Social Perception and Impression Management in Relation to Attribution Theory and Individual Decision Making from Development Perspectives

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Abstract: *This paper try to conceptualize how social perception, impression management and attribution theory effects the decision making process in an organization. These factors are the most important dimensions of decision making process. Social perception includes mainly touch, sight, taste, smell and hearing which are very important for every decision making process. Impression management is a tactic of influences which have an impact on organization's culture and performance. Manager attributed employee's behavior according to their external as well as internal factors like, situations, task, motivation, etc. However, these dimensions are not always an accurate reflection of the reality. It can be said that impression management is an important and effective instrument for decision maker to increase the productivity of the organizations. Decision making style can be influenced by several factors such as economical competences, location of residence, gender and age differences. Decision making is the key of organizational development which effects in different developmental policies such as; policy on poverty, child development, household finance, productivity, health care, climate change, organizational development, political development and so on.*

Key words: Perception, impression management, attribution theory, decision making

1. Introduction

The simple connotation of social perception is the aptitude to hear, see and become conscious through the sense. It is an important precondition for successful social relations, because it helps to increase information about behaviors, thoughts and feelings of interaction partners [20]. Although, it is the component of social psychology which studies show impresses and inferences about other people, study of social perception is an important agenda in every sector and many academics have been trying to explore and better understand in business sector that how consumer brand perception is formed and how brands could generate engagement with their consumers [3].

Some persons' effort to influence other people's perception this is an impression management. "An impression is a type of mental phenomena related to emotions" [21]. Key principle is trying to make the perception consistent with his/her goals. An individual constructs an image of themselves to claim personal identity and present themselves in a manner that is consistence with that image. "Impression management refers to the process by which individuals try to influence the impressions others have of them" [13].

Attribution theory believes that people attempt to understand the behavior of others by attributing feelings, beliefs and intention to them. "Attribution theories posit that in order to understand the cause of own or others' behaviors, one can apply either an internal or an external explanation for the behavior" [22]. It explains the ways of judging other people differently, depending on the meaning we attribute to a given behavior [29]. "For example, a runner had already been expending high effort, but had failed to reach a race final, then encouraging him to attribute the failure to lack of effort might simply demoralize him" [1].

Decision making is a most important part of the organizational behavior and important life skills at all stage of development projects. Not only managers make decisions in any organization but also all employees decide in a routine way. To make the decision, there are choices from among two or more alternatives. Although several types decision making styles have been in practices, according to World Development Report [31] three principles of human decision making; thinking automatically, thinking socially and thinking with mental models are defined. Understanding how they do so is an important part of good management. People make decision based on their perceptions of other people with whom they interact and the context in which their interactions occurs. To understand individual decision making, it is important to review the dynamics of individual perceptions. So, the way make decisions and the quality of their choices are largely influenced by their perceptions [29]. They reported that skills in decision making require abstract thinking which involves multiple alternatives. In simplest term individual perception has three components; the perceiver, the target of perception and situation.

Therefore, a review was done with the aim of understanding the social perception and impression management in relation to the attribution theory and individual decision making for the development.

2. Methodology

A large numbers of publications such as journals, proceedings, periodicals, books, reports, etc. were reviewed and data was collected. The data was processed and managed for constructing the manuscript.

3. Social Perception and Impression Management in Development

3.1 The Social Perception and an Organization

"Perception is a process by which individuals organize and interpret their sensory impressions in order to give meaning to their environment" [29]. So, perception plays an important role in decision making process. Many conflicts arising in a business sector are mostly due to the effects of perception in decision making. Managers approach situations perceiving only half of the facts. Hence, the quality of the final decision influence of their perception and perceptual process affect the final outcome [29]. The below Figure (1) shows the perception process in which follows four stages such as stimulation, registration, organization and interpretation. Perception includes the five senses; touch, sight, taste, smell and hearing. Several factors such as attitudes, motives, interests, experiences, expectations, time, work-setting, social-setting, novelty, motion, sound, size, background, proximity, similarity, etc. affect perception of individuals [17]. For example, loud people are more noticed in a group than quite ones [29] which allows taking sensory information in and makes it into something meaningful. A person's awareness and acceptance of the stimuli play an important

role in the perception process, so that it helps to understand other people's behavior. In other words, a person is confronted with a situation or stimuli, however, what an individual interprets or perceives may be substantially different from reality [26].

