

Investigating the Personality Variable (LOC) & Impression Management Relationship: Exploring the Role of Demographic Variables & Sectoral Difference of Managers

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ABSTRACT

The purpose of the study is to investigate the relationship between locus of control and impression management. The study also examines the variation in locus of control dimensions namely, internality, externality (others) and externality (chance). It further investigates the difference on perception of demographic variables (gender and marital status) and sectoral difference on impression management. The study was administered on 125 Managers who were representatives of different private and public sector organizations in Delhi/NCR. Variables in the study were assessed using validated instruments. Descriptive Statistics, t-test, Correlation and Regression were used for data analysis. Organizations will be better prepared to dig into the arena of one of the personality variable, i.e. locus of control and its relationship with impression management. The current research is imperative in providing insights into role of personality variable (locus of control) and impression management, which will be one of the pioneer researches available till date. Moreover, the research will highlight the significance of locus of control dimensions and impression management.

Keywords: *Locus of Control, Impression Management, Private Sector, Public Sector, Gender, Marital Status*

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INTRODUCTION

Impression management is the process whereby individuals try to manipulate the opinions of others about their own image (Rosenfeld et al., 1995). The key reason for attempting to control or manage the impression we make is that through building enviable social identities, our public selves comes closer to our ideal selves. Individuals seek to manipulate how they are perceived and hence, the ways in which others treat them. The consequence of such behavior may have direct impact over material outcomes. For example, giving the impression that one is proficient and aspiring can lead to advantages such as career enhancing prospects and superior performance ratings (Wayne and Liden, 1995). Weng and Chang (2015) validated that personality traits of extraversion, agreeableness, and conscientiousness positively influences impression management behavior. Impression management actions may be focused on the self, managers and the job. Self-focused tactics include self-presentation, self-promotion and self-identification; whereas manager focused tactics refers to strategies such as networking and ingratiation. We use the term job-focused impression management strategies refer to the extra-contractual facets of high performance and dedication.

One of the very important concepts towards development of impression management is relational practice and relational theory propagated by Miller (1976) and Gilligan (1982). According to this relational theory “adult development and growth can occur through connections with others, not only through more traditional models of autonomy and self-individuation”. Whereas relational practice goes beyond consideration to relationships –“it is intentional action motivated by the belief that working this way is more effective in getting the job done”. Although in recent years there have been numerous studies on impression management, two questions still remain unanswered - first, how employee’s personality traits, specifically locus of control influence impression management behavior; second, difference on usage of impression management tactics based on demographic variables is still not clear and scarce too.

The present study investigates the role of personality variable (locus of control) & impression management relationship. Some individuals consider that they are masters of their own fate. Whereas, other individuals perceive themselves as pawns of fate and believed that whatever happens in their lives is due to chance or luck. An individual’s general belief about internal i.e. self versus external i.e. situation or other controls is called locus of control. The present research will seek to examine the variation in

locus of control dimensions, namely, internality, externality (others) and externality (chance) with respect to impression management. The research will bring out the implications of impression management tactics being used by individuals in the organizations for attaining material outcomes. Research further investigates the role of demographic variables namely, gender, marital status of managers & sectoral difference of managers too.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Locus of Control

Rotter (1966), defined locus of control as the degree to which individuals feel that they have control over the reinforcements, i.e. the rewards or punishments that transpire relative to their behavior. Levenson (1981) proposed three dimensions of locus of control, which establish how individuals behave and think. The individual who believes that they control the reinforcements are the ones with internal orientation; the other individuals believe that influential others control the reinforcements have external orientation; the third type of individuals believe that chance/luck controls the reinforcements, because the world is unordered and volatile have chance orientation. Forte (2005), defines locus of control as the conditions that individuals attribute their failures and success to.

