

The Art of Self-Presentation: A Study on Impression Management among Academicians in Sri Lankan State Universities

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Abstract

Impression Management is one of the important phenomena in everyday life, which everyone uses as a strategy to improve their current state of affairs. This qualitative study on impression management among academicians in Sri Lankan state universities was carried out to explore the impression management strategies which are adopted by academicians, while trying to identify the motives behind them to practice those strategies. Eight academics of a leading faculty in a state university, which is in the Colombo district were selected as the sample using the purposive sampling technique. Semi-structured interviews were adopted to collect data and the Thematic Analysis Technique was used to analyze those collected data. Findings of the study indicate that academicians of the selected context use a variety of impression management strategies. Those include direct strategies of creating a good image through presenting the self as competent, likable, diligent, supplicatory, and dangerous. Strategies of apology, reasoning and rejecting were identified as the direct ways of defending a bad image. Indirect impression formation is done by criticizing, passing the fault to others, and getting appreciation from others. Not only that, but academicians also use non-verbal ways such as attire, facial expressions, and vehicle & other accessories to create impressions. Further, the results illustrate that academicians are motivated to manage impressions to maintain a good image of themselves, to build a relationship, to achieve job-related goals such as, job security, career growth, and finally to motivate others for success. This study also provides some valuable theoretical and managerial implications and considerations for future research in the field of impression management.

Keywords: *Academicians, Impression Management, Impression Management Strategies, Impression Management Motives*

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Introduction

As social beings, people always tend to interact with others though they have different purposes of association. The most important thing is, when interacting, people try to create an impression about themselves in other's minds. Cambridge Dictionary (2019) defines 'impression' as an idea or opinion of a particular person or about something which is seemed, looked or feel to be. Simply, impressions are what we feel and think about others who are around us. Due to the individual differences and diverse backgrounds of individuals, there may be some conflicts during interactions. Once an individual co-operates with another, the person should have the ability to behave in such a way where others will accept the presence of that individual. If not, problems may arise. That is where the concept of 'Impression Management' (IM) comes into the field.

Leary and Kowalski (1990) state that Americans spend billions of dollars on diets, make-ups and plastic surgeries every year to make them more attractive to others. This indicates that people have an interest to know how others perceive and evaluate them, which is known as the concept of impression management. Impression management refers to the process by which individuals try to control the impressions that others form of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Similarly, Bozeman and Kacmar (1997, as cited in Drory & Zaidman, 2007) define impression management as intentionally exhibiting certain behaviours, both verbal and nonverbal, which lead others to perceive the actor as desired. Altogether, it can be defined as the conscious or unconscious efforts of individuals which influence and keen them to know how others perceive and accept them. People may use different techniques to impress others with different intentions in their minds. Many researchers have identified those various strategies of impression management and, they have built up theories on them (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

Having a better knowledge of impression management is very helpful to understand and be aware of our actions in day-to-day life with the impressions we give to others (Gaspar, 2016). So, it is much more important to give significant consideration to the concept of impression management in the present scenario. Thus, engaging in impression management can help to ensure that social interactions go smoothly (Dunn & Forrin, 2007, p. 468). This statement illustrates the importance of conducting studies on impression management further. Over the past few years, many kinds of studies have been done to identify impression management and its tactics within the organizational context (Asawo & George, 2018; Bolino et al., 2006; Drory &

Zaidman, 2007; Gwal, 2015; Mohamed & Gardner, 2004). However, Leary and Kowalski (1990) emphasize that even at home, work, school, and elsewhere people monitor the reaction of others on them and try to show an image that promotes themselves. Correspondingly, Gwal (2015) highlights the importance of managing impressions in any kind of organization, which consists of individuals who possess different personalities. These statements direct that impression management can be practiced anywhere if there is a presence of individuals. So, even in not-for-profit organizations such as universities and colleges, impression management practices can be experienced especially among academicians as there are higher levels of interactions taking place with each other. The term ‘academician’ refers to a member of an academy or educational institute (Cambridge Dictionary, 2019). Though impression management can be utilized to enhance the quality of interactions of academicians, researchers in Sri Lanka have paid less attention to such mechanisms. As a result, there are limited studies done on impression management in relation to the educational institutions in Sri Lanka. Therefore, this study is designed to address the identified problem and focused to look at how and why impression management is done among academicians within state universities in the Sri Lankan context to give a thorough understanding of the site. Drawing from the above-mentioned gaps, this research study raises the following research questions:

- a) How impression management is done by academicians of a selected state university in Sri Lanka? and,
- b) Why such impression management strategies are being practiced by them?