Hence, the perception is the organization, identification and interpretation of sensory information to represent and understand the environment. Perception would differ individual to individual. It is a process of selecting, organizing and interpreting the input from their senses. There is a very important need for an organization to understand how perception works, how a single perception affects the whole organizational behavior. There has to be an understanding of positive and negative effects of using perception. Moreover, it should be clear that the perception is affected by the time, environment, personality, intentions and history of the perceiver. So, decisions made for the same problem may vary from time, place, target or the perceiver, which helps us to conclude the decision made on such circumstances are irrational. Thus, it is understandable that an employee or even a manager can be away from rational decision-making, the decision could be significant for organization and person's life also.
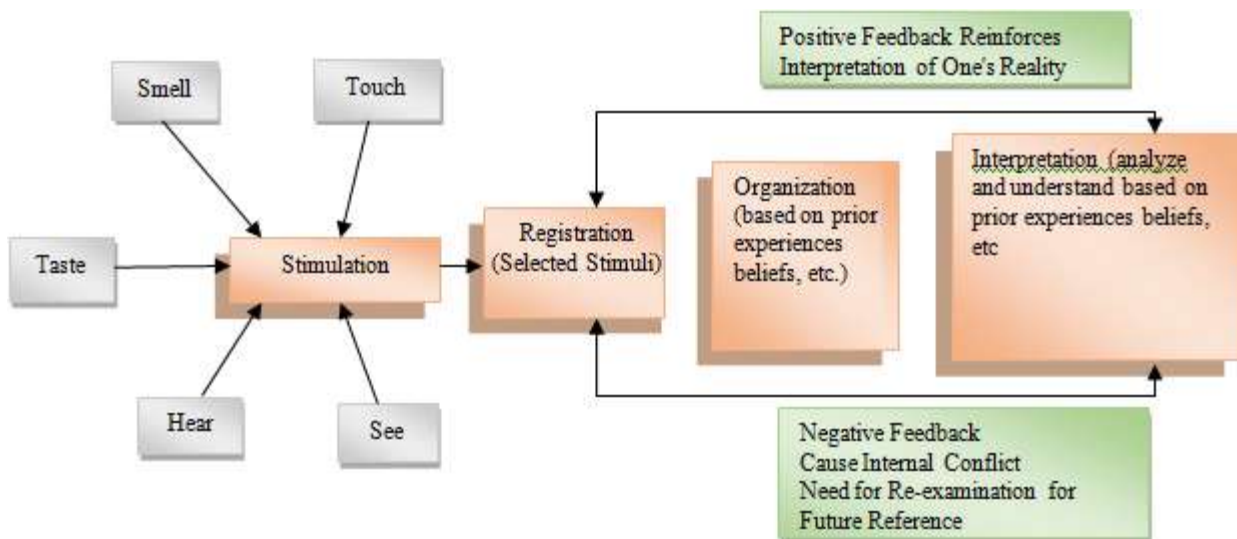

Figure 1: The perception processing system (Adapted from Pickens, 2005, p.57).

Barajas-Portas, [3] published an article on the impact of consumer interactions in social networking sites on brand perception. In recent years, social media has increased popularity; *Facebook* and *Twitter* are the king of this types of platform. Brand perception measurement has become one of the most important topic for marketers and social media. Agreed with this facts, the study structured the main objective to explore the impact of the brand perception using the social networking sites. The study presented five dimensions of brand perception; affective perception, functional perceptions, reputation perception, brand experience and interaction through social media. The study state that consumer social interactions are alternative marketing strategies in order to be close with the consumers. The digital communication give new marketing strategies and the impact of consumer interactions on social networking sites is better than traditional communication

images. The study provided empirical evidence of the effects of social media marketing on brand perception.

3.2 Impression Management Process in an Organization

The most common types of impression management have to do with self-presentation. It is a process through which individuals attempt to impress other people from of them [11]. Impression management is a tactic of influences, which are relevant to its ethical evaluation and moral appraisal [27].

