

IMPRESSION MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH SOCIAL ROLE THEORY

Waed Ensour^{*}, Nael M. Sarhan^{**}

^{*} Corresponding author, Department of Business Administration, Business School, The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan
Contact details: Department of Business Administration, Business School, The Hashemite University, P. O. Box 150459, 13115 Zarqa, Jordan
^{**} Department of Business Administration, Business School, The Hashemite University, Zarqa, Jordan



Abstract

How to cite this paper: Ensour, W., & Sarhan, N. M. (2024). Impression management strategies in accordance with social role theory. *Corporate Governance and Organizational Behavior Review*, 8(2), 191–200. <https://doi.org/10.22495/cgobrv8i2p19>

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ISSN Online: 2521-1889

ISSN Print: 2521-1870

Received: 11.12.2023

Accepted: 06.05.2024

JEL Classification: J16, M14, M51, Z13, C83

DOI: 10.22495/cgobrv8i2p19

Impression management (IM) is a process where individuals consciously or unconsciously control the information, behaviors, and expressions they present to others. Studies on IM that are based on social role theory have mostly focused on gender roles. However, there is a growing recognition of the need to expand social role research beyond traditional gender roles (Anglin et al., 2022). This study aims to investigate the influence of various societal roles, including gender, age, occupation, and education, on IM strategies among Jordanian public sector employees within organizational contexts. Drawing upon social role theory and existing literature, this research seeks to explore how different social roles intersect and shape IM behaviors. Data were collected from 927 participants via an online questionnaire distributed through convenience sampling. Nonparametric analysis was employed, utilizing the Mann-Whitney U test and Kruskal-Wallis H test to analyze gender-based and other variables with three or more groups, respectively. The findings suggest that while gender, occupation, and educational background can impact IM, their influence is often overshadowed by the broader organizational context. This study contributes to the literature by expanding our understanding of IM beyond traditional gender roles and elucidating the complex interplay between societal roles and IM strategies.

Keywords: Impression Management, Social Role Theory, Gender Role, Public Sector, Mann-Whitney U Test, Kruskal-Wallis H Test

Authors' individual contribution: Conceptualization — W.E.; Methodology — N.M.S.; Software — N.M.S.; Validation — W.E.; Formal Analysis — N.M.S.; Investigation — W.E. and N.M.S.; Resources — W.E. and N.M.S.; Data Curation — N.M.S.; Writing — Original Draft — W.E.; Writing — Review & Editing — W.E.; Supervision — W.E.; Project Administration — W.E.

Declaration of conflicting interests: The Authors declare that there is no conflict of interest.

1. INTRODUCTION

Impression management (IM), the conscious or unconscious process of controlling the information, behaviors, and expressions one presents to others, plays a pivotal role in various aspects of everyday life, shaping a wide range of social interactions and personal contexts (Leary & Kowalski, 1990; Korzynski et al., 2021). Individuals frequently engage in IM to gain social approval, enhance self-esteem, build

relationships, or achieve specific goals (Schlenker, 2003). Sun et al. (2021) state that because individuals' interactions with others are influenced by the impressions formed of them, they tend to manage these impressions in manners deemed satisfactory or beneficial to their goals or relationships. This process may encompass various behaviors, including adjusting one's appearance, demeanor, or communication style to cultivate a favorable impression. The motivations behind IM

can vary, and individuals may employ different strategies depending on the desired outcomes they seek to achieve.

While IM is a universal phenomenon, research suggests that social roles, particularly gender, can influence the strategies and consequences associated with self-presentation. Gender differences in IM have been the subject of extensive research (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007; Wood & Eagly, 2010), shedding light on how individuals of different genders navigate social contexts and strive to create desired impressions. These gender differences in self-presentation strategies arise from a complex interplay of individual characteristics, societal expectations, and cultural norms.