Literature Review

The Concept of Impression Management

The theoretical framework for the concept of impression management was initially introduced by Erving Goffman through his book ‘The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life’. There, he defines impression management as a dramaturgical metaphor of individuals as actors on a stage performing for the audience (Goffman, 1971). Impression management is concerned with studying how individuals present themselves to be perceived favourable by others according to the social-psychology viewpoint (Hooghiemstra, 2000, as cited in Chaubey & Kandpal, 2017). In an advanced way, “Impression management is a goal-directed, conscious or unconscious attempt to influence the perceptions of other people about a person, object or event by regulating and controlling

information in social interaction” (Singh, 2013, as in Shoko & Dzimiri, 2018, p. 253).

Dunn and Forrin (2007) demonstrate that impression management is mostly done unintentionally though people are not expecting to do so, by providing an example of how it differs the way we interact with a close friend from the way we interact with a family member. There, they state such different behaviour occurs not only because of what we wish to be viewed differently when interacting with people, but also the people whom we interact with have different hopes regarding our behaviour and how we should behave in front of them. Therefore, as individuals we may use the best identity for a situation, as we have different identities to interact (Araz, 1998, as cited in Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016).

Although most of the researchers have focused on how people present themselves to others under impression management, it can be seen some people try to manage the images of other people or other entities if they are related to them. To prove that Cialdini and Richardson (1980), as in Mohamed & Gardner, (2004) show how people try to damage the image of others or business organizations to enhance their own image. Thus, the target of impression management is not always the self, but it may be other people or entities too.

Strategies of Impression Management

Akdogan and Aykan (2008) express, to have effective impression management, it should use a suitable strategy (as cited in Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016). Initially, scholars have categorized impression management strategies as direct and indirect tactics. Again the direct tactics are divided as assertive and defensive tactics (Amaral, 2018). Similarly, Mohamed et al. (1999, as in Terrell & Kwok, 2011) have developed a 2×2 taxonomy of organizational impression management behaviours including all direct and indirect tactics with assertive and defensive tactics. Use of own information to improve/ repair image is called ‘direct strategies’ while using information whom associated with to manage impressions is called ‘indirect strategies’. Assertive strategies are used to improve the good image while defensive strategies are accompanied to reduce/ repair the damage to the image (Terrell & Kwok, 2011; Yan & Ho, 2017). Moreover, Jones and Pittman (1982) introduced five strategies of impression management that are used by individuals aiming at protecting and maintaining one’s image. Ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplification, intimidation, and supplication are those five strategies under Jones and Pittman’s taxonomy.

“Ingratiation involves doing a favor or use of flattery to be likable by the observers” (Chaubey & Kandpal, 2017, p. 10). Self-promotion is convincing

the target people about the actor's competence to compete with others (Jones & Pittman, 1982). In the similar fashion, "Self-promotion is a proactive process in which the self-promoter has to actively say things to show the competence or at least undertake actions so that the competence is displayed to the target" (Gwal, 2015, p. 41). "Exemplification involves showing oneself to look overly dedicated and committed while creating a feeling of guilt among others" (Arif, 2011, as cited in Chaubey & Kandpal, 2017). In the same way, Jones and Pittman (1982) describe exemplification as the action in which individuals seek to project integrity and moral worthiness where it makes others feel guilty.

The actor tries to show that he/she is dangerous by advertising the available power by creating pain, discomfort, and all type of psychic costs on the target person using the strategy of intimidation (Jones & Pittman, 1982). According to Rosenfeld et al. (1995, as cited in Gwal, 2015), the intimidation tactic of impression management mostly flows from higher-level positions to lower-level positions. As stated by Jones and Pittman (1982), the strategy of supplication is in which a person exploits his weaknesses and dependencies to get help from the target. People who use supplication as a strategy, try to establish a social norm that we should help others when they need the help of someone, by displaying the weakness/ disability (Rosenfeld et al., 1995, as cited in Gwal, 2015).

Moreover, Lee et al. (1999) have developed a taxonomy of self-presentation skills including 13 tactics. Their 13 tactics of impression management include excuse, apology, justification, disclaimer, self-handicapping, entitlement, enhancement, blasting, basking, ingratiation, exemplification, intimidation, and supplication. An excuse is used when the person rejects his/her responsibility for a negative action. A person confessing the wrong things done to others is called an apology. Justification involves providing reasons for the wrongdoing while taking responsibility for it. Providing explanations before difficulties occur is the action of disclaimer. In self-handicapping, it is creating complications to the success of an action to prevent others from being asked regarding the failure. Entitle means taking credits for a successful accomplishment. When the person shows that his/her actions are more positive than expected, it is called the tactic of enhancement. Basking occurs when a person tries to engage with the people who are perceived as good by others. Blasting is the opposite of basking, where a person creates a bad image on others with whom he/she engages (Lee et al., 1999).