Within seconds of seeing a person for the first time one decides their manners, social status, approachability, education, religion, sexuality, friendliness [7]. "So a person never gets a second chance to make a first impression" [26]. It is a board phenomenon in which a person tries to influence

the perceptions and behaviors of others by controlling and information they receive [33]. Impression management is known as self-presentation in the process by which people try to deliver a certain impression to others. It has five different tactics which are intimidation, exemplification, ingratiation, self-promotion and supplication [13]. So, it is the processes of awareness in which people influences the perceptions of other people about a person or event. The term impression management usually used in management sector, there are many causes why a conceptual review of impression management is needed in the area of management [10]. Impression management behavior is related to individual success in the organization. Different tactics of self-presentations are related to job interview success, "there is a positive impression to interviews" [4]. This behavior could be an important and effective mechanism for managers in supporting for their actions and it can be controlled, it manipulated to influences organizational and personal success. Every individual uses different techniques for boosting their image. Specially, newcomers continuously use impression management tactics to be accepted by the organization, whereas those who are matured use influential tactics. Impression management strategies have an impact on organization's culture and performance.

4. Attribution Theory and Institution Management

Attribution theory was first introduced by Heidler, [15] to help explain the behaviors of others by describing ways in which people make casual explanation for their action. The author believed that people have two behavioral motives, one is need to understand the world around them and other is need to control them. Pickens [26] reported Kelley's Attribution Theory- in which three models; consensus, consistency and distinctiveness were proposed- is shown in the Figure (2). Consensus relates to whether an employee's performance is the same as or different from other employees. Consistency refers to whether the employee's behavior is the same in most situations whereas distinctiveness asks the question: does the employee act differently in other situation? Attribution theory is a fundamental of social-psychological research [18]. Attribution theory is one of cognitive theories of motivation, typically grouped along with goal orientation, expectancy X value theory and self-efficacy theory [2].

Managers attribute an employee's behavior to external causes such as task difficulty, if there is high consensus, low consistency and high distinctiveness. "Attribution can be classified according to lacus of casualty, which describes internality and externality of an attribution" [14]. A physician misdiagnosis a patient and attributes medical error to his own carelessness, at this situation he/she is making internality attribution. Whereas the same outcome is attributed from the contradicted laboratory results, the physician is making an externality attribution. More importantly, all perceptions and attributions are not always an accurate reflection the reality. Attribution theory is concerned with how individuals interpret events and how this relates to their thinking and behavior. Attribution theory assumes that people try to determine why people do what they do.
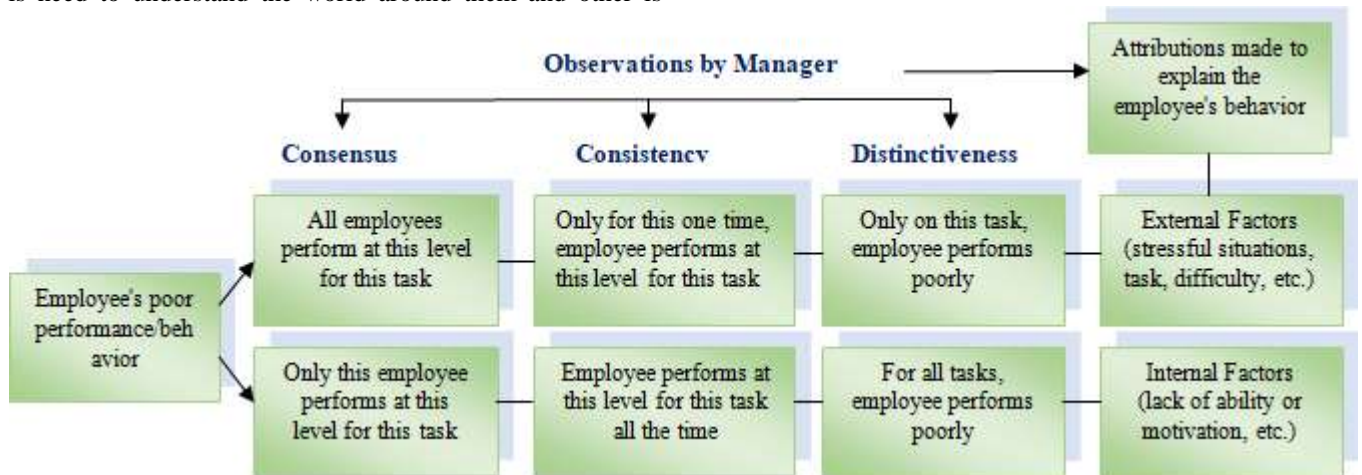

Figure 2: Kelley's Attribution Theory Model (Adapted from Pickens, 2005: p.59).

