

A study on the relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Culture and Impression Management

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ABSTRACT

Impression Management is a process by which people in social situations manage the settings and their dress, words and gestures to correspond to the impressions they are trying to make or the image they are trying to project. A person's ability to manage impressions will be affected by the very setting in which he is doing so. It can be affected by qualities or characteristics of the person such as gender, age, emotional intelligence etc. This research intends to investigate the effects of environmental factors like Organizational Culture and personality factors like Emotional intelligence on Impression Management on organizational settings. The measures of impression management are Self Presentation, Self Monitoring, Desirable Responding and Ingratiation.

Incorporating Impression Management in today's research and practice is beginning to yield a better understanding of how organizational processes are substantially affected by individual issues of how they are seen by others. Especially in service industries, the effect of outcome of interactions of the employees with the clients is an inevitable part of portraying their identity.

Most of the actions in the service industry having a legal importance, it is highly essential that controlled image presentation should not cause any deceptions. Hence, It is essential that the employees should know the tactics of Impression Management and able to flaunt the Impression Management in the best way possible by them.

Emotional Intelligence is the capacity for recognizing our own feelings and those of others, for motivating ourselves, and for managing emotions effectively in ourselves and others. There are two approaches to the measurement of Emotional Intelligence: as a mental ability or as a personality trait.

Owing to the paucity of research in this area and the growing demands of the service industry for strategies to excel over each other, the researcher seeks to understand the dynamics of Impression Management Techniques in improving the effectiveness of organizations and also how Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Culture affects Impression management.

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Introduction

The managers need to skillfully manage the impression they create on others in a wide range of situations ranging from simple ones such as meeting a colleague in the lobby to more complex and delicate ones like dealing with a troubled customer.

This phenomenon of willfully managing impressions is referred to as "Impression Management". IM is the process through which individuals attempt to influence the impressions others form of them. Skill in this process – both to manage one's impressions and identifying the impression management techniques of others has become more significant to employees in current organizational settings.

After the extensive studies in the field of Sociology and Social Psychology, Impression Management is taken up by the researchers in Organizational Behaviour. In the present-day organizations, impressions play a significant role. Recently people have started to focus on the individual's scope for Impression Management along with the Organizational Impression Management.

When Impression Management is looked upon as a behaviour, it is evident that it can be affected by the qualities or characteristics of the person. These personal characteristics could be age, gender, personality types, emotional intelligence etc. Behaviour of a person will also be influenced by the environmental factors and the situation in which

he or she is in. When Impression Management is looked upon as an employee's behaviour in organizational settings it is obvious that Organizational Culture has an influence on it. Some of the comparable aspects of Impression management measures, Emotional Intelligence and Organizational Culture have already been looked up by other researchers. In this paper we attempt to raise more research questions and provide a framework of a model.

Definition and scope of impression management

In the literature, Impression management is defined as: the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others form of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan, 1995).

Often it is the sociologist Erving Goffman who is described as the founder of the concept of impression management. In the book 'The presentation of self in everyday life' (1959) he uses the metaphor of dramatic performance to demonstrate how people manage the impressions they convey to others in everyday life. He links with dramaturgical devices such as gestures, props, dress etc used by people to create a certain impression. He views people can be viewed as actors who give a performance to target audience in a given setting.

Impression Management is seen as very broad and common phenomena, a fundamental part of all interpersonal interactions. (Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan, 1995). It has been argued that impression management is a dynamic process that occurs continuously during interpersonal interactions. As individuals interact with one another, they often search for cues or signals that indicate how others perceive them (Leary and Kowalski, 1990; Rosenfeld et al., 2002).

The main reason for attempting to “manage” the impression we create is that through the construction of “desirable” social identities, our public selves come closer to our ideal selves. We seek to influence how we are perceived, and hence, the way in which others treat us. (Singh, V., et al, 2002) The effect of such behavior may directly impact material outcomes. For instance, giving the impression that one is competent and ambitious can lead to benefits such as improved performance ratings and career- enhancing opportunities (Wayne and Liden, 1995). Impression Management behaviors may be focused on the self, the manager(s), and the job. Self-focused strategies refer to self-presentation, self-promotion and self-identification, while manager-focused IM include upward influencing strategies such as ingratiation and building relationships. IM is used in three inter-related ways: to maximize reward-cost ratio by gaining social and material outcomes; to enhance self-esteem; and to facilitate the development of

desired public identities. (Singh, Val; Vinnicombe, Susan.2001) Tedeschi and Reiss (1981) looked at the deliberateness of controlling impressions. Every behaviour of individuals has the likelihood of having an effect on the impressions others form of them. That is, in a very general manner every behaviour can be looked at as impression management. Hence it can be assumed that the actor must have deliberately planned to create the appropriate impression and is aware of engaging in this process.