Locus of control construct was first reported by Phares (1957). His research advocated that information about an individual's perception of control was valuable in envisaging, the decisions individuals would make concerning the success or failure of an allotted task. Furthermore, the research by Phares (1976) points out that individuals with internal versus external locus of control were distinct. Phares proposed that individuals with an internal locus of control having greater capability leads to enhanced self-confidence and reliance on their own ideas. Research advocated that individuals having an internal locus of control are more likely to be contented with their career and their job (Ernster & Harrison, 1998). On the other hand, externals are keener to adapt their attitude and behavior to adhere to external influences (Lefcourt, 1983; Spector, 1982).

Internals usually exhibiting her levels of job satisfaction, higher compensation, long job tenures and higher status professions than Externals (Andrasani and Nestel, 1976; Spector, 1988). Anderson, Hellriegel & Slocum (1977) demonstrated that Internals use more active than passive approaches to problem-solving at job. Anderson (1983) also verified that

individuals who credited failures to internal and controllable behavioural variables exhibit improved progress with practice, enhanced motivation and superior consequent work performance than individuals who credited failures to internal and behavioral variables. Studies also have documented relationship between attribution style and sales performance means positive attribution style was positively correlated with sales, than their lower scoring colleagues (Corr & Gray, 1996; Seligman & Schulman, 1986). Internals are those who consider that they control their destinies. Internals have been found to be more likely to presume managerial positions, have greater job satisfaction and desire participative style of management. Furthermore, internals illustrate higher work stimulus, embrace strong beliefs that efforts lead to performance, exhibit less apprehension than externals and receive higher salaries. Whereas, externals are individuals who think that what happens to them is controlled by external forces namely, luck or chance. Externals desires more ordered work setting, averse to participate in decision-making, are more acquiescent and keen to follow directions (Aquinas, 2013).

Impression Management

Impression management refers to the process, by which individuals seek to manage or influence the reactions or ideas others hold about them (Schlenker, 1980; Tedeschi & Reiss, 1981; Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Schlenkar and Weigold (1992) defined impression management as the regulation of behaviour or information, so as to shape other's perceptions of oneself. Impression management is the process, whereby individuals try to manipulate the representation others have of them (Rosenfeld, Giacalone & Riordan, 1995). This manipulation to influence the perceptions that others have of them is through behaviour, manner of speaking and body language. Gilmore et al. (1999) define impression management as cognizant or unconscious effort to manipulate images during interaction. According to Schlenker and Pontari (2000), individuals possessing superior impression management skills are more thriving at presenting themselves precisely to others.

Organizational researchers have proposed various impression management frameworks. One of such framework is propagated and empirically examined by Jones and Pittman. According to Jones and Pittman (1982), individuals engage in five impression management tactics, namely, a) Ingratiation – individuals seek to be perceived positively

by flattering others or granting favors for them; b) Self-promotion – individuals flaunt their capability and proficiency; c) Exemplification – individuals seek to be viewed as committed by going beyond the call of duty; d) Supplication – individuals seek to be looked as one requiring help due to limitations; e) Intimidation – individuals seek to be perceived as influential and intimidating.

According to Leary and Kowalski's (1990) two-component model, impression management is composed of two distinct processes, which are impression motivation and impression construction. Impression motivation is the process by which the individual are stimulated to form specific impressions in minds of others. Impression construction involves changing one's behaviour so as to influence others impressions, after being stimulated to form those impressions. According to Leary and Kowalski's model, the impression motivation process consists of three aspects, namely, relevance of impressions, the significance of the desired outcomes and the existing divergence between desired and present image. People are more likely to be stimulated to form impressions on others, of them, when these impressions are significant to the accomplishment of one or more of these goals: a) acquiring social and material outcomes, b) enhancing or maintaining one's self-esteem and c) creating desired identities.