5. Decision Making Styles

The effective decision-making styles are based on the normative model which recommends (a) identifying the possible options (b) identifying the possible consequences that follow from each option (c) evaluating the desirability of each consequences (d) assessing the likelihood of each consequences and (d) making a choice using a decision rule [12].

Table 1: Decision making styles and their characters

Decision making styles	Description of characters
RatDM	Total search for and evaluation of alternatives
IntDM	Reliance on feelings and hunches
DepDM	Search for direction and advice from others
AvoDM	Attempts to avoid decision making

RatDM = Rational Decision-Making
IntDM = Intuitive Decision-Making
DepDM = Dependent Decision-Making
AvoDM = Avoidant Decision-Making
Adapted from Hablemitoglu & Yildirim, (2008).

Davis & Rigaux, [6] published a report from a study on perception of marital roles in decision processes. They explained that family roles in many decisions like purchase furniture, automobiles, cleaning products, garden tools, etc. can be differentiated according to their perceptions. The report further explained that many economists have measured the characters of consumer purchasing plans but they have not much studied the role played by each spouse in searching or evaluation alternatives. Information about the roles played by husband and wives for decision-making process is relevant in assessing the perception of material roles. The analysis considers changes in marital roles throughout decision-making and extent of role consensus within families.

Another study on marital roles in consumer decision in the Catholic University of Lauvain, Belgium in 1971 performed with distributing a questionnaire to each spouse in 73 households had revealed that all decisions influences by husband and wife in family matters (Figure 3). The Figure (3) shows the decision role in percent and relative influences of husband and wife respectively. The plot of decision process examined for 25 economic decisions in a convenience sample of Belgian households in which both spouses were questioned were divided into four patterns in the figure-3. The decisions area 1.5 or less is defined as 'husband dominant' while area 2.5 or greater is defined as 'wife dominant'. The area fall between 1.5 and 2.5 is either a 'syncretic' or 'autonomic'. If more than 50 percent families made a decision jointly, it was classified syncretic and if the percentage is less than 50 percent it was classified autonomic. The study suggested that marital roles are differentiated according to various phases in the decision making process as well as consumption categories.
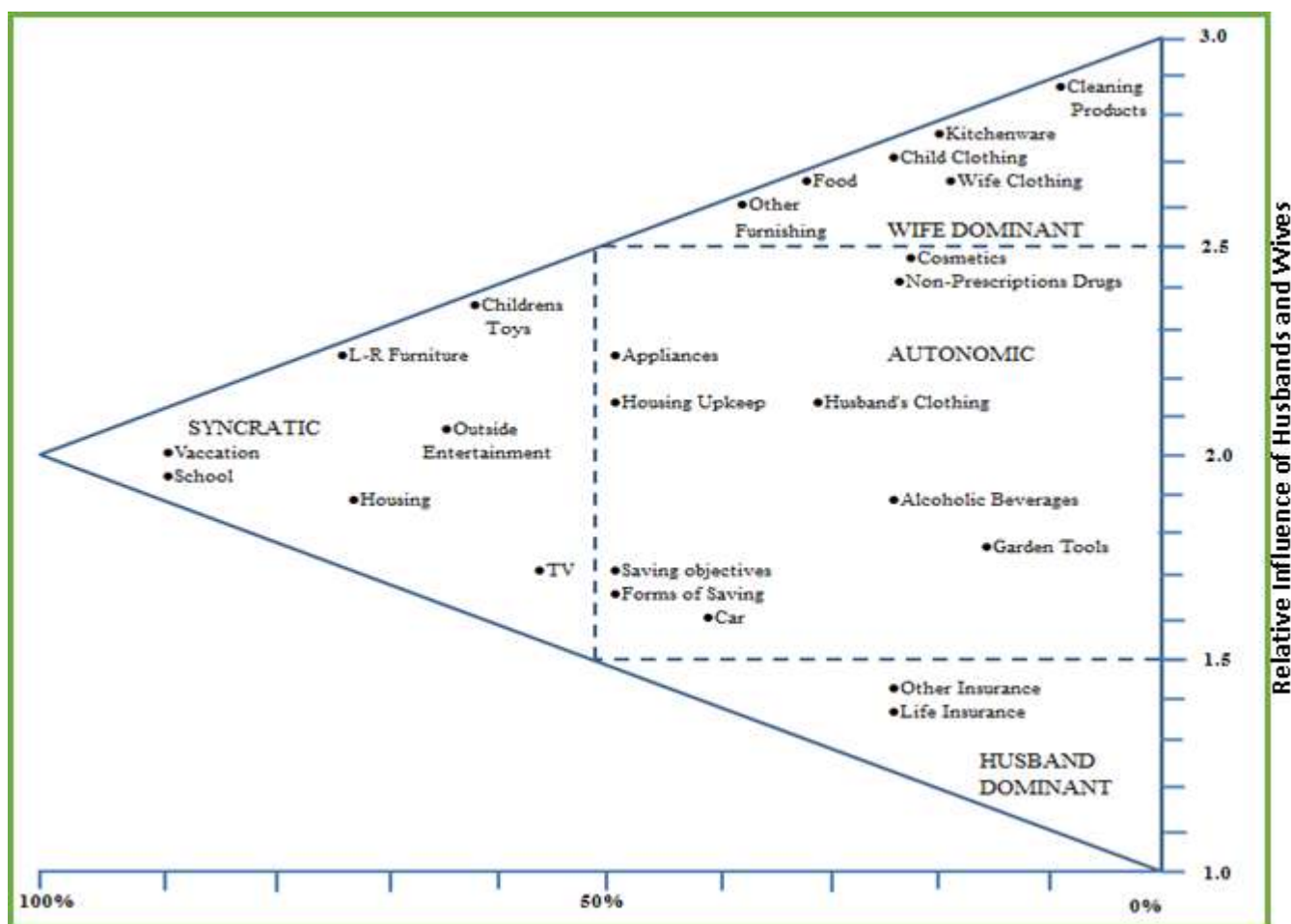