However, all the above-mentioned classifications have left the non-verbal impression management tactics (Yan & Ho, 2017). Non-verbal behaviours such

as facial expressions, movements, postures, and appearance can be used for impression construction (DePaulo, 1992, as in Yan & Ho, 2017). Similarly, Brooks (1985, as cited in Gaspar, 2016) illustrates how first impression and nonverbal behaviours such as the dress are important in the formation of impressions. Yilmaz (2014) notes that although the same situation individuals face, the tactics they use may differ (as cited in Yan & Ho, 2017). Consequently, the extent to which one person employs impression management strategies may differ from one person to another and also, from one organization to another (Shoko & Dzimiri, 2018).

Motives behind Impression Management

To have desired impressions from others it is required to consider the motivation and the belief of the person who created impressions (Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016). Therefore, it is important to identify not only the strategies of impression management but also the motives behind them. Schlenker (1980) points out that the motivation behind impression management behaviours leads to increase rewards while reducing punishments (as cited in Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Therefore, individuals tend to use impression management strategies when they get to know that they can gain more results over it (Schlenker & Weigold, 1992, as cited in Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016). Similarly, Demir (2002) directs that individuals use impression management to improve personality, manage emotions, and with the idea that they can have better results by creating good impressions in other's minds (as cited in Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016). Thus, Impression management is used when a person wishes to create and maintain a specific identity (Drory & Zaidman, 2007, p. 290). In contrast, Becker and Martin (1995) express that there may be some incidents where people attempt to look bad to create a bad image on behalf of others (as cited in Mohamed & Gardner, 2004).

Impression management strategies help individuals to have desired outcomes while reducing undesired outcomes. Those outcomes may sometimes be social/personal such as authority, relationship, assistance, approval. In another way, some outcomes may be material like promotions, salary increments (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Despite, Schlenker (1980) expresses that motivation behind impression management increases when there is a person who is more powerful, authoritative and nice-looking than the one who forms impressions (as cited in Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Further, the increased confidence level of the impression former (actor) is another motive behind impression management. So, individuals are motivated to engage in impression management when there are reactions from others which increase their self-esteem (Schneider, 1969, as in

Leary & Kowalski, 1990). On the other hand, shame and lack of success increase motivation towards impression management (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Moreover, impression management is used to accomplish the requirements based on the situation that the person is in (Scott, 1981, p. 582). As this highlights, motives behind people to engage in impression management may depend on the situation.

When it comes to educational institutes, some attributes such as designation, sense, intellect, knowledge, appearance, personality, social status, economic well-being and generosity enhance impression management among academicians (Chaubey & Kandpal, 2017). Further, Shoko and Dzimiri (2018) suggest that the head positions in schools engage in impression management strategies to follow norms, to develop the identity of the school and about themselves, and to get approval from society.

Impression Management in Educational Institutes

Aside from being common in employment interviews and private organisations, impression management can be applied in educational organisations too (Shoko & Dzimiri, 2018). With that, there is a tendency to be engaged in impression management by academic communities when displaying their work (Ortbach & Recker, 2014). Academics who are extrinsically motivated for material rewards use impression management than the academics who are intrinsically motivated for achievement in Turkey (Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016). The study by Shoko and Dzimiri (2018) which is conducted in Zimbabwe, states that school heads spend more time during their leadership and management to manage impressions among teachers and stakeholders regarding their position and the school. Non-verbal behaviours also influence the concept of impression management in educational institutions. As an example when a lecturer enters the class with an untidy dress, students may form the impression that the lecturer is not capable of teaching and he/she may be lethargic in teaching. Similarly, facial expressions are also another important factor to understand how lecturers are maintaining the image in the class (Gaspar, 2016). Therefore, during academic activities, non-verbal behaviours and facial expressions affect a lot when forming an impression of a person.

Students spend more energy on managing self-impressions and avoiding negative impressions when targeting professors than peers in academic performance (Haber & Tesoriero, 2018). Correspondingly, Valerius and Parr (1997) highlight students use impression management tactics to gain social goals such as obtaining recognition and personal contact with the instructor,

rather than obtaining performance goals. And, students who are not that much knowledgeable receive good grades than they expect by the use of impression management tactics effectively with their teachers (Takei et al., 1998). Also, women are willing to manage impressions than men in the school environment (Haber & Tesoriero, 2018).

By reviewing the above literature, it can also be concluded that there is an opportunity to undertake a study on impression management with special reference to academicians within educational institutes. It further highlights the importance of carrying out this research study.