Almost everyone uses impression management, managers, job candidates, employees and even external stakeholders engage in impression management tactics. Individuals are encouraged to manage impressions so as to acquire valued and enviable results such as job offers (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Stevens (1997) established that ingratiation was more likely to be used by interviewees in campus interviews, when they suppose the job to be attractive and when they expect a job offer. The individuals who engage in impression management tactics are high self-monitor. An individual's capability to alter his or her behaviour to external situational factors is called as Self-monitoring (Gangestad and Snyder, 2000). Individuals high in self-monitoring show significant flexibility in adjusting their behaviour to external situational factors, however, low self-monitors can't mask themselves in that way. Whereas, low self-monitors tend to present images of themselves that are steady with their individuality, despite of the advantageous or disadvantageous effects for them; whereas, high self-monitors are better at understanding circumstances and shaping their appearances and actions to fit in the same (Snyder and Copeland, 1989). Wayne and Kacmar (1991) established in

a lab research that subordinates who engage in impression management tactics attained more favourable performance review ratings than others who did not.

RESEARCH GAP

Priyadarshini and Sandhya (2004) in their paper examined the influence of Ego States on Impression Management in various services in the medical profession. Other researchers namely, Snyder and Copeland (1989); Bolino and Turnley (2001) in their research investigated role of self-monitoring in impression management. Fletcher (1990) argued that locus of control manipulate a candidate's choice of impression management strategy during a selection interview. He suggested that as internals view themselves as masters of their own destiny and they are more likely to take on assertive and controlling behaviours during selection interviews than externals. Similarly, Silvester et al. (2002) investigated how candidates and interviewers locus of control influences choice for three kinds of explanations provided by candidates during graduate recruitment interviews. The three types of explanations were characterized by (a) internal-controllable attributions (e.g. being careless), (b) internal-uncontrollable attributions (e.g. being unwell during the exams), and (c) external-uncontrollable attributions (e.g. inadequate supervision). The result of their study was that all interviewers rated that internal-controllable attributions convey a positive impression of a candidate. Nevertheless, locus of control mediated the inclination for candidate's attributions such that external interviewers rated external-uncontrollable attributions significantly and are more likely to convey a positive impression than internal interviewers. Jain (2012) in his research examined the moderating impact of impression management on the relationship of emotional intelligence and organizational citizenship behaviors.

None of the above cited researches demonstrate the relationship between locus of control and impression management. Hence, due to paucity of research done on the relationship between locus of control and impression management, the current study will be pivotal and relevant for private and public organizations. The study's unique contribution is in bringing out the relation between locus of control and impression management and variation in dimensions of locus of control and impression management in Indian context. It provides insights on the role of demographic variables (gender and marital status) & sectoral differences of managers in both public and private organizations.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- Q1. Is there any relationship between locus of control and impression management?
- Q2. Is there any relationship between locus of control dimensions and impression management?
- Q3. Is there any gender difference on perception of impression management?
- Q4. Are unmarried professionals are more inclined towards impression management than. The married professionals?
- Q5. Is there any sectoral difference on perception of impression management?

HYPOTHESES DEVELOPMENT

Based on the previous research the present study proposes following hypothetical research model:

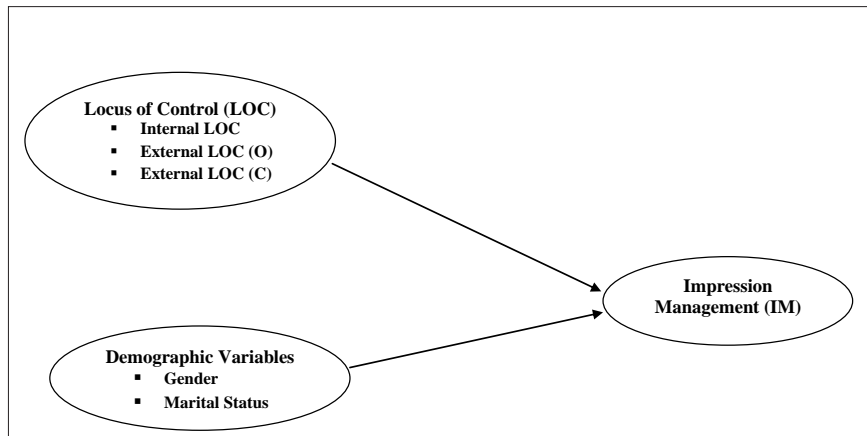


Fig. 1: Hypothetical Research Model proposed by the present study

H1: There exists positive relation between LOC and IM

H2: There is a significant variation in LOC dimension with respect to IM

As mentioned above too in the research gap, there is dearth of research on the current topic. The current paper is one of the pioneers in investigating the relation between locus of control and impression management. Also, it will examine the variation in locus of control dimensions, namely,

internality, externality (others) and externality (chance) with respect to impression management.

