

Detecting Impression Management: Improving Conditional Reasoning Test Validity with
Forced-Choice Survey

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Abstract

Whether you are an instructor trying to relate to their students, an employee trying to impress their boss, an athlete trying to intimidate their opponent, or anywhere in between; everyone uses impression management in some form or another. The primary purpose of our study is to develop a conditional reasoning test that can detect an individual's dominant impression management strategies as well as abnormal levels of impression management. The conditional reasoning test would be utilized by employers to detect the use of impression management strategies among job applicants, allowing employers parse potentially misleading or false information provided during the selection process. Currently, we have established a conditional reasoning test that should predict preferred impression management response types. Additionally, we are looking to create a secondary forced-choice survey to be administered after the conditional reasoning test. By forcing participants to select impression management responses, we believe this will provide valuable insight into participants preferred impression management strategies in an applicant-type position which can be compared to participants' results of the conditional reasoning test in order to establish its validity.

Introduction

Impression management is the process individuals use when trying to control other people's opinions they have of them (Leary & Kowalsky, 1990). The importance of impression management can be overlooked at times, despite how frequently individuals engage in impression management. Individuals are constantly in situations where impression management gets used. Some of the situations where people are more likely to engage in impression management are situations that call for any sort of social interaction. This could be talking with professors or meeting new neighbors. However, the workplace seems to be the most prone to impression management. Accordingly, this study will be examining impression management in the workplace.

Being able to measure the level of which people engage in impression management is important because the knowledge we gain would allow employers to make optimal hiring/promotion decisions. There have been multiple past attempts aimed at measuring impression management, most of which utilizing self-report instruments (e.g., Bolino & Turnley, 1999). These measures can prove to be troublesome when analyzing impression management, due to the fact that people may be inclined to pick the more socially desirable responses. This would lessen the validity of the study, providing a misrepresentation of impression management. To resolve this problem, our study is aimed at developing a Conditional Reasoning Test (CRT; James, 1998) to measure impression management. To that end, we developed a series of CRT items for each of the five facets of impression management, exemplification, supplication, ingratiation, intimidation, and self-promotion (Jones & Pittman, 1982). involves items which on the face look like inductive reasoning problems. However, the options are constructed in such a

way that different options appeal to individuals with different motives and thus different dispositions. Specifically, given the problem in the conditional reasoning items, individuals with differing motives find different options more logical than others because options are based on opposing justification mechanisms. Hence, this type of personality assessment can be used as a way to measure the motives underlying the dispositions.

Method

Participants

The participants will include college students in the southeastern United States.

Procedure

The study will use deception such that the participants will be told they are asked to complete a screening measure for a compensated follow-up study. The participants will be given access to an online survey in which they will first view and answer the CRT questions. After the participants complete this, they will answer questions about why they should be paid for their time in a follow-up study. This will be accomplished by presenting them a list of randomized statements. Each statement will pertain to one of the five impression management types or will be a non-impression management statement. From the list they must select 10 statements to describe why they deserve to be selected for the actual study. Based on the choice of the participants, we will determine which of the five IM types the participants tend to lean more towards, as we expect that they will most likely choose the statements that represent their typical tendencies. The information recorded will then be used to identify dominant impression management types as well as validation for the CRT questions.

References

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BACKGROUND

- Most people engage in some sort of impression management in situations which involve interaction with others.
- Impression management can be defined as the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them.
- There have been multiple past attempts aimed at measuring impression management, most of which utilizing self-report instruments.
- The workplace is arguably one of the most prone settings to impression management, making it important to understand and measure the extent to which people are likely to engage in impression management.

OUR GOAL

The purpose of this study is to develop a measure of impression management which goes beyond the self-reported tendencies and taps the motives underlying the manifested choices. In order to achieve this goal, a conditional reasoning test (CRT) is developed which measures the extent to which people are likely to engage in impression management behaviors.