Figure 3: Perception of marital roles in decision making process. (Adapted from Davis & Rigaux, 1974. p. 54).

6. Social Perception and Impression in Decision Making Process in Relation to Attribution Theory

The social perception and impression management do have direct relation with the well-being and social welfare. It becomes decisive in the decision making process which is predominantly guided by attribution theory.

6.1 Relationship among Attitude, Perception, Impression Management and Well-being

Pickens, [26] published an article on attitudes and perceptions. The article explained how understanding the psychology of attitudes and perceptions can help better management of employees of the health service organizations. The study concluded that, when psychological principles applied to organizational behavior issues, it assists health care managers to deal with staff properly, make job interesting, satisfying and motivate employees to higher level of productivity.

In a Malaysian context, Rahaman, Mustaffa & Ariffin, [28] reported that the influence of social support and impression

management on the well-being of flood victims. Natural disaster such as earthquake, flood, droughts and wind storms etc. damage well-being. Well-being is something that makes a person feel fun, happy and feel that their life is meaningful [9]. Many writers argued that well-being is in fact an attempt to solve the problems and improve the quality of human life to be living safely, healthy and comfortable physically, socially and psychologically [23]. This paper explored perceptions of flood victims towards social support provided by the government and analyzed flood victims well-being and impression management. It contributed studying disaster by providing a conceptual framework to be used in further investigation of well-being because of disaster (Figure 4).
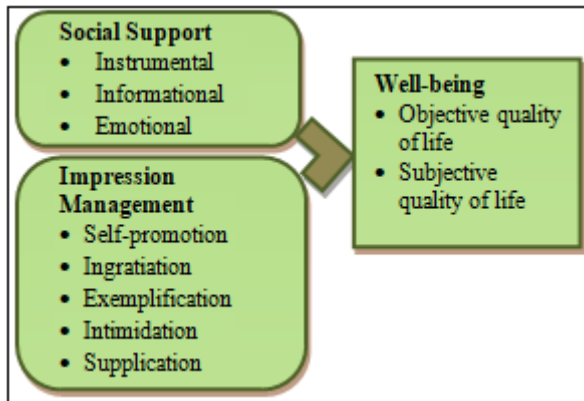

Figure 4: Conceptual framework for social support, impression management and well-being (Adapted from Rahaman, et al. 2014. p. 46).

This framework explored perceptions of the flood victims towards social support provided by the government and analyzed the flood victim's well-being, social support and impression management of the flood situation in Malaysia.