Social role theory provides a valuable framework for understanding how societal roles shape IM behaviors. This theory posits that individuals' behaviors are shaped by the roles and expectations associated with their gender, occupation, and other social categories (Eagly, 1987). With a link to IM, it is assumed that social roles impact IM because they establish normative expectations for behavior (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007). Research has shown that men and women often adopt different self-presentation strategies to conform to societal gender norms (Eagly & Karau, 2002). Men may emphasize their competence and assertiveness, aligning with traditional masculine roles, whereas women may emphasize warmth and likability, conforming to feminine roles. These gender-specific strategies are aimed at aligning with social role expectations and maximizing social acceptance (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Wood & Eagly, 2010). In the organizational context, Guadagno and Cialdini (2007) explained that men and women may both behave differently and be expected to behave differently in the workplace. These gender role expectations carry over to the types of jobs considered appropriate for men and women as well as to the perception of the behavior of men and women in organizational settings. For instance, assertiveness in a man has been seen as a gender "appropriate" behavior, whereas an assertive woman is seen as violating gender-based expectations for behavior and may be thought of in a derogatory manner.

Guadagno and Cialdini (2007) confirmed that men and women do generally differ in terms of the way they self-present in organizational contexts. However, they acknowledge that these gender differences in IM strategies are not absolute and can vary across individuals and contexts. Previous studies have found considerable within-gender variation, suggesting that personal characteristics, cultural influences, and situational factors also play a significant role (Rudman et al., 2012).

Anglin et al. (2022) claim that social role theory has been expanded beyond gender differences. Further, Koenig and Eagly (2014) illustrate that core concepts of social role theory apply to various stereotypes. For example, racial, occupational, age, socioeconomic status, sexuality, and educational differences may all carry stereotypical roles that are a result of historical, social, and economic forces. Like gender roles, these roles carry expectations for appropriate behaviors that influence individual behavior and perceptions of behavior. In this context, it was found that individuals in leadership positions often emphasize their authority, competence, and

ability to inspire and motivate others (Higgins et al., 2003). These tactics align with the expectations associated with leadership roles and aim to establish credibility and effectiveness. Conversely, individuals in supportive roles may emphasize their helpfulness, cooperation, and willingness to contribute to team efforts (Heilman, 1995). These strategies align with the expectations of their occupational roles and facilitate effective teamwork and collaboration.

Guadagno and Cialdini (2007) assume that different situations are often associated with specific and varied norms for behavior. Thus, different norms for behavior will arise according to the type of organization. Zivnuska et al. (2004) added that IM may vary in success depending on the organizations' political climate. Thus factors (such as norms and political climate) peculiar to a specific organization or occupation may impact the likelihood of using a specific type of IM. However, Guadagno and Cialdini (2007) claimed that the issue of the workplace as a social context on IM has not been examined.

Overall, the literature predominantly focuses on gender differences in IM, overlooking the influence of other social roles. Anglin et al. (2022) claim that almost all management disciplines pay less attention to other social roles. This study aims to fill this gap by investigating the impact of various societal roles, including gender, age, occupation, education, and organization type on IM strategies among Jordanian public sector employees. By extending beyond traditional gender roles, this research seeks to explore how different social roles intersect and shape IM behaviors, contributing to a more comprehensive understanding of IM dynamics.

The research question guiding this study is:

RQ: How do various societal roles, including gender, age, occupation, education, and organization type influence IM strategies among Jordanian public sector employees?

Data were collected from 927 Jordanian public workers. Findings indicate that while previous research has predominantly focused on gender differences in IM strategies, this study reveals that organizational context, represented by organization type, exerts the most substantial influence on IM practices, followed by age. These results underscore the dynamic interplay between individual characteristics and situational factors in shaping IM behaviors.

The structure of this paper is as follows. Section 2 reviews the relevant literature. Section 3 outlines the research design, data collection methods, and analysis techniques used. Sections 4 and 5 describe and discuss the results and, finally, Section 6 presents the conclusion.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Impression management

Impression management has received extensive attention in social psychology and has been explored in various disciplines, including sociology, communication, and organizational behavior (Schlenker, 2003). The study of IM has advanced significantly from its beginnings in Goffman's dramaturgy approach in 1959 (Leary, 1996). IM, also referred to as self-presentation or face-work, is a process that individuals engage in to control

the information, behaviors, and expressions they present to others to create a desired impression or image (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). This strategic management of one's appearance, words, gestures, and actions during social interactions plays a fundamental role in shaping how others perceive and evaluate individuals (Goffman, 1959). Understanding the strategies employed in IM provides insights into how individuals navigate social interactions and influence the impressions they make. Moreover, exploring the implications of IM in everyday life sheds light on its significance in interpersonal relationships, career advancement, and overall well-being.