Methodology

To explore the impression management strategies and the aims behind those impression formations, I have chosen the qualitative approach to my research project. And, I have located this study on the paradigm of interpretivism. Interpretivism is where researchers make sense of the subjectivity and socially constructed meanings about the phenomenon they're researching (Saunders et al., 2016). The concept of impression management is much more behaviour focused and because of that, it is required to go to the field, observe and talk with the participants to come up with research findings. Therefore, as the researcher, I had to play an important role in the data collection process. So, it is adopted the inductive approach, where it contributes to a theory through own observations and data analysis. Hence, this study was carried out using a series of interviews as the research strategy.

Academicians were considered as the primary data source because they are the repositories who possess the knowledge to address the research questions. Books, journal articles, conference proceedings, theses, statistics, reports, and online websites have been used to collect data as secondary data sources. All the academics in the selected state university were identified as the population of this study. Among them, eight academics of a leading Management faculty were selected as the sample using the 'purposive sampling technique'. According to Saunders et al. (2016), purposive sampling requires to use researcher's judgment to choose cases that will help to answer the research questions. So, academicians who are willing to talk and share ideas, their designation and the experiences, the department in which they are attached, and gender were set as criteria to draw the study sample.

Data collection was done using the interview method. Face-to-face and semi-structured interviews with time duration of around 30-45 minutes were conducted among the selected academicians. Follow-up questions were used to

come up with a rich collection of data. Also, the data were analyzed using the ‘thematic analysis technique’. Braun and Clarke (2006) define thematic analysis as a method of identifying, evaluating, and reporting patterns or themes in a dataset. Within the analysis process, all the transcripts were read in between lines to investigate different patterns, themes, and trends. Then those were coded under different themes with the support of the literature review. By analyzing the most significant codes and themes, the accurate findings to answer the research questions of this study were identified. The details of the participants are depicted in Table 1

Table 1: Details of the Participants

No.	Name	Age	Gender	Designation (Level)	Educational Level
01.	Ms. Ayomi	41-55 years old	Female	Senior Lecturer (Grade II)	Up to PhD
02.	Ms. Amali	41-55 years old	Female	Professor	Up to PhD
03.	Mr. Madhushan	25-40 years old	Male	Lecturer (Probationary)	Graduation Degree
04.	Ms. Priyani	56-65 years old	Female	Senior Lecturer (Grade II)	Up to PhD
05.	Mr. Sadeep	25-40 years old	Male	Lecturer	Master’s Degree
06.	Mr. Sandun	25-40 years old	Male	Lecturer	Graduation Degree +Additional Academic Qualification
07.	Ms. Siluni	25-40 years old	Female	Lecturer (Probationary)	Graduation Degree
08.	Mr. Thulada	41-55 years old	Male	Senior Lecturer (Grade II)	Up to PhD

It has been considered the ethical issues and taken actions to address them too. Before the selection of the research topic, it was analyzed whether any parties are negatively affected by conducting this study. Pseudonyms have been used to protect the privacy and confidentiality of the participants and the entities. Also, in the data collection satge, consent forms were administered to all of the participants prior to the interviews. During the interviews, all the questions were asked with the intention of not to harm/ embarrass the participants. The participants were allowed to express their ideas freely, and to stop the discussion at any time. Further, when analysing the data, it was given the priority to the voices of the participants rather than my expectations regarding

the findings. Moreover, all the literature were properly acknowledged by adhering to the citation and referencing guideline of the American Psychological Association (2019) - 7th edition.

Results and Discussion

A thematic map (Figure 1) was developed to present the research findings. Findings were arranged into five main themes that are in line with the two research objectives. Direct ways of impression formation to create a favourable image, direct ways of impression formation to defend an unfavourable image, indirect ways of impression formation, and non-verbal ways to impress others are the four themes under the objective of exploring the impression management strategies adopted by the academicians in the selected state university. Then, the final theme which is the aims of impression management behaviours was organized to examine the motives behind academicians to adopt those strategies, which is the second objective of this study. The following section presents the findings of the study under each theme.