The level of impression management in which a person engages, can be perceived as a continuum. On one hand, there are conditions of ultimate public self-awareness in which people focus consciously to all the aspects of themselves that others will observe. On the other hand, there are conditions in which people do not hold themselves as the object of their own thought and thus are not engaging in conscious self-presentations. (Leary et al, 1990).

Measures of Impression Management

There are various measures and techniques of Impression Management available in the literature. Most of them have projected the negative aspect of Impression Management. Rosenfeld et al published a book “Impression Management: Building and Enhancing Reputations at Work” in 2003. It was in this book Impression

Management was projected as a necessary and positive skill related to work behaviour. In this book the authors have identified the following aspects as the measures of Impression Management. The same is adopted for this study also.

Self Presentation

Self presentation is defined as the process of creating a positive outward appearance, self-presentation involves people strategically controlling the inferences others draw about them (Goffman, 1959). These controlling tactics include people selectively presenting self-information and manipulating their behavior to influence others to view them in a favorable light (Godfrey, Jones, & Lord, 1986; Jones & Pittman, 1982).

Self Monitoring

Self Monitoring is an ability to adjust his or her behaviour to external, situational factors. (Robbins, 2005.) Individuals high in self – monitoring show considerable adaptability in adjusting their behaviour to external situational factors. High self monitors are capable of presenting striking contradictions between their public persona and their personal self. Low self monitors display high behavioural consistency between how they are and what they do.

Desirable Responding

Desirable responding is the tendency to deliberately convey a distorted image of self to

others and it also measures the extent to which individuals give highly positive statements about themselves, which they actually believe are attributable to them. It can be seen as healthy adaptive behaviour that people display to protect their self-images and their social positions.

Ingratiation

Ingratiation is an attempt by individuals to increase their attractiveness in the eyes of others so as to influence others' behaviors. It is prevalent in social interactions and as such, is also pervasive in organizations. Ingratiation behaviors can be focused in any direction— toward superiors, coworkers, or subordinates (Liden & Mitchell, 1988) and are designed to persuade the target.

Importance of Impression Management in Service Industry

In the service industry between the product and the beneficiary there is an intermediary. Often the beneficiary relates the quality aspects to the intermediary who delivers the product through his professional practice. This is the service quality. Hence in the service Industry , the effect of outcome of interactions of the employees with the clients is an inevitable part of portraying organization's identity and quality. This makes it essential that service sector employees should know the tactics of Impression Management and be able to flaunt the Impression Management in

the best way possible by them. (Priyadarshini. R & Rani C, 2004). More so, in the globally competent market it has become a matter of survival for service based industries such as banking, insurance, healthcare etc. Especially in an industry like Healthcare, the patients are ignorant about the technical aspects of medical care and most factors such as medical equipments, infrastructure etc., and factors other than human resources are identical in comparable hospitals. Hence they tend to attribute the quality of service to the Impression Management techniques used by the healthcare professionals.

Factors affecting Impression Management

The basic Organizational Behaviour Model is based on the Person- Situation- Behaviour concept. That is, behaviour of a person is influenced by the person's qualities and situation in which he or she is in. This model of Organizational behaviour is true about Impression Management. Qualities of the person like Age, Experiences, Gender and Personality Traits such as Emotional Intelligence, will all influence the behaviour of an individual. It is important to know how a person perceives a situation to predict his behaviour. The various situational factors affecting behaviour can be of environmental factors like organizational culture, the work, work place etc. Hence personal characteristics of a person i.e., Emotional Intelligence and his perception of the situation i.e.,

Organizational Culture will have a positive influence on his behaviour i.e., Impression Management.

Emotional intelligence

Humans have always been trying to reckon how to feel better and get along with each other. The words of wisdom on these topics have been documented over the time. The disciplines of philosophy (such as that supported by Aristotle, Sir Thomas More, and William James), religion, science, fiction, and nonfiction are examples of humanity's continued efforts to improve upon civilization. Thus, the fundamental societal drive regarding the knowledge of the intelligence of our emotions can be traced back a long way.