H3: There is a gender difference on perception of IM

Tata (1998) advocates that both men and women regularly seek to build impressions, but in diverse ways. Female employees prefer to depend on superior performance and dedication for being visible to their seniors, rather than the ingratiation, networking and self-promotion tactics are used more by male employees (Singh et. al, 2002). Females engage in rather less aggressive behaviours than their male counterparts and also use a more passive approach (Guadagno and Cialdini, 2007; Bolino and Turnley, 2003). They also validated that females in comparison to males are less likely to use impression management tactics.

H4: Unmarried professionals are more inclined towards IM than their married counterparts

We are unable to find any previous research on the relationship between impression management and marital status, neither in Indian nor in any other country's context. Therefore, the current research will enlighten whether unmarried professionals are more inclined towards impression management than their married counterparts or not.

H5: Private sector professionals are more inclined towards IM than Public sector professionals

There was no other research except for the one by Rao et al. (1995), *Upward Impression Management: Goals, Influence Strategies and Consequences*, where they compared managers from manufacturing firms in private sector and municipal government and educational organizations in the public sector. They hypothesize that the degree of formalization and routinization inherent in an organization will affect the types of influence strategies used by subordinates. They formulated hypothesis that "the more formalized and routinised an organization's work operations, the more subordinates will use ingratiation to obtain desired outcomes". But their empirical results do not support this hypothesis. Thus, their research doesn't talk about sectoral differences at all. Therefore, the current research will contribute by demonstrating that sectoral difference on impression management exists or not.

METHOD OF ANALYSIS

Data Collection: Out of 140 questionnaires, 125 usable responses were obtained from the middle-level managers belonging to both public and private sector organizations were the sample for the present study. The employees were both males and females. The data was collected from the private and public sector organizations across Delhi NCR.

Measures: Two measures were used in the study to assess Locus of Control and Impression Management. Locus of Control was conceptualized as independent variable, whereas Impression Management as dependent variable. The measures used in this study were borrowed from their original source.

Locus of Control in Organizations Inventory (Loco Inventory): The Loco Inventory scale used in the present study was developed by Levenson (1972) consists of 30 items, and involves three independent aspects of the locus of control: Internality (10 items), Externality (Others) (10 items) and Externality (Chance) (10 items), ranging from strongly feel this way (4) to hardly or never feel this way (0) is used in the present study. A satisfactory reliability was found for this scale (Levenson, 1972). The Cronbach alpha was found to be .85 for this scale.

Impression Management: This scale developed by Bolino and Turnley (1999) consists of 22 items, and involves 5 independent aspects of impression management: Self-Promotion (4 items), Ingratiation (4 items), Exemplification (4 items), Intimidation (5 items), Supplication (5 items), ranging from often behave this way (5) to never behave this way (1) is used in the present study. A satisfactory reliability was found for this scale (Bolino & Turnley, 1999). The Cronbach alpha was found to be .94 for this scale.

RESULTS

Descriptive analysis, Reliabilities and Correlation Analysis

The reliability of scale indicates that the study is free from random error. Reliability is measured in this study using Cronbach's coefficient alpha, (α). Table 1 indicates the result of reliability analysis of the Cronbach's alpha scale for Impression Management and Locus of Control (diagonally), where its value is more than 0.7. This signifies that the instruments used are reliable to measure the constructs consistently (Nunnally, 1978).

Insert Table 1 here (Mean, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities and Correlations)

Impression Management is positively and significantly related to locus of control. Therefore, the hypothesis H1, which states there exists a positive relation between LOC and IM, is accepted.

