

Research Paper

Effect of Impression Management Tactics on Eclectic Evaluative Interview Scores in the Selection Process

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ABSTRACT

The selection interview is one of the vital components of the assessment of the Indian Armed Forces to find appropriate candidates. During the eclectic evaluative interview, prospective applicants will resort to either Self-Management (SM) or Impression Management (IM) tactics to alter the interviewer's perception. The study aimed to understand the effect of Impression Management (IM) tactics (self-rated and observed non-verbal strategies) in eclectic evaluative interview scores among candidates who applied for Officer Cadre in the Armed Forces. This exploratory study encompassed a quantitative method of data collection through convenient sampling. A total of 144 candidates, who appeared for Officer Cadre in the Armed forces were selected, out of which 108 were male and 36 were female. The questionnaire method was used to gather data on the impressive management tactics adopted during the eclectic interview. The interviewees were asked to rate themselves using BIDR-6 to assess the impression management tactics used by them which comprise Self Deceptive Positivity (SDE) and Impression Management. The interviewers were asked to rate the interviewees on non-verbal impression management tactics. The data was processed using descriptive statistics - Mean and Standard Deviation (SD) and inferential statistics - Independent Sample 't' test, Pearson's Correlation, and Stepwise Multiple Regression. Results show that the female candidates had higher scores in self-deceptive positivity ($p < 0.05$) and IM tactics ($p < 0.01$). Self-rated IM interview tactics were not statistically related to the non-verbal IM tactics as observed by the interviewer. Among the male candidates, a significant correlation ($r = 0.25$, $p < 0.01$) was found between the Observed non-verbal IM tactics and the eclectic evaluative interview scores. This study implies the tendency to adopt IM tactics by the participants.

Keywords: *Impression Management Tactics, Interview Scores*

The selection interview is an important part of the assessment in the Indian Armed Forces to identify suitable candidates. During the interview, when the candidate meets the interviewer, who “is of higher status, competence, or power”, ‘relative

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submissiveness' is appropriate even if it is not one's typical image (Schlenker, 1980). Given the preceding statement, prospective candidates will use either Self-Management (SM) or Impression Management (IM) techniques during the eclectic evaluative interview to influence the interviewer's perception. Impression management tactics are grouped into verbal (Self-promotion) and nonverbal. IM tactics can be further classified as assertive (self-focused & other focused) or defensive (Stevens & Kristof, 1995). Interviewers' perceptions of self-promotion and perceived applicant transparency are positively related to interview evaluations (Roulin et al., 2014). Kristof-Brown et al. (2002) showed that self-promotion tactics significantly affected interviewers' perceptions of person-job fit, and nonverbal IM tactics correlated positively with interviewer-perceived similarity. The skill with which one exhibit and monitors one's impressions can have important implications in the selection process. Therefore, the study of IM in job interviews is important because it can affect interviewer evaluation significantly. The current study aimed to explore the effect of IM tactics on Eclectic Evaluative Interview scores among candidates who applied for Officer Cadre in the Armed Forces.

METHODOLOGY

Aim

The study aimed to understand the effect of Impression Management (IM) tactics (self-rated and observed non-verbal strategies) in eclectic evaluative interview scores among candidates who applied for Officer Cadre in Armed Forces.

Objectives

- To identify the existence of gender specific adoption of IM in self-rated and observed non-verbal IM.
- To find out the correlation between self-rated IM tactics and observed non-verbal IM in eclectic evaluative interviews.
- To examine the impact of Impression Management (self-rated and observed non-verbal) tactics in eclectic evaluative interviews on Interview scores.

Design and sampling

This exploratory study encompassed quantitative method of data collection through convenient sampling.

Study setting

The study was carried out in the month of Mar-Apr 2021. The interview was conducted on those who have applied for the officer cadre in Indian Armed Force. This study involved the candidates who are from pan India. The eclectic evaluative interview is conducted in the early hours of the day in a face-to-face mode.

Sample

Candidates who got enrolled in the Armed forces were the samples. A total of 144 candidates were selected, out of which 108 were male and 36 were female. Their mean age was found to be 22 years.

Measures

Balanced Inventory of Desirable Responding-6 (BIDR-6) (Paulhus, 1984, 1998): The BIDR measures two constructs; **Self-Deceptive positivity** (tendency to give self-reports that are honest but positively based) and **Impression Management** (deliberate self-presentation

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to an audience). The 40 BIDR items are stated as propositions. Respondents rate their agreement with each statement on a seven-point scale. With respect to scoring the BIDR, Paulhus (1994) authorized two methods, namely continuous scoring (all answers on the continuous scales are counted) and dichotomous scoring (only extreme answers are counted). The BIDR is a robust measure showing satisfactory internal consistency and test–retest reliability (Paulhus, 1994). These subscales have discriminant validity. Construct validity is also established for the scale (Hart et al., 2015).

Observed Non-Verbal Impression Management Tactics: This questionnaire, developed by the researchers, consists of a list of observable non-verbal impression management behaviors summarized under five domains; walk, handshake, sitting position, hands and eyes. First three domains have five alternatives and last two have four alternatives listed. These aspects were compiled domain wise into a comprehensive questionnaire and distributed to Interviewing Officers for independent content validation. The Interviewing Officer has to merely check for the presence/absence of these manifestations. The questionnaire was then scored depending upon the differential weights assigned to each manifestation corresponding to the domains. The score for all the five domains is then summed up to arrive at a composite score. Maximum score reflects the usage of high non-verbal IM tactics. Internal consistency reliability Cronbach Alpha has been worked out and it was found to be 0.76.