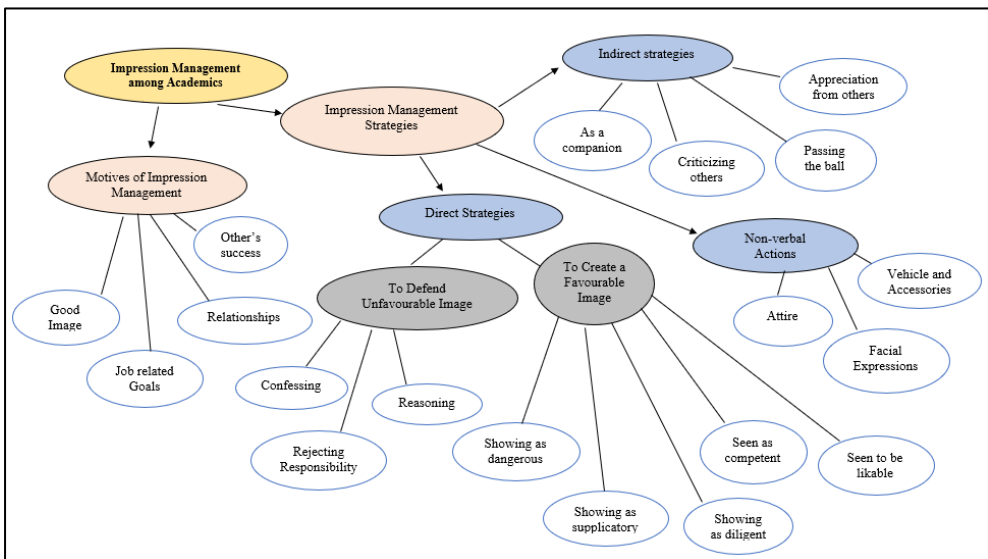


Figure 1: Thematic Map

Source: Author Compilation

Note: The size and the distance between bubbles do not indicate any thematic relationship

01. Direct Ways of Impression Formation to Create a Favourable Image

The findings of this theme of direct ways of impression formation to create a favourable image are interpreted using the five sub-themes of present the self as

a well competent person, present the self to be likable, present the self as diligent, present the self as supplicatory, and present the self as dangerous and tough.

- **Present the Self as a Well Competent Person**

According to Gwal (2015), self-promotion is a process where individuals present things to display their competencies to the target audience. Almost all the participants in their self-introduction went on to say their capabilities and competencies. Mr. Madhusan recounted his performance during the interview as, “Due to having a 1st class I was able to join the staff after passing out”. Similarly, the senior lecturer Ms. Priyani explained, “My works are so neat at those times. Still like that [smiling proudly] ...Normally before starting to teach a subject I prepare the whole plan for that subject and handover it”. Considering the excerpts of the participants, I came up with a finding where academics in my context use this strategy of promoting their own competencies and capabilities to impress others by stating their performances, designations, previous employments, expressing their strengths, sharing achievements among others.

- **Present the Self to be Likable**

People use flattery or do something in favour with the intention of perceived good in front of others. According to Mr. Sandun, he uses exaggeration as an art to impress others with the excerpt of, “No, I’m not calling it as ‘butter ganawa’. I say it as an art. It’s the art of dealing with people. That sometimes uh...one word is enough. If I say ‘aiye meka karala denna’, non-academic will do it definitely”. And Ms. Siluni gave her voice, “Uh...I’m like this, I do ‘butter ganawa’ with my closest set of people only. Within my professional capacity, within student-teacher capacity, I do not use it”. The findings of this study revealed that all the participants use flattery to impress others to some extent. Most of the time male lecturers use it for lower-level employees like non-academics, while female lecturers use it among friendship groups. Also, academics in my sample respect others and try to be compatible with the university values to create a good image of them in others’ eyes. Further, those academicians have an indirect expectation behind joking where if students are having such a relaxed environment with jokes, they tend to create a good impression regarding the particular academician as well. In a conclusion, it can be interpreted that the academics of the study sample not only use flattery and do favour as to existing literature, but they also use some uncommon behaviours such as greetings, sharing, and respecting others. By doing so they try to show that they want to maintain a favourable image in front of others.

- **Present the Self as Diligent**

During interview discussions, most of the participants emphasized the huge workload which they are engaging with to express how much they are hardworking. Moreover, I came across different stories narrated by the participants regarding the hard effort that they have taken to put students to their success. With that, it is implied that they wanted to be perceived as moral characters which agrees with the existing literature, where individuals try to communicate with others that they are hardworking and they try to show that they are moral characters using this strategy (Jones & Pittman, 1982; Khadyr & Caliskan, 2016). Ms. Amali emphasized that “I’m not going to mention it again and again especially. Never saying ‘Ammoh I have done this much’. Uh...but I work, and that work should be foreseen in front of others. And they should feel that. That means I don’t think that it should highlight time to time.” With this, it is demonstrated that though academics of the study context do hard work and try to show that they are moral characteristics, they do so with real intention and not to pretend.

- **Present the Self as Supplicatory**

The strategy of supplication is in which a person exploits his weaknesses and dependencies to get the help or favour from the target (Jones & Pittman, 1982). An interesting result is found where all the academics that I have studied express their incapacities with the idea of getting help from others. When I asked the question whether you are sharing the unknowingness of a particular aspect with others, Ms. Amali went on saying “Definitely. If I don’t know I say it. That’s it for students too. In a lecture also, if students ask something if I don’t know, it is better to say, ‘I don’t know’ rather telling a lie”. But when taking assistance, they don’t seek it only from a higher-level position as in the existing literature. They prefer to get assistance from any level of the career. A similar answer was given by Mr. Thulada, “I ask if I assure that the person has some kind of knowledge...That person may be in a higher position than me or maybe a lower position”.

