by political skills. Employees make attempt to be in-group member and develop high quality relationships with their supervisors as in-group members have greater access to supervisors, to information and resources, and enjoy more of supervisors' favors. In this regard they attempt to shape their image in front of their supervisors by applying different impression management tactics. Thus, employees high in political skills would be better able to adjust themselves in this political arena, as political skilled employee have the ability to effectively understand others at work and use such knowledge to influence others to act in ways that enhance their personal and organizational objectives. Political skilled employees are better at selecting the most suitable impression management tactic, hence, a politically skilled employee is more aware of its surroundings. Thus, as hypothesized, impression management behavior alone is not enough; for impression management to be successful, it must be matched with a high level of political skill (Harris et al., 2007).

While previous studies have established the negative relationship between organizational politics and job satisfaction, the role of political behavior in those studies have been ignored. However, in this study it was found that when individuals perceives their organizational environment to be highly political, they engage in political behavior like impression management to overwhelm negative consequences of organizational politics. In managing impressions, people make an attempt to have control over their image in social interactions and enhance their self-image and others' perception of them (Wayne & Liden, 1995; Bolino, 1999). In this regard, impression management leads to development of high quality LMX, furthermore, as a result of high quality relationship; subordinates are given more favors by their supervisors, consequently resulting in higher commitment and satisfaction with their jobs. Hence, LMX mediates the relationship between impression management and job satisfaction, as supported by the findings.

A study conducted in this context by Bashir, Nasir, Saeed, and Ahmed (2011) also depict that in high power distance countries like Pakistan, employees are aware that survival in the organizations is associated with using political tactics. In private sector organizations of Pakistan, where pay and promotion is based on degree of relationship with supervisor, it forces employees to present positive image and show loyalty, sincerity and trust in their relationships which, in return, strengthen

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their relationship with supervisors (Blau, 1964). Thus, employees make efforts to be in-group members and gain supervisors' favors by applying different impression management tactics. Hence higher the quality of LMX, more satisfied the employee will be.

Limitations

The significance of this study comes with fulfilling the gap in literature as the relationship between subordinate's political skill and its impact on development of high quality LMX has rarely been studied, especially keeping culture of Pakistan in context where power distance is high. Emphasis on development of high quality LMX is the foremost concern for organizations and requires extra efforts; this study emphasizes the importance of enhancing subordinate's political skills.

Two of the limitations that were faced during collection of data were time and resource constraint; therefore all of the five telecom companies operating in Pakistan were not covered. Secondly, in reporting impression management behavior, people may have been reluctant in reporting if they were really involved in such behaviors.

Implications

There appear to be two obvious implications of this work for managers in the field. First, these results point to the utility of implementing training programs that serve to enhance employees' political skills. as political skill is most often conceptualized as a trait that can be improved or developed (Ferris et al, 2005). The results of this study would suggest that political skill has the potential to reduce the negative consequences of organizational politics; use of political skill is a source of developing high quality of LMX which is as an integral component of job satisfaction.

Secondly, political behavior like impression management is not necessarily detrimental to the organization or the employee, this study is unique in a way that it depicts the positive impact of using impression management as employees who are success full in maintaining their impression at their work place are more contempt and satisfied with their work.

From the employee's perspective, individuals who desire to create a favorable image in the eyes of their supervisors would benefit from this study as they would know how best to achieve this goal. Use of impression management tactics can lead to either positive or negative impressions depending on an individual's political skill. Individuals who have better political skills have the ability to create better impressions on

the supervisors.

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