REGRESSION ANALYSIS

Table 2 represents the regression analysis of the study variables. It was performed to test the hypotheses for overall measure of Impression Management.

Regression Equation

$$IM = A + \beta_1 X_1 + \beta_2 X_2 + \beta_3 X_3$$

Impression Management = Intercept + Coefficient (Internal LOC) + Coefficient (External LOC (Others)) + Coefficient (External LOC (Chance))

One regression equation was used for the analysis of the present study. Equation included three independent variables (Internality, Externality Others and Externality Chance) and one Dependent Variable (Impression Management). The result in the case of equation, 44.1% of the outcome is statistically significant.

Insert Table 2 here (Regression analysis of Locus of Control and Impression Management)

Table 2 demonstrates that, as a set of predictors, the Locus of Control dimensions explain 44.1% of Variance in Impression Management. It means that the Locus of Control dimensions play a vital role in Impression Management. Specifically, it can be observed that all the dimensions of Locus of Control are positively and significantly related to Impression Management, except for one i.e. Internal Locus of Control. Thus, the hypothesis H2, which states that there is a significant variation in Locus of Control dimension with respect to IM, is partially proven.

Independent Sample t-test

Insert Table 3 here (Independent Sample t-test on Impression Management, Gender, Marital Status and Sector for Total Sample, N=125)

Furthermore, an independent sample t-test was employed to find out the whether there lies any difference in impression management on

the basis of demographic variables i.e. gender and marital status. For impression management and gender, the p value (.568>.05) is more and thus we can conclude that, it is statistically not significant, means there is no gender difference on perception on impression management of males and females. For marital status and impression management too p value (.361>.05) is more, which verifies that there is no significant difference between unmarried and married professionals inclination towards impression management. For sectoral differences and impression management, p value (.084>.05) is more and thus we can conclude that, it is statistically not significant, means there is no significant difference between private and public sector professionals inclination towards impression management. Therefore, Hypotheses H3, H4 and H5 are not accepted.

DISCUSSION

The research established that impression management is positively and significantly related to locus of control. Thereby, accepting the hypothesis H1, which states there is a positive relation between locus of control and impression management. Also, from table 2, it can be observed that all the dimensions of locus of control are positively and significantly related to impression management, except for one i.e. internal locus of control. As demonstrated in table 2 that, as a set of predictors, the Locus of Control dimensions explain 44.1% of Variance in Impression Management. Thus, the hypothesis H2, which states that there is a significant variation in locus of control dimension with respect to impression management, is accepted but partially. The reason is clear that impression management tactics are used by individuals having external locus of control, whereas, individuals having internal locus of control do not rely on any impression management tactics and believe in their own capabilities and skills. They do not believe in camouflaging their personalities for any beneficial outcomes. The research is one of the first in Indian context which establishes the relationship between locus of control, its dimensions and impression management.

From table 3 above, we demonstrated that there is no gender difference on perception on impression management of males and females. In other words both men and women regularly seek to build impressions, but might do it in diverse ways. Research also demonstrates that here is no significant difference between unmarried and married professionals inclination towards impression management, therefore, whether you

are married or unmarried there is no impact on impression management tactics being use; but if you have external locus of control your chances of using impression management tactics are higher. Also, there is no difference between private and public sector professional's inclination towards impression management. That means whether an individual is employed in a private sector organization or in public sector will not have any impact on his/her use of impression management strategies. The reason being that impression management practices vary depending on the individual's personality and vary across individuals not sectors. So, whether an individual is employed in public sector or private sector organization, this sectoral difference will not have any significance on their usage of impression management tactics.