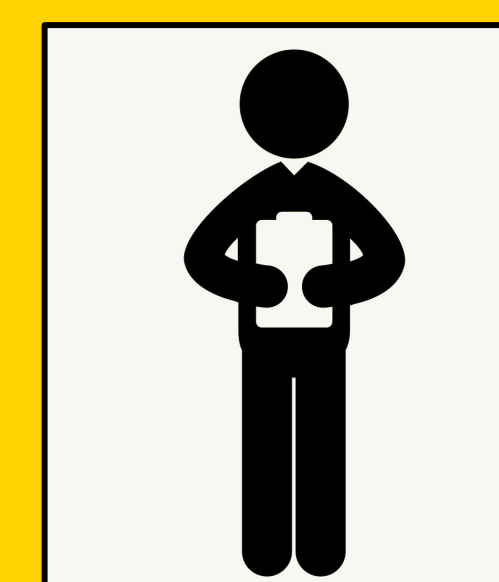
IMPLICATIONS

- Understanding which facets of impression management people engage in benefits employers in the hiring process.
- Our research will allow employers to look at what type of employees are being hired.
- This research will also show an applicants organizational fit and whether they are a right for the position.

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT

Exemplification

Exemplification is used to make oneself be seen as an exemplary individual based on their professional behavior. Examples might be staying late for work, taking on extra projects, or exceeding goals.



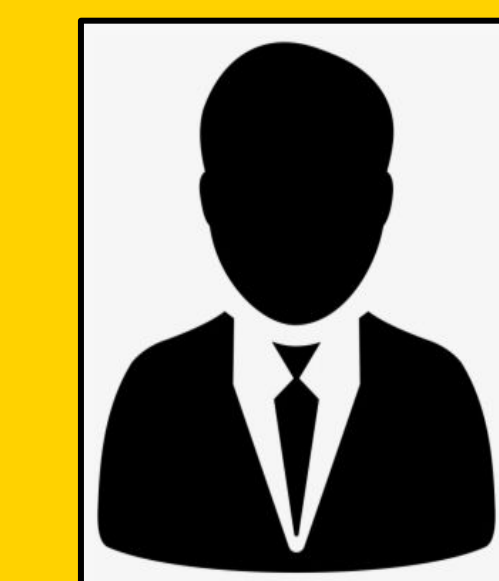
Supplication

Supplication is used to elicit a sympathy response or presenting oneself as incapable. Examples might be asking for help when it's not needed or over embellishing a sob story.



Ingratiation

Ingratiation is used to make oneself appear to be an upstanding individual based on the quality of one's character and personal behavior. Examples might be constantly bragging about volunteer work or appearing to be part of the in-crowd.



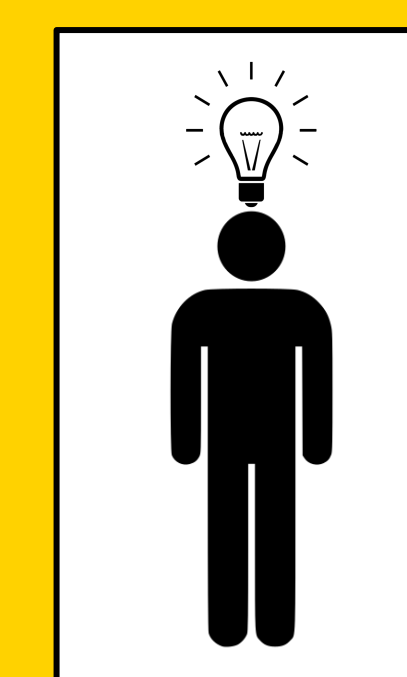
Intimidation

Intimidation is used to convince others that the intimidator is dangerous by advertising the ability to cause pain, discomfort, or other abuse. Examples might be mentioning a relationship with a more powerful individual or direct verbal threats.



Self-Promotion

Self-Promotion is used to make oneself appear as an accomplished, capable, smart, and skilled person. Examples might be over exaggerating levels of involvement or guiding conversation to focus on oneself.



METHOD

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➤ Procedure

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- After responding to the CRT questions, the participants will answer questions about why they should be paid for their time in a follow-up study. This will be accomplished by presenting them a list of randomized statements.
 - Each statement will pertain to one of the five impression management types or will be a non-impression management statement.
- From the list they must select 10 statements to describe why they deserve to be selected for the actual study.

SAMPLE CRT QUESTION

One of Kevin's coworkers slacks off and frequently blows deadlines, but this has not been a cause of concern for Kevin in the past. However, Kevin has recently taken to correcting his coworker's behavior and trying to make sure the job gets done well. What is likely Kevin's motivation?

- Kevin has decided the company should work more efficiently.
- Kevin is taking classes in his free time after work.
- Kevin is trying to show that he is worthy of a promotion.
- Kevin is trying to lose weight.