Numerous strategies are employed by individuals in the pursuit of IM, all with the ultimate goal of creating favorable impressions. Jones and Pittman (1982) have offered a popular taxonomy of IM tactics, which includes five dimensions: self-promotion or self-enhancement, the practice of emphasizing one's best characteristics, positive qualities, and achievements (Taylor & Brown, 1988; Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007). Self-promotion occurs when individuals showcase their accomplishments and desirable traits to shape others' perceptions (Toma & Hancock, 2013). It is worth mentioning that the digital landscape offers new avenues for self-presentation, and individuals strategically craft their online presence to align with their desired image (Rosen et al., 2008). Ingratiation encompasses efforts to gain acceptance and likability through flattery opinion conformity and doing a favor for others to increase likability (Drory & Zaidman, 2007; Leary, 2007). The third tactic is exemplification which includes presenting as self-sacrificing, moral, or worthy (e.g., staying late at work, and appearing busy) to be seen as dedicated (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007; Bolino et al., 2016). Kacmar et al. (2007) added that exemplification actors enact behaviors that make them appear like model employees, going above and beyond the requirements of the job. Intimidation represents another dimension of IM which refers to creating the attribution of danger with colleagues (Kacmar et al., 2007) or using threats and warnings to gain compliance (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007). Finally, supplication can be used as an IM strategy, where individuals advertise their limitations in efforts to appear needy (Kacmar et al., 2007), which is also called "playing dumb" (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007). Bolino et al (2016) claim that supplication and intimidation are commonly associated with negative impressions.

However, it is crucial to acknowledge that IM can also involve manipulation, where individuals intentionally deceive others to create a particular impression (DePaulo, 1992). While not all individuals engage in manipulative tactics, research has highlighted instances where individuals strategically engage in deceptive practices to present themselves in a more favorable light. These manipulative behaviors may include embellishing accomplishments or omitting unfavorable information, emphasizing the fluid and sometimes ethically ambiguous nature of IM.

2.2. Social role differences in impression management strategies

Anglin et al. (2022) claim that a role represents a core set of behavioral expectations tied to a social group or category that defines appropriate and

permitted forms of behavior for group members, this includes gender roles (woman or man), career roles (e.g., sales, education, financial services), and status roles (e.g., supervisor or subordinate).

Research examining the impact of social roles on IM strategies reveals interesting findings. Studies have consistently demonstrated that individuals conform to gender norms in their IM behaviors (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007; Wood & Eagly, 2010). It was found that men tend to emphasize their competence and assertiveness to align with traditional masculine roles (Leary & Allen, 2011). Furthermore, research indicates that men tend to engage in more self-promoting behaviors, such as highlighting their achievements and abilities, to create positive impressions (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007; Leary & Allen, 2011). This may be influenced by societal expectations that encourage men to assert their competence and success. On the other hand, women often focus on building rapport, nurturing relationships, and displaying warmth and likability (Wood & Eagly, 2010). Women's IM may reflect societal expectations of nurturing and relational qualities traditionally associated with femininity (Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007).

Guadagno and Cialdini (2007) conducted a literature review and found that men engage in self-promotion, exchange, sandbagging, acclaiming or entitlement association, and intimidation more than women. Women engage more in modesty, opinion conformity, flattery/compliments, and hedges. No gender differences were found regarding using exemplification, other enhancements, and disclaimers. Contradictory results were found regarding using charm, ingratiation, excuses, and justifications. Furthermore, the research on accounts (verbal damage control) reveals conflicting gender differences based on the nature of the account. Women engage in more mitigating accounts, such as concessions, and men engage in more defensive accounts, such as refusal to take responsibility for an event or to acknowledge that the event occurred. Not enough studies were found regarding gender differences in the use of boosting, burnishing, blurring, and belittling.

Overall, it is assumed that women are often expected to display communal and nurturing qualities, such as warmth, empathy, cooperation, friendliness, and using affiliative language, to create positive impressions. On the other hand, men face expectations related to assertiveness, independence, and dominance. (Wood & Eagly, 2010; Eagly & Karau, 2002). Therefore, it is logical to propose that:

H1: Jordanian public sector workers employ different impression management strategies according to their gender.