- **Present the Self as Dangerous and Tough**

Basically, this strategy is used by individuals to create an image as they are authoritative than others. I asked my participants in what situations they have to use their power in front of others. There, Mr. Sadeep encountered, “That means we have to give them (non-academic staff) a chance know? there if they don’t behave, then have to say it a bit more hard than forcing”. Through findings, it is proved that if the academics are to use power, they use it to lower-level

academics or to the non-academic staff. Shoko and Dzimiri (2018) highlight school heads have used the intimidation tactic when the good impression management tactics couldn't give better results. In line with this, academics in the context use a little or no intimidation strategy when the other positive tactics are failed to achieve their expectations. As the final interpretation, it is proved that although there are some situations for academics of my study sample to use power, they use it less and they generally use it for lower-level employees. But they don't like to seem like intimidators in others' minds.

02. Direct Ways of Impression Formation to Defend an Unfavourable Image

Defend the self as an apologizer, defend the self by reasoning and defend the self by rejecting responsibility are the three sub-themes that have been developed to present the research data within the theme of direct ways of impression formation to defend an unfavourable image.

- **Defend the Self as an Apologizer**

Apologizing is defined as a confession of responsibility for a negative action/event done by the actor which is guilty (Tedeschi & Lindskold, 1976, as cited in Lee et al., 1999). According to this definition, the strategy of apology is used by individuals to express pardon for a negative action done by them. With the statements raised by the participants, I came up with a finding where academics use apology as a defensive strategy to repair their bad image. Because all the participants emphasized that they will say 'sorry' to anyone, regardless of their position, for the wrong actions that they have done.

- **Defend the Self by Reasoning**

Justification involves giving reasons to justify a negative action done by the actor while accepting the responsibility for the negative behaviour (Scott & Lyman, 1968, as in Lee et al., 1999). Giving reasons for the wrong action done is another way of impression management to defend the negative image. During the interview discussions, the study sample ended up saying that they provide reasons for the wrongdoing if they have so. "I will explain the situation I was in. That means if a mistake happens to someone by me, I will apologize and give reasons that this happened due to these reasons", expressed by Ms. Siluni. So, it ended up with the finding that the academics are using the strategy of justification to defend an unfavourable image being created about them in the Sri Lankan context too.

- **Defend the Self by Rejecting the Responsibility**

In my study context, academics reject the responsibility of a negative action if the circumstance is reasonable to deny the responsibility of an undesirable action. They specifically underlined that, though others see their actions as wrong, if they don't see it as wrong, and then they would strongly reject it. Ms. Priyani was trying to reject the responsibility of a negative action during the conversation by saying, "All of us don't have the same mental level. Sometimes due to physical conditions, mental problems, we may come across days where we are not fully fit with the conditions... In such situations, mistakes may happen. Those arise naturally." Therefore, results demonstrated that academics use excuses as a defensive strategy of impression management in the study context to protect their image if there are only acceptable reasons for them to do so.

03. Indirect Ways of Impression Formation

As stated in the literature review phase, people use the information of others to create a good image of them (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980, as in Mohamed & Gardner, 2004). To interpret the data of my research regarding the indirect ways of impression formation, I have divided the theme into main four sub-themes including, improve the self as a companion, improve the self by criticizing others, improve the self with other's appreciation and reduce the negative image by 'passing the ball'.

- **Improve the Self as a Companion**

"Association is whereby individuals enhance or protect their image by managing information about people and things that they associate with" (Shoko & Dzimiri, 2018, p. 255). When it comes to the findings of my study, it is found that irrespective of the situation whether it is official or not, the sample of my study promotes the university to create a good image for them. As Mr. Sadeep explained, "That's a prestige for us. I'll take it (the opportunity of getting prestige) definitely. That means, wherever I say that I am a lecturer at this university...I think that is not maintaining status in the wrong way...But we have got a prestige... I use it." Further, some of the academics enhanced their families and with that, they tried to have a favourable image for them. In this sub-theme of presenting the self as a companion, academics don't associate with others to create a good image for them. But academics use the enhancement of the university and the family enhancement as the indirect ways of impression management.