Emotional intelligence is the ability to monitor one's own and others' feelings and emotions, to discriminate among them, and to use that information to guide one's thinking and actions. (Salovey & Mayer, 1990). Emotional Intelligence is an adaptive skill, whereby a person who has a deep awareness of his or her emotions and the ability to label and draw upon those emotions as a resource to guide behavior. (Gardner, 1983). When looked upon from this point of view, Emotional Intelligence will guide and influence Impression Management behaviors of a person.

Emotional Intelligence as a personality trait

Mayer, Salovey and Caruso were instrumental in initiating current interest in the concept of

measuring Emotional Intelligence, by their work in the beginning of the 1990's (Mayer, DiPaolo, & Salovey, 1990). They devised tasks in which people were instructed to judge, among other things, the emotional content expressed in art or music. Basically there are two approaches to the measurement of EI: as a mental ability or as a personality trait.

Researchers (Petrides & Furnham, 2000, 2003) have differentiated between two Emotional Intelligence constructs, depending on whether the measurement process is based on self-report (as in personality questionnaires) or on maximum-performance (as in IQ tests). When looked upon as an ability, Emotional Intelligence is an emotion related cognitive ability and is measured using performance based tests. The Trait Emotional Intelligence is a self perception and is a disposition related to the emotion and measured by self report means. The operational aspect of trait Emotional Intelligence is straightforward because the construct included self-perceptions and dispositions, which is in accord with the subjective nature of emotions.

Measures of Emotional Intelligence

Different researchers have assured that Emotional Intelligence has various factors to it. According to Mayer and Salovey (1997), Emotional Intelligence is a multi-dimensional construct which can be

divided into (a) the perception, appraisal and expression of emotion, (b) the emotional facilitation of thinking, (c) the understanding, analysing and employing emotional knowledge and (d) the reflective regulation of emotions to aid emotional and intellectual development. Schutte et al developed a framework to explain emotional intelligence based on the model of emotional intelligence developed by Salovey and Mayer, 1990. This included three elements they described as appraisal and expression of emotion in self and others, regulation of emotion in self and others, utilization of emotion and social skills.

Petrides and Furnham (2000) added a fourth factor to this model by separating social skills from utilization of emotion. This paper will focus on the four factor frame work by Schutte et al. Various characteristics of different factors of Emotional Intelligence as identified by Schutte et al are as follows:

Appraisal and Expression of emotions in self and others

- being aware of your emotions and their significance
- being aware of other's emotions and their significance from their tone of voice and facial expressions etc
- having a realistic knowledge of your strengths and weaknesses

Regulation of emotions in self and others

- controlling your emotions
- being able to influence other's emotions

Utilization of emotions

- being empathic, being able to perceive another's thoughts and points of view
- being aware of and sensing a group's dynamics and inter-relationships
- focusing on others' needs, particularly when they are customers.

Social skills

- helping others to develop themselves
- effective leadership
- influencing skills
- excellent interpersonal communication skills
- change management skills
- ability to resolve arguments and discord
- ability to nourish and build good relationships
- team-player skills.

Linking Impression Management with Emotional Intelligence

In 1999, R Abraham developed a framework on emotionally intelligent employees. It raised a question on whether emotionally intelligent people

engage in organizationally functional behavior, from a genuine desire to promote organizational goals or whether they are social chameleons (capable of organizationally dysfunctional behavior). This study directed future researchers to examine the motives underlying impression management by clearly distinguishing between positive organization-promoting and negative self-serving motives. It was indicated that the self monitoring aspect of the Impression Management could be a motive for emotionally intelligent people.

In 2004 Lennart Sjöberg and Elisabeth Engelberg conducted a study among the students of Stockholm school of Business. This study looked at Emotional Intelligence from a performance measure and trait point of view (Sjöberg, Svensson, & Persson, 1979). It was found that Impression Management was strongly related to Emotional Intelligence as a trait measured by the self report measure and rather than performance measure. This study had touched upon the social desirable responding and the faking aspects of the Impression Management.

In 2001 Sjoberg had conducted another study in which Emotional Intelligence in a real high-staked selection situation was studied along with Impression Management. This study also established the relationship between Emotional Intelligence and Desirable Responding aspect Impression Management.