However, it is important to recognize that these gender differences in IM strategies are not fixed or universal. There is within-gender variation, emphasizing the impact of individual differences, environmental variables, and cultural contexts (Rudman et al., 2012). Some individuals may deviate from traditional gender norms and adopt strategies that align with their values or goals. For example, research has shown that men and women may adapt their IM strategies based on the specific context they find themselves in. In situations where competitiveness is valued, both men and women may increase their self-promotion behaviors to project confidence and

assertiveness (Eagly & Steffen, 1986). Similarly, in communal or cooperative settings, both genders may engage in affiliative strategies to foster harmony and maintain positive relationships (Gabarro & Kotter, 2005).

Accordingly, occupational roles could shape individuals' IM strategies. It was found that individuals in leadership positions often emphasize their authority, competence, and ability to inspire and motivate others (Higgins et al., 2003). These self-presentation strategies are in line with the standards for leadership positions and seek to establish credibility and effectiveness. Conversely, individuals in supportive roles may emphasize their helpfulness, cooperation, and willingness to contribute to team efforts. Heilman (1995) argues that people who play supportive roles might highlight their willingness to work with others, be helpful, and cooperate. Further, individuals who fail to align their self-presentation with the expectations of their occupational roles may be perceived as incompetent or ineffective (Higgins et al., 2003). Bolino et al. (2008) propose that there are a variety of individuals who engage in IM on behalf of the organization, such as chief executive officers (CEOs), public relations personnel, recruiters, written publications, and even the corporate website. Furthermore, each of these actors can be engaging in IM at the same time, but using different tactics. These findings highlight the importance of managing impressions in a way that aligns with social role expectations to avoid potential negative consequences. Thus, it is proposed that:

H2: Jordanian public sector workers employ different impression management strategies according to their occupational role.

Guadagno and Cialdini (2007) claimed that the issue of the workplace as a social context on IM has not been examined. They added that different situations are often associated with specific and varied norms for behavior. Thus, different norms for behavior will arise according to the type of organization. Further, Zivnuska et al. (2004) added that IM may vary in success depending on the political climate of the organization. Thus factors (such as norms and political climate) peculiar to a specific organization may impact the likelihood of using a specific type of IM. Further Drory and Zaidman (2007) assumed that in the work environment context, individuals choose their IM strategies to maximize their personal gain, assuming that a more favorable impression will eventually yield positive outcomes. They further assume that organizational systems differ in the way they utilize their human resources. Hence various approaches in this regard are associated with different sets of values and assumptions about human nature and with different expectations of their employees. The definition of desirable behavior, competence, and excellence constitutes a part of these expectations; these expectations affect and determine what impressions are considered desirable. Drory and Zaidman, (2007) emphasized the importance of an organizational system's characteristics in shaping employees' IM behavior. They suggest that organizational systems and norms affect the nature of impression motivation and construction, as through an assessment and learning process, organization workers adopt

the appropriate IM strategies, which will best serve their interests. Therefore, it is logical to assume that:

H3: Jordanian public sector workers employ different impression management strategies according to their organization type.

Almost all management disciplines, according to Anglin et al. (2022), pay less attention to other significant social roles, such as those related to race, age, and sexual orientation. In a similar context, Bolino et al. (2008) claim that although economic, environmental, or leadership factors may explain most of the variance in IM strategies, individual difference factors may explain the bulk of the variation in the extent of IM. However, although age and educational background have not received adequate attention in the context of IM, based on social role theory we assume that age can affect IM strategies according to the expectations associated with a particular age. Social role theory suggests that societies have predefined roles and expectations for individuals based on their age. These roles come with specific stereotypes and norms about how individuals should behave. These stereotypes influence age-related roles and therefore, IM strategies as individuals seek to align with or challenge these expectations. In this context, Koenig and Eagly (2014) claim that the concepts of social role theory extend to various stereotypes, including age, which reflects stereotypical roles shaped by historical, social, and economic influences. Therefore, it is proposed that:

H4: Jordanian public sector workers employ different impression management strategies according to their age.