Later, Brennan & Merkl-Davies, [5] had added new insights from psychology, sociology and critical perspectives on a conceptual framework of impression management. The paper conceptualized impression management in alternative ways as self-serving and symbolic management.

Harvey & Martinko, [14] illustrated the importance of attribution perception in predicting employee motivation. The major finding of this paper was that internal and stable attributions for successes in the workplace as well as external and unstable attributions for negative workplace events, are associated with higher levels of empowerment. The accurate attribution helps steer employees down the path towards empowerment, and managers can assists in the process by providing honest and accurate assessments of the causes of employee's performance.

Table 2: Summary of attribution styles

Attributional style	Impact on attributions	Examples
Optimistic	Based toward internal (often) stable attributions for positive outcomes, external (often unstable) for negative	Attribute successful diagnoses to personal ability and misdiagnoses to inadequate information from patients.
Pessimistic	Based toward internal (often stable) attributions for negative outcomes, external (often unstable) for positive	Attribute successful outcomes to good luck; poor outcomes are due to lack of personal ability.
Hostile	Biased toward external stable attributions for negative outcomes	Attribute most workplace problems to a biased and vengeful manager.

Adapted from Harvey & Martinko (2009. p. 150).

6.2 Association between Attribution Theory and Decision Making

Pearce & DeNisi, [25] suggested their views on their article on attribution theory and strategic decision-making: Coalition formation is pervasive aspects of social life. The term coalition is normally used in political or national issues but nowadays it has been used in organizations, banks, schools and institutions etc. with some common purposes. This study analyzed the understanding of why executives and board members feel they were and were not successful in attaining membership in the dominant coalitions in their organizations. The method of the study was, which were delivered by the researchers to the officers and board members. Participants rated the importance of four potential causes of membership in the bank's dominant coalition i.e. ability, types of decision, desire and luck. Attributions for membership in the dominant coalition by members and non-members provided general support for the hypothesis the members would make stronger attributions to external factors. Members were more likely than non-members to attribute membership to ability and desire to be a member and non-members were more likely to attribute membership to luck, both as predicted. Members also more likely, however, to attribute membership to the type of decision being made, which is an external factor. This, therefore, was contrary to the prediction. Additionally, non-members were more likely to attribute membership to a desire to be a member. A finding was counter to hypotheses. This study represented an application of attribution theory to the study of formation of collations within organization through strategic decision making. Major finding of this study was that the non-coalition members made stronger attributions (for membership) to the type of decision being made then had been expected. The pattern of results for remaining three attributions, however, was consistence with predictions. This may indicate an awareness, by all respondents sub groups, that their form's coalitions were formed specially to get a job done and that this membership was a function of the decisions being made. Although, such an awareness would be comforting to strategic decision makers, it also should be noted that non coalition members felt about equally strongly that membership was due to non-performance factors or luck, which executives might find particularly discomforting.

The results of this study provided some insight into participant's perception of coalition formation. These insights permit certain predictions about the dynamics of coalition formations. Participants would seem to attribute membership to the factors of ability, desire and the nature of decision made.

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6.3 Relationship between Perception of Risks and Decision Making Styles

Hablemitoglu & Yildirim, [12] studied the relationship between perception of risk and decision-making styles of Turkish university students through a descriptive study of individual difference. They distributed questionnaire and took an interview with the age of 17-20 years plus students of different faculty of Ankara University. The findings were reported by grouping them to determining the effects of housing, perceived economical competency and location on decision making style and risk perceptions (Table 3).

Table 3: F values that explain the relation of decision-making styles and perception of risk scores

	Housing	Perceived economical competency	Location of residence
	F	F	F
RPS	2.748		3.102
RatDM	3.233		3.882
IntDM		3.055	
DepDM			3.916
AvoDM	4.355		3.200

Adapted from Hablemitoglu, & Yildirim, (2008. p. 218).

The table depicts the relation of decision-making styles and perception of risk scores with housing, perceived economical competency and location of residence. Further, rational decision making styles of students was affected by housing and location of residence; intuitional decision-making style was influenced by economical competency; dependent decision-making style was influenced by location of residence and avoidant decision-making style was influenced by location of residence. In addition, perceptions of risk of students' were influenced by housing and location of residence independent variable. At this point, it can be suggested that location of residence was the independent variable which has the most predicative effect on both perception of risk and decision-making styles of the students. "Pearson Correlation (r) showed that gender had a significant effect on the relation between perception of risk and decision-making styles of the students.