In 2006 Deshpande et al demonstrated that socially desirable responding and Emotional intelligence are linked. They had also studied socially desirable responding. They stated that Socially Desirable Responding yields perceptions that an individual operates within the expected social norms of a population, which is arguably an impression that an emotionally intelligent individual would like to present.

Hence it is clear that there is a paucity of research in understanding effects of Emotional Intelligence on positive aspects of Impression Management. Only few measures of Impression Management are studied with regard to Emotional Intelligence. Self Presentation and Ingratiation are also behaviours that employees engage in a daily basis. This behaviour can be explained on the basis of connection between stimuli and response. When looked from a social learning approach the qualities of the organism (person) will affect behaviour. Hence it can be argued that Emotional Intelligence is also linked to Ingratiation and Self Presentation.

This understanding can clearly contribute the effectiveness of human resource function in the organization in the areas of recruitment, training and development. The understanding whether a high emotionally intelligent employee can manage impressions better, will be a breakthrough for recruitment processes in service industry.

Organizational culture

In 1871, Edward B Taylor, one of the first anthropologists, introduced the term 'culture' into

the English language. It can be seen that culture gives an organization a sense of personality – 'who we are,' 'what we stand for,' 'what we do.' It determines, through the organization's legends, rituals, beliefs, meanings, values, norms, and language, the way in which 'things are done around here.' An organizations' culture summarizes what it has been good at and what has worked in the past. Organizational culture refers to the unwritten, unspoken, but powerful "rules of the game" that determine appropriate ways to "think, act and feel."

Hence it can be understood that the cultural values underlie people's attitudes and behaviour. They form individual perceptions and expectations about work, also the way they interact with their co-workers in the workplace. In addition, cultural values also provide guidelines for decision-making.

Definition of culture

There are several definitions for organizational culture in the literature. Schein in 2002 says that organizational culture is the shared beliefs, ideologies, rituals, myths, and norms that influence organizational actions or behaviour. Jones et al in 2006 looks at culture as a system of shared values that lead to organizational members' attitudes and behaviours. Another definition for culture by Triandis (1972) is as follows "culture is defined as an individual's characteristic way of perceiving the man-made part of one's environment. It involves the perception of rules, norms, roles, and values and it influences interpersonal behaviour." (p.4). Organizational culture is defined as 'a system of

shared values (that define what is important) and norms that define appropriate attitudes and behaviours for organizational members (how to feel and behave)' (O'Reilly and Chatman 1996).

Hence there are various definitions and measures of Organizational Culture are available in the literature. For this paper the framework developed by Udai Pareek (1997) is adapted. Udai Pareek gave four beliefs and four values of culture in his framework.

Measures of Organizational culture

In 1997, Udai Pareek developed the OCTAPACE measures of organizational culture. They are values include openness, confrontation, trust, authenticity, pro-action, autonomy, collaboration, and experimentation. The conceptual definitions and description of the OCTAPACE dimensions are as follows:

Openness: Openness in organizational culture is indicative of absence of defensiveness and inhibitions and spontaneous expressions of feelings. For instance, in some companies the CEO also shares the floor space and does not have a closed cabin. This may easily become a motivational problem where one might have failed in past and continue to believe that he is incapable of doing anything in order to improve his/her performance.

Confrontation: Confrontation can be seen as facing problems and difficulties squarely rather than shying away from them. It also includes a deeper analysis of interpersonal problems and

taking of challenges. Lack of confrontation in an individual leads to shyness and avoidance behaviours.

Trust: The word Trust is not used in the moral sense but it is reflected in maintaining confidentiality of information shared by others and in not misusing it. It also means a sense of assurance that others will help when needed. It will involve meeting the mutual commitments and obligations.

Authenticity: Authenticity is the equivalence between what one feels, says and does. It is echoed by owning up one's mistakes and in an unreserved sharing of feelings. It has been seen that if authenticity is lacking in the organization the employees feel self-confidence and their motivation is affected adversely.

Pro-action: Pro-action/Pro-activity represents taking initiative, pre-planning, taking preventive action, and calculating the pay-offs of an alternative course before taking action. An employee will lack the motivation to start a new action if the culture of the organization does not support proactive actions.