Procedure

Questionnaire method was used to gather data on the impressive management tactics adopted during their interview. The interviewees were asked to rate themselves using BIDR-6 to assess the impression management tactics used by them which comprises of Self Deceptive Positivity (SDE) and Impression Management. The interviewers were asked to rate the interviewees for Observed non-verbal impression management tactics. The interview scores were obtained with the consent of the candidates and the interviewers. Informed consent was obtained to utilize the interview scores by maintaining confidentiality.

Statistical Analysis

The data was analyzed by means of descriptives like Mean and Standard deviation (SD) for the sub scales of BIDR-6 and Questionnaire on Observed Non-verbal Impression Management and for gender. Inferential statistics were performed using Independent Sample ‘t’ test, Pearson’s Correlation and Stepwise Multiple Regression.

RESULTS

Table 1. Comparison of self-rated IM and observed non-verbal IM scores between male and female candidates

Variables	Gender	Mean	SD	‘t’ value
Self-rated Impression management				
Self-Deceptive Positivity	Male	102.39	12.33	2.42*
	Female	108.00	10.79	
Impression Management	Male	92.99	14.94	4.07**
	Female	104.00	11.70	
Observed by Interviewer				
Non-Verbal IM	Male	14.70	3.27	2.36*
	Female	13.30	2.41	

Note. ** $p < 0.01$ * $p < 0.05$

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The results of 't' test show that female candidates had higher scores in the self-deceptive positivity ($p < 0.05$) and IM tactics ($p < 0.01$). With observed score on IM tactics, the male candidates scored high on exhibiting non-verbal IM compared to the female candidates ($p < 0.05$).

Table 2. Relationship between observed and self-rated scores of IM

Self-rated IM	Observed Non-Verbal IM
Self-Deceptive Positivity	-0.031
Impression Management	0.087

Self-rated IM interview tactics was not statistically related with the Non-Verbal IM tactics as observed by the interviewer.

Table 3. Relationship of self-rated IM and observed non-verbal IM scores with the eclectic evaluative interview scores for male and female candidates

Impressive management tactics	Interview Scores	
	Male	Female
Self-rated Impression management		
Self-Deceptive Enhancement	0.10	0.08
Impression Management	0.15	0.17
Observed by Interviewer		
Observed non-verbal IM Scores	0.25**	0.18

Note. ** $p < 0.01$

Among the male candidates, significant correlation ($r = 0.25$, $P < 0.01$) was found between the Observed Non-Verbal IM tactics and the eclectic evaluative interview scores. In contrary, no significant relationship was found between impression management tactics and Eclectic Evaluative interview scores for female candidates.

Table 4. Stepwise Multiple Regression of Impression Management on Interview Scores

Regression details	Predictor Variable	Un-standardized Coefficients		Beta	Standardized Beta Coefficients	t value
		Beta	Std. Error			
Multiple R=.215	IM	0.17	0.06		0.215	2.62**
Adjusted R square=.04						
Standard Error=11.61						
F=6.876**						

Note. ** $p < 0.01$

Only one dimension i.e., Impression Management ($p < 0.01$) scale of BIDR-6 emerged as significant predictor of Interview Scores. However, the Self-Deceptive Enhancement (SDE) and Non-verbal IM tactics were not found to be significant predictors of Interview scores. The standardized beta (β) coefficient of 0.215 yielded by Impression management Scale of BIDR-6 indicates that the extent of Interview Marks will increase (as β value is positive) by 0.215 S.D. with the increase in the level of Impression Management by one S.D. if the impact of all the other independent variables are kept constant.

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DISCUSSION

In this study, the impact of impression management tactics on the interview scores has been found. Our results showed that there is an increase in interview scores when there is an increase in the level of impression management tactics. Impression Management is a significant predictor of Interview scores. High self-deceptive mean value demonstrates high self-esteem i.e., candidates have high opinion of themselves. Moreover, men resorted to Observed non-verbal impression management tactics which influenced their interview scores. The impression management component of BIDR-6 significantly affected the eclectic evaluative interview scores. Therefore, it is important the interviewing officer is vigilant on whether interviewees use IM methods and whether they provide a positive social image of themselves. The Interviewing Officer should be able to see through the interviewee's mask.

Our findings are in line with the study on the effects applicant impression management tactics on interviewer judgements by Gilmore and Ferris, 1989. They identified that the interviewers were influenced by the impression management techniques regardless of applicant credentials. Increased eye contact, smiling, gestures, and head nods by an applicant produce favorable outcomes (Edinger & Patterson, 1983). Quality of handshake was associated to interviewer hiring recommendations given that a handshake is typically exchanged during an interview. Women have a stronger relationship between a firm handshake and interview ratings than men (Stewart et al., 2008).

Gender role theory (Eagly, 1987) states that actions demonstrating modesty, friendliness, submissiveness, unselfishness, and concern for others are stereotypically feminine tactics. Self-confidence, assertiveness, self-reliance, directness, and instrumentality, on the other hand, are stereotypically masculine tactics. Gender influences how often people engage in impression management and the types of IM tactics they employ (Bolino et al., 2016).

On contrary to the findings of our study, Interviewers' perception do not converge with self-reported impression management tactics. Evaluations were unrelated to perceptions of deceptive ingratiation, image protection and extensive image creation (Roulin et al., 2014). This work appears to have some potentially significant practical implications for interviewer training. It would be beneficial to train interviewers to distinguish between genuine content and opportunistic behavior on the part of the applicant.

As this study was done using convenience sampling method with a small number of participants, generalizing the results is difficult. The individual differences like personality trait are ruled out while analyzing the data.

CONCLUSION

This study implies the tendency to adopt IM tactics by the participants. Specifically, there was gender-wise usage of self-rating and non-verbal IM tactics by the candidates. In male the non-verbal IM tactics adoption is more prominent in comparison to females.

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Conflict of Interest

The author declared no conflict of interest.

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