The study concluded that there was a significant difference between decision-making styles; risk perception of young person. For housing situation; the students who stay at dormitories took more rational decisions than who stayed with their families and friends. In terms of place, it was dependent upon the place of education where they received.

Students who came from town took more avoidant decisions than students came from big cities. The foreign students perceived risk more than others and they rational, intuitive and dependent decision maker. According to gender, for female students, rational decision making affected avoidant decision making and for male students, rational deciding making was affected by intuitive decision making. The study obtained that traditional male and female roles were again confirmed.

A research report by Gwal, [11] on tactics of impression management, relative success on workplace relationship stated that the most common tactic used in impression management is ingratiation, employees attempt to make themselves likeable or more attractive to their colleagues by appreciating their achievement. But if this is done in excess, it may result disliking. Second common tactic used is self-promotion. Employees who claim their competencies will be highlighted only when the observer is competent. Employees using the tactic of supplication are perceived lazy and demanding. This tactic emphasizes employees' dependence and weakness. Intimidation tactic impact negative relationship and disliking. Lastly, employees use supplication tactic which lose their self-esteem and perceived as incompetent by other colleagues. Tactics of impression management sometimes adversely affecting. To make a favorable impression on others many situations is obvious. Hence, it is important to make a good impression on others when we care about their evaluations on us.

6.4 Association between Impression Management Behaviors and Leadership Skills

A study Harris [13] on the impact of political skill on impression management effectiveness examined the effects of an individual's political skill on the relationship between five different impression management tactics as noted above. "Politically skilled individuals carry a sense of personal security and self-confidence that attracts others and gives them a feeling of comfort" [8]. The study further investigated that how effectiveness of political skills as a moderating variable to determine the impression management tactics. To find out this relationships, the authors matched sample of 173 supervisor-subordinate dyads. The Figure (5) shows how politics influenced the relationships between five different impression management behaviors and supervisors evaluations for job performance.
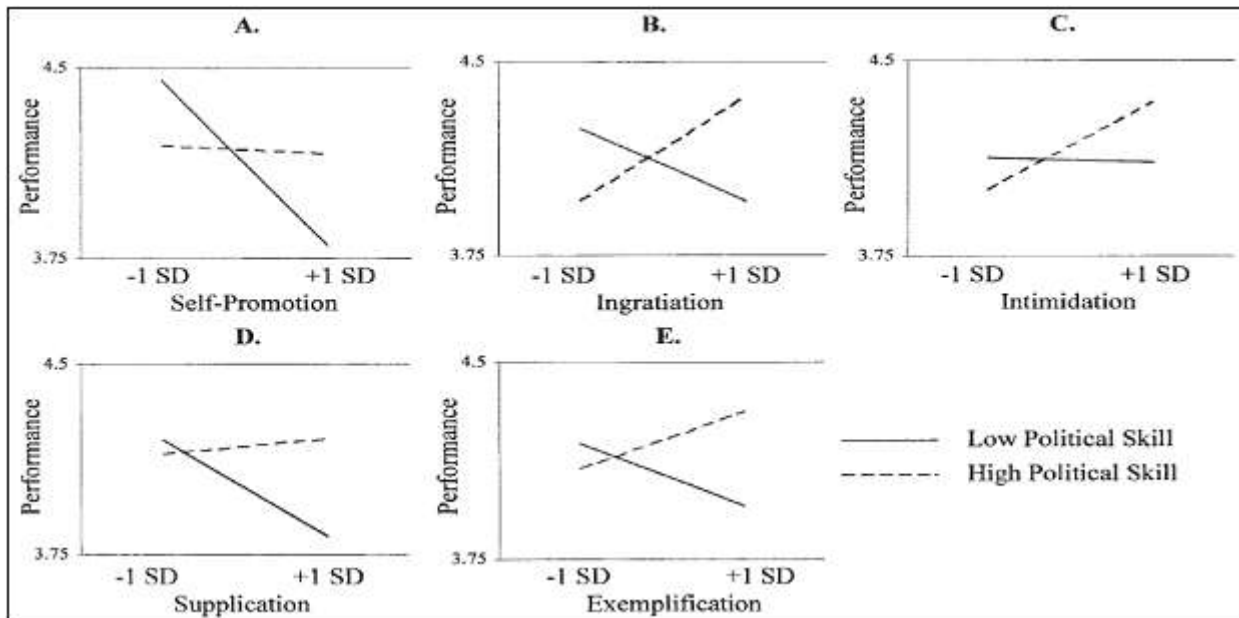
Figure 5: Interactions between impression management tactics and political skill on supervisor evaluation of performance (Adapted from Harris, *et al*., 2007. pp. 282-283).