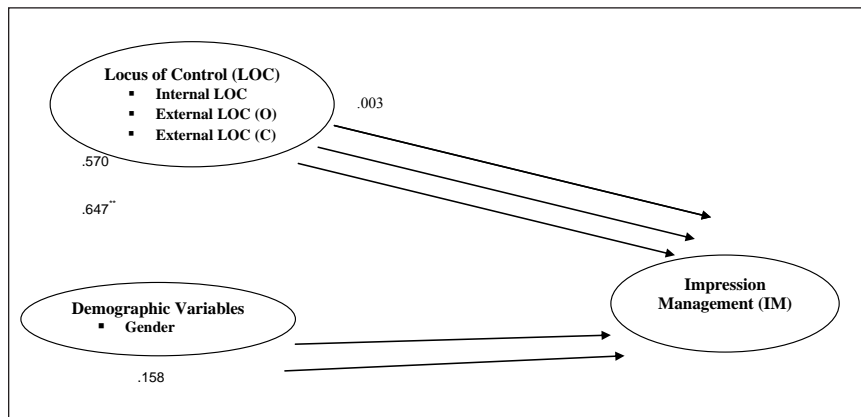


Fig. 2: Hypothesized Research Model based on the Results from the Present Study

Managers need to be vigilant and shall assess the extent to which their recruitment, selection and compensation practices reward impression management tactics over skills of greater importance. Organizations should be keen on developing transformational managers. As such managers perceive to notice the performance, development needs, strengths and ambition of their subordinates as their managerial role and duty. Individuals would be less likely to feel the need of using impression management tactics to gain visibility, as in transformational managers' teams, they would receive manager's feedback and attention in a constructive environment (Fletcher, 1999). Fletcher (1999) validated in a qualitative study on six women engineers that there is direct evidence

that in organizations with transformational leaders there is less impression management.

CONCLUSION

The research validated that impression management is positively and significantly related to locus of control. Also, the research is pivotal in establishing that all the dimensions of locus of control are positively and significantly related to impression management, except for one i.e. internal locus of control. Thus, individuals having external locus of control will be more inclined in using the impression management tactics than the individuals with internal locus of control. Further, it was found that there is no gender difference on perception on impression management of males and females. In other words both men and women regularly seek to build impressions, but might do it in diverse ways. Research also demonstrates that there is no significant difference between unmarried and married professionals inclination towards impression management. Also, with regards to the sectoral difference there is no difference between private and public sector professional's inclination towards impression management.

Positive performance images are vital for most individuals to maintain in organizations (Higgins & Snyder, 1989; Rosenfeld, Giacalone & Riordan, 1995). However, how an individual should attain the same is not clear at times. Organizations can use management by objectives to evaluate employee's performance, helping managers to alleviate the effects of impression management behaviors. Management by objectives is a goal-setting tool where goals are set by employees in collaboration with the management. MBO is a bottom-up approach, the organization gains from the participation of employees in the establishment and achievement of employee goals. It is an effective method to not only motivate employee to achieve their individual goals but also helps in attaining organizational goals. This method can help managers in attenuating the effects of impression management behavior and managing employee's performance. Organizations shall note that, individuals should make use of impression management tactics in their workplace in order to be professed as more proficient, to be fond of and to get ahead.

IMPLICATIONS FOR THE MANAGEMENT

Impression management is an attempt by individuals to influence or manage the impression that others form about them. Individuals in

organizations use several impression management tactics to influence how others perceive them. In particular, this is true for organizations where individuals compete for positions, favourable performance reviews and salary rises. Such individuals are likely to use these tactics when interacting with others, who they believe have power over them or on whom they rely for lucrative job assignments, promotions and raises. Managers and immediate superiors need to take a note of precaution when reviewing the performance of their subordinates; they must take into account the long term behaviors of employees rather the short term impression management tactics used by an employee.

Research on locus of control and impression management relationship has strong implications for organizations. Previous research comparing externals and internals has persistently shown that individuals high in externality are less satisfied with their jobs, have higher absenteeism rates, are more estranged from the work and are less engaged in their jobs than internals (Aquinas, 2013). Individuals high on externality more discontent, possibly because they perceive themselves as having little control over organizational outcomes that they consider are important to them. Locus of control is related to moral behaviour, with internals doing what they think is correct and being willing to bear the consequences for doing so (Detert, et. al, 2008). And thus they engage more in impression management tactics. Internals usually do not need much supervision as their external counterparts need; as they are more likely to believe that their own work behaviour influences the outcomes such as performance, promotions and pay. And that is why they are reluctant using impression management tactics. Therefore, being aware about locus of control can provide valuable insights to managers.