- **Improve the Self by Criticizing Others**

I came across some situations where my participants criticize others intending to build a good image of them. People try to damage the image of others or business organizations to enhance their own image (Cialdini & Richardson, 1980, as in Mohamed & Gardner, 2004). Some participants criticized the actions of others where they are not involved, some discussed the situations where they see others as wrong. As an example, Ms. Priyani criticized others in the department when she joined the staff with the excerpt, “When the time I join the staff, I had a hard time. No one was there to welcome me with beautiful roses. I only had ‘Katu Akulu’. So, with lots of fights, disrespects I joined here”. Therefore, it can provide a finding where criticizing others is another indirect type of strategy used by academics in my study context to create an image about them in other’s eyes.

- **Improve the Self with Other’s Appreciation**

This strategy is a unique one where it does not direct with existing literature. Some participants express how well they have done their job in coordinating/teaching by stating how they got appreciation from others. Also, Mr. Sandun spoke about how his teaching skill is being recommended by friends, “Even from before passing out, I taught the difficult things to my friends. Then they said that I have a teaching skill”. These indirectly create a good impression about them. Considering the voices given by the sample of participants, it ended up with a new finding where the academics in the present context use others’ appreciations and recommendations to show that they are favourable and pleasant in front of other people.

- **Reduce the Negative Image by ‘Passing the Ball’**

This sub-theme is also another interesting finding in my study. With the raised voices during interviews, I understood that there are some situations where academics wanted to prevent being created a bad image by passing the fault to another person. As an example, Ms. Ayomi explained her experience regarding a situation where she had to blame another person, “He was not in a good situation. That means by standing in a wrong point he asked a wrong question...at that time I can remember, I told him in a serious manner ‘why are you doing this? Here this is right?... That day I don’t know I was a bit in a tension mood with the paper packets. Uh...then he asked me about available information what he knows already”. So, it allowed me to present a unique finding that academics in my study context are trying to defend creating a bad image of them by pointing out other’s faults.

04. Non-verbal Ways to Impress Others

Under this theme, it presents the findings relating to the non-verbal strategies used by academics with some sub-themes. Attire to present the self, vehicle and other accessories to impression formation, and facial expressions are the sub-areas that have been touched in the interpretation as the non-verbal ways to impress others.

- **Attire to Present the Self**

Almost all the participants agreed that the dress of an academician affects the impressions of students regarding that particular lecturer. During the interview discussion Mr. Sadeep expressed his idea about the attire, “Now if we are coming like with a tattoo, with a tinted or spiked hair, having earrings...then, by coming so it damages the image based on how others perceived”. According to Preves and Stephenson (2009), teachers try to maintain their identity within a classroom through symbols like attire (as cited in Gaspar, 2016). So, it was clear that in the current context also academics give reasonable attention to their attire as it affects the impression that others form of them as academics in a particular university.

- **Vehicle and Other Accessories for a Good Looking**

Teachers use symbols such as vehicles, their appearance, and manner of behaviour to form impressions within a classroom (Preves & Stephenson, 2009, as in Gaspar, 2016). My sample of participants gave a different idea about the non-verbal strategy of using vehicles and other accessories to create impressions. Ms. Amali went on saying, “That means I’m not going to maintain my status using a vehicle. I had a big vehicle, and I got the permit as well...then I thought that I don’t get mental happiness. I change to the point after realizing that my vehicle should use for my easiness and not to maintain status”. Like Ms. Amali, all the participants stated that they don’t use those to maintain their status. Therefore, it can conclude that academics in the study context do not use vehicles and other accessories as non-verbal aspects to manage their impressions.

- **Facial Expressions to Impression Formation**

During interviews, all the participants emphasized many times the importance of maintaining facial expressions to form impressions in classrooms, consistent with Cuddy et al. (2011, as cited in Amaral, 2018) individuals who use non-verbal cues including smiling, nodding, and leaning are perceived as likable and friendly. Ms. Priyani emphasized, “... our facial expressions, the way we move

with the students, the way we talk with them, the language we use are very important for student-teacher interactions”. So, it is proved that facial expressions help academics to create good impressions as a non-verbal strategy in the Sri Lankan educational context.

05. Aims of Impression Management Behaviours

The final theme of ‘aims of impression management behaviours’ has been arranged to answer the second objective of this research study. To interpret the results, it is arranged in sub-themes including to present a good image, to maintain good relationships, to achieve job-related goals, and for other’s success and well-being.

- **To Present the Good Image**

The main goal of impression management is to present the self in a way that they like to be perceived by others (Drory & Zaidman, 2007). The study sample mainly pointed out that they want to seem good in front of others every time when interacting. Also, they expressed that they don’t want others to see them as a bad person. As a good example, Ms. Siluni stated, “I like others to have an impression about me like this is a good person. Even when we die, I like them to tell that I am a good person. So that is the idea I have in my mind”. Similarly, Mr. Madhushan highlighted maintaining a good image with the excerpt, “So, when we work with them (students), I believe that it’s very important to maintain the image”. Considering all the statements of participants, it is identified that academics manage impressions to present a good image of them. But they don’t manage impressions in a situation where others perceive them wrong as they expect.