Autonomy: Autonomy is giving and using the freedom to plan and act in one's own realm. It involves respecting an individual and role autonomy. Due to lack of autonomy, an individual may not have self-confidence for carrying out a task or taking initiative for a difficult work, and may restrict himself for acting willingly.

Collaboration: Collaboration is providing help to, and asking help from, others. It involves working together (both individuals and groups) to solve problems and developing team spirit.

Experimentation: It means using and encouraging innovative approaches to solve problems, using feedback for improvement, taking a fresh look at things, and encouraging creativity - most crucial and basic for R&D activities.

Linking Impression Management with Organizational Culture

An individual's cultural identification may influence his choice of impression construction strategy and corresponding self-presentation behaviors. Past research on racial identity shows that individuals for whom race is an unimportant and devalued aspect of the self concept are more likely to try to suppress their race during interracial interactions (Cross, 1991; Ethier and Deaux, 1994).

Goffman (1959) observed the environment as providing a setting that includes "the furniture, decor, physical layout, and other background items that supply the scenery and stage props for" Impression Management (p. 13). Davis (1984) identified elements of organizations that influence the quantity and quality of cues actors receive: (a) the physical structure (e.g., walls, furniture), (b) physical stimuli (e.g., the time on a clock, a ringing telephone), and (c) symbolic artifacts (e.g., framed certificates). The reflection that workers with cubicles located near their boss will probably receive more cues and opportunities for upward

influence like ingratiation than relatively isolated employees, illustrates the influence of the physical setting on IM.

In their book 'Impression management: Building and enhancing reputations at work' Rosenfield et al observed the effect on Organizational climate on IM factors and strongly recommended the need to study organizational culture in understanding Impression Management in organizations.(page 182). In 1963 Barnouw pointed out that a significant constituent of individuals' expectations and perceptions in social behaviour is accounted for by their cultural values. 'As social interactions, all service encounters are performed within the context of the cultural background of the participants: that is, both the client and the service provider representing the organization. Thus culture plays an important part in the service encounter. The health care consumers (compared to users of other services) are relatively less knowledgeable to evaluate the technical aspects of the service and, therefore, utilize other perceptual cues such as provider behavior and tangibles in the setting to evaluate quality (John, J, 1997).

Wexler (1983) stated that organizational culture also provides powerful cues for Impression Management. Organizational strategies, policies, symbols, myths, and stories serve to teach, demonstrate, and support the behavior and attitudes considered appropriate (Trice & Beyer, 1984). For example, the emphasis IBM places on the respect for the individual imply that, opinions and actions which violate this core value will create

unfavorable impressions. In addition, perceptions of organizational norms designate behaviors considered appropriate for the situation (Weary & Arkin, 1981), thus placing constraints on the range of IM behaviors available. Norms relate to a wide variety of behaviors including dress, communications and performance (Feldman, 1984). Violations of norms result in unwanted impressions and organizational sanctions.

Considering all the above studies Gardner and Martinko (1988) suggested a conceptual framework of Impression Management process and proposed that organizational culture proved powerful cues for Impression management.

It was suggested by Priyadarshini.R & Rani C (2004) that personnel from same services in healthcare industry showing the same core strengths and weaknesses in Impression management factors could be related to the peculiarities of the organizational culture existing in the particular environment.

Drory and Zeidman (2007) studied the power distance aspect in Mechanistic and organic systems on Impression management. They suggest that organizational systems and norms affect the nature of impression motivation and construction. Their study strongly demonstrated Gardner and Martinko's proposal that Organizational Culture affects Impression Management. Whether the spokespeople of a company will publicly accept blame or apologize in a particular situation will be subtly persuaded by the organization's culture or

the political realities of its environment. (Ginzel, Kramer, & Sutton. 1992).

Theoretical Research Model

The objective of this study is to bring out the relationship between Emotional Intelligence, Organizational Culture and Impression Management. The literature based discussion has depicted the linkages between Impression management and personality traits like Emotional intelligence and environmental factors like Organizational Culture. The present model is labelled as 'Impression Management - Emotional Intelligence - Organizational Culture' Model (Figure 1). Impression Management is constituted by measures namely self presentation, self monitoring, ingratiation and desirable responding. The components of Emotional intelligence are Self awareness, Self management, Social competence and Social skills. The components of Organizational culture are Openness, Confrontation, Trust, Authenticity, Pro-action, Autonomy, collaboration and Experimentation.