The current research establishes that there exists no gender difference on perception of impression management tactics; this implies that females are as much willing to use impression management tactics as their male counterparts. This is another pivotal point of the present research, but managers need to work with caution here as they should not assume any individual employee as non-ambitious and incompetents they do not indulge in self-promotion. As the present research provides the answer of indulgence in impression management tactics depends upon your personality. So, individuals with internal locus of control will refrain from using impression management tactics, whereas, individuals with external locus of control will use impression management tactics extensively. Organizations shall ensure that their performance review and promotion systems are open to all individuals who are outstanding at their present

jobs and have prospects for development; and not being open to those who use manager-focused and self-focused impression management tactics to augment the presentation of them.

LIMITATIONS AND DIRECTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Even though the research possesses quite a few methodological strengths, but it's not without some limitations. The research has used the impression management scale which analyzes the overall impression management of an individual. Whereas previous research has proven that individuals do modify their impression management strategies based on the specific behaviors of individuals. Also, the impression management model of Jones and Pittman (1982) advocates a number of impression management tactics, however, everyone don't practice impression management alike. Some individuals are not precise self-monitors (self-monitors seek to know how individuals and groups will perceive their actions) of the impressions they form. Therefore, they do not pay much attention to what they say, how they interact with others and how they dress. The future research efforts should acquire a more representative sample from more public and private sector organizations. Also, the geographic area was limited to Delhi NCR. Therefore, future research shall cover a larger geographical area so as to ensure an extensive gamut of respondents is integrated in the research and results being more representative. The current study investigates only middle level managers. The future research can take into consideration the frontline managers too. Contribution of our study lies in the empirical investigation of a conceptual framework of locus of control and impression management. By examining locus of control and impression management relationship within public and private organizations, we have provided a stronger basis for further development and empirical investigation in the area of impression management and other personality variables.

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APPENDIX:

Table 1. Mean, Standard Deviations, Reliabilities and Correlations for N=125

S.No.	Variables	Mean	S.D.	Correlations				
				1	2	3	4	5
	Impression Management	61.89	18.14	.94	.003	.570**	.647**	.644**
	Internal LOC	29.57	4.41	.003	.63	-.070	-.132	.210*
	External LOC (Others)	25.52	6.42	.570**	-.070	.79	.755**	.844**
	External LOC (Chance)	20.69	8.06	.647**	-.132	.755**	.85	.893**
	Total Locus of Control	75.80	13.80	.644**	.210*	.844**	.893**	.85

Source: Developed by the author on the basis of data collected for the present study

N=125, ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed). Reliabilities of the measures are stated on the diagonal.

Table 2: Results of Regression Model

Variables	IM=A+β1X1+ β2X2+ β3X3
Impression Management	-
Internal LOC	.003
External LOC (Others)	.570**
External LOC (Chance)	.647**
R ²	.441
Adj R ²	.427
Change in R ²	.441
Sig. F Change	.000

N=125, **p < .01

Table 3. Independent Sample t-test on Impression Management, Gender, Marital Status and Sector for Total Sample, N=125

S.No.	Variables		N	Mean	SD	t Value	df	Sig. (2-tailed)
1.	Impres- sion Man- agement	Gender						
		Male	71	63.23	17.61	.944	123	.347
		Female	54	60.13	18.84	.936	110.05	.352
		Marital Status	79	60.44	17.28	-.678	120	.499
		Married	43	62.74	18.98	-.660	79.70	.511
		Unmar- ried						
		Sector						
Private Sector	66	59.47	16.75	-1.585	123	.115		
Public Sector	59	64.59	19.376	-1.572	115.43	.119		

Source: Developed by the author on the basis of data collected for the present study at .05 significance level