- **To Maintain Good Relationships**

Findings disclosed that academics are motivated to manage impressions to build rapport among others. Not only that but also the sample of academics expressed some unique ideas regarding their intention of impression management. Ms. Amali recounted the reason to manage impressions as, “After that must maintain a good network with others”. Not only that, but Ms. Priyani also discussed about trust and closeness, “Students build trust upon us like ‘this teacher is like this, this type, very good, we are taught like this...’ etc. That trust is important”. Maintaining closeness, trustworthiness, and openness when interacting with others are some intentions that led them to manage a good impression about themselves in front of others in this study sample. So, it can be

said that academics are motivated to manage impressions to have good relationships, close interactions, build trust, and openness to conversation.

- **To Achieve Job Related Goals**

Most of the participants emphasized career development and career growth as job-related goals to engage with impression management. Not only that, but some of the participants also pointed out job security as another job-related goal, which motivated them to manage impressions. As to the voices of the participants, it is identified that impressions are managed when going to gain power, authority, and positions in the career. Therefore, it is implied that impression management is important in the current study context to achieve job-related goals such as career growth, job security, power, and position gain in the career ladder.

- **For other's Success and Well-being**

This is one of the unique findings that I have captured in my research data, where it doesn't match with the existing literature. During interview discussions, participants emphasized that they use impression management basically to facilitate mental happiness to the students as well as to motivate them. According to Ms. Amali, "We have to show that this is how we work, this is how we handle problems, ah... this is how we balance the timetable likewise. If we give an example like that, they will also do that". In addition to that Ms. Priyani highlighted the mental happiness by saying, "Sometimes students become hopeless and give up their degrees. In such situation I hug them, kiss them and asked them 'don't do this 'putha'. let's finish this'". With that, a finding can be interpreted where academics in the current study manage impressions especially to facilitate, motivate and guide students for their success rather than considering the academic's own interests.

Implications and Conclusion

The current study contributes to the field of impression management as it strengthens the existing theories as well as provides unique findings. The findings proved that impression management can be practiced either directly or indirectly as stated by Mohamed et al. (1999, as in Terrell & Kwok, 2011). Also, all of the participants use the five strategies introduced by Jones and Pittmans (1982). And, the motives behind academics to manage impressions are in line up to some extent with the model developed by Leary and Kowalski (1990).

In addition to the existing literature, this research study provides unique theoretical implications to the impression management field. Academics in the study context share their achievements and competencies basically to motivate others which is a little bit different from the existing literature. Not only the flattery and exaggeration, but some unique actions such as greetings, sharing, and respecting others are adopted by academics of the study sample to be seen as likable in front of others. Also, they like to show that they are hardworking but in a real manner and not to form fake impressions. Trying to improve the own image through other's appreciation and trying to reduce the negative image by pointing other's faults are two unique indirect impression management strategies that have been identified through research findings. Another interesting implication of this research is, almost all the academician's intention to manage impressions are to facilitate and motivate students to their success rather being considering their own self-interests.

Moreover, this study provides managerial implications to academics and other authoritative parties in the educational sector to improve the effectiveness of the interactions among others. Findings provide implications for individual academics to present/ create a good image that may help to achieve inner peace and attraction of others in both career and personal lives. Further, this study provides implications to any person in the educational sector or organizational sector, who has an interest to conduct a study on impression management behaviours.

Although this study provides insights into impression management strategies and the motives behind them in the Sri Lankan context, there are some limitations too. One of the limitations I encountered when conducting the study was presenting me, as I am a beginner to this field of research. As I am a student in the beginning stage of doing research, I faced difficulties when making appointments to have interview discussion and when collecting data for the study. The incapability of doing observations with the time constraints also limited to bring more rich findings regarding the study.

Finally, some avenues can be suggested for future studies in this area. It is better to conduct a study in the field of impression management by capturing the area of private universities as this research is focused and limited to a selected state university in Sri Lanka. Because this impression management concept is much more behaviour focused and the controlling mechanisms used by private and state universities are different. So, by doing that, there is another opportunity to do a comparative analysis by capturing the differences of impression

management behaviours of academics in state universities vs private universities.

Further, future researchers should connect the situational factors which are prevailing in contemporary society such as the COVID-19 pandemic, to the field of impression management. Because due to these circumstances it allows people to connect virtually. Therefore, it is recommended for prospective researchers to find out how impression management techniques are used in online work settings and/or work-from-home contexts.

Declaration of Conflicting Interests

The author declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and publication of this article.

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