The study concluded that the relationship between self-promotion and job performance negative when political skill was low. The relationship between integration and performance was positive when political skill was high and negative when political skill was low. Who engaged in higher levels of impression management were seen as better performers when they were high in political skill. In contrast, individuals low in political skill who engaged in impression management more frequently were seen less positively. The findings presented that those who were politically skilled were able to use the impression management tactics. Politically skilled appears able to understand the targets of their behaviors and use that knowledge in combination with specific impression management behaviors to influences them. Impression management is not enough alone. For impression management to be successful it must be matched with a high level of political skill.

6.5 Social Structure, Social Perception and Impression Management on Decision Making

Generally, development organizations have their own principles, their own capital and their own technologies, and their own social structure, all of which are required in order to protect against environment influences [16]. Maria & Maria, [19] published an article on factors affecting decision making by gender and age difference. In this study, the authors investigated, how gender and age differences effect in decision-making process with decision-making questionnaire among 589 participants in which 294 men and 295 women, who were grouped into three stages; youth 18-25; adults 26-65 and retired 66-80. The study showed that women were more concerned with doubts, uncertainty and they were more aware of the emotions in decision making process. Conversely, men gave more importance to analysis the information to carry out the decisions and they were motivated and feel pressure from all the work-related aspects during the process of decision making. The study's further result was that men and women both carefully process information, retrieve the relevant decision-related data,

classify the data if they are very diverse, think rationally about the alternatives, predicts result, evaluate the consequences, solve the problems posed by the situation, and monitor all the decision stages. The study also found that there were significant differences in the three age groups in uncertainty, time/money constraints, information and goals, emotion and social pressure. There were also significance differences between the adults and the retired people, with regard to the youths in the consequences of the decision, motivation, cognition, self-regulation and the decision maker factor. The study concluded that there are always differences and similarities between men and women and sex is an important component of our identity.

O'Fallon & Butterfield, [24] summarized that there were no differences found between male and female, but when differences were found, female were more ethical than male. More education, employment and work experience were positively related to ethical decision making. Nationality also influence the ethical decision making. Although, the study suggested that age appears positive correlated with ethical decision making but research on age has a mixed results, it creates more complex relationship between age and ethical decision making. The study suggested that Machiavellianism was negatively related to the ethical decision making. Religion has a positive relationship with ethical decision making. The majority of students has positive related to ethical decision making. Ethical environment and cultures have a positive influence on ethical decision making. Organizational size has a determinant ethical decision making.

7. Conclusion

Self-perception, impression management and attribution theories play the vital role in decision making process. Every decision has a positive or negative effects in a developmental project. Accordingly, all perceptions, impressions and attributions are not always an accurate reflection of the reality. The framework of social support and impression

management has a pivotal role in enhancing the developmental approaches. Some researchers found that impression management could be an important and effective mechanism for decision maker in supporting for their actions. To increase the productivity of the organizations the social impression can assists the managers to deal with staff properly, make job interesting, motivate employee towards empowerment and can assists in the process by providing honest and accurate assessment. Hence, to make favorable impression on others, care should be taken on evaluations on oneself. The individual who has high leading skills can be able to use the impression management tactics. In the organization and developmental projects internality and stable attributions for successes in the workplace as well as externality and unstable attributions for negative workplace events are higher levels of empowerment. Decision making style can be influenced by several factors such as economical competences, location of residence, gender and age differences. Decision making is the key of organizational development. Every decision can be improved itself in the betterment of development policies in different developmental fields such as; policy on poverty, child development, household finance, productivity, health care, climate change, organizational development, political development and so on. The review summarize that there are several principles by which social perceptions, impression management and attributions always influences decisions making process and every decisions have their positive or negative effect in developmental field.

8. Acknowledgement

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