Conclusion

Impression management tactics will play a major role in social interaction between colleagues, especially when they have to depend on each other for accomplishing relevant work outcomes. An understanding of the Organization culture of the setting and Emotional intelligence of the person helps in developing the appropriate Impression management skills of employees.

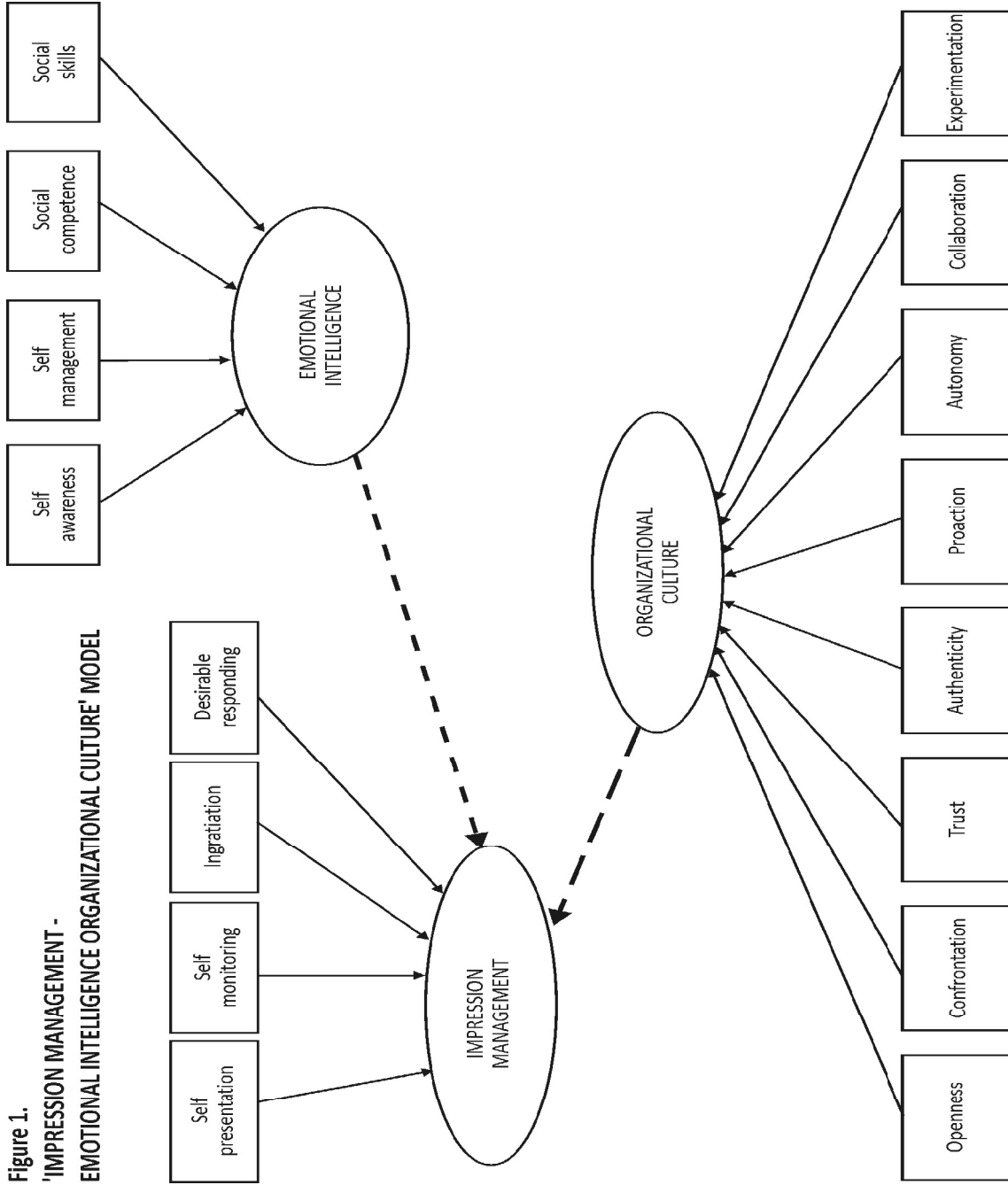


Figure 1.
'IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT -
EMOTIONAL INTELLIGENCE ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE' MODEL

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