As previously mentioned, educational level was not well investigated in terms of IM. Koenig and Eagly (2014) propose that racial, occupational, age, socioeconomic status, and educational differences may all carry stereotypical roles that are a result of historical, social, and economic forces. Therefore, according to social role theory, we assume that educational background can influence IM strategies due to the roles, expectations, and stereotypes associated with different levels of education in society. Educational level, on the other hand, pertains to an individual's level of formal education, which can influence their self-concept, communication style, and perceived competence. Thus, educational background often leads to the assumption of certain roles and expectations. People with higher levels of education may be stereotyped as knowledgeable, intelligent, and competent. Therefore, IM strategies may be influenced by these stereotypes, as individuals may emphasize qualities that align with their educational background to meet or challenge these expectations. Overall, we propose that:

H5: Jordanian public sector workers employ different impression management strategies according to their educational level.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Sample and procedure

Data was collected from Jordanian public sector employees through the administration of a structured online questionnaire employing a convenience

sampling approach. The research utilized 927 valid questionnaires, out of 1,500 distributed, yielding a response rate of 61.8%.

3.2. Instrument development and research tools

The structure for this research questionnaire was comprised of two parts. The first one uses ordinal scales to capture information related to the respondent characteristics. The second part has items that measure IM strategies utilizing Bolino and Turnley's (1999) IM scale, which is based on the work of Jones and Pittman (1982).

3.3. Data analysis

This research employed nonparametric analysis for variables in ordinal or nominal values. To test *H1* regarding gender-based differences among public sector employees' IM, the Mann-Whitney U test of mean differences among groups was used. In Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS), the non-parametric Mann-Whitney U test is used to compare the difference between two independent groups when the dependent variable is ordinal ranked data (Bennet et al., 2023). The *H2*, *H3*, *H4*, and *H5*, exploring differences based on occupational role, organization type, age, and educational level, were tested using the Kruskal-Wallis H test due to the presence of three or more groups in the variables.

4. RESEARCH RESULTS

4.1. Demographic characteristics analysis

Table 1 presents the findings of an analysis of demographic characteristics. Respondents were categorized by gender into two groups: males, comprising 63.2% of the sample, and females, constituting 36.8%. The average age of the respondents fell within the range of 35 years old to less than 45 years old, with 46.4% falling within this category. Furthermore, 45.3% of the respondents held Bachelor's degrees. The majority of respondents occupied the position of "employee", representing 68.4% of the total. Additionally, 33.3% of the respondents were affiliated with the educational sector, while 21.5% were associated with the health sector.

Table 1. Demographic characteristics

Demographic category	Frequency	Percentage
<i>Sex</i>		
Male	566	63.2%
Female	341	36.8%
<i>Age</i>		
From 18 to < 25 years old	58	6.3%
From 25 to < 35 years old	163	17.6%
From 35 to < 45 years old	430	46.4%
From 45 to < 55 years old	233	25.1%
From 55 to < 65 years old	41	4.4%
65 years old and above	2	0.2%
<i>Education level</i>		
High school and lower	109	11.8%
Diploma	154	16.6%
Bachelor	420	45.3%
Higher diploma	43	4.6%
Master	118	12.7%
PhD	83	9%
<i>Occupation role</i>		
Employee	634	68.4%
Supervisor	67	7.2%
Head of department	117	12.6%
Assistant manager	34	3.7%
Vice general manager	57	6.1%
General manager	18	1.9%
<i>Organization type</i>		
Educational sector	309	33.3%
Health sector	199	21.5%
Tourism sector	27	2.9%
Telecommunication sector	3	0.3%
Energy sector	29	3.1%
Financial sector	17	1.8%
Constructions sector	35	3.8%
Municipalities and local council	33	3.6%
Civil status and passports sector	3	0.3%
Military sector	60	6.5%
Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs	20	2.2%
Parliament and Senate Council	76	8.2%
Ministry of Sports and Youth	11	1.2%
Other sectors	105	11.3%

Note: *N* = 927.

4.2. Hypotheses testing results

To test the first research hypothesis (*H1*), we conducted a Mann-Whitney U test. The results showed that male participants (mean rank = 489.88, *n* = 586) had significantly higher *IM* strategies, as indicated in Table 2, compared to female participants (mean rank = 419.52, *n* = 341), *U* = 84746.00, *z* = -3.859 (corrected for ties), *p* = 0.000, two-tailed. This effect size is small (*r* = 0.12), following Clark-Carter's (2009) recommendation to convert *z* into *r* for effect size calculation, as shown in Table 3. Table 3 also presents the Mann-Whitney U test statistics conducted to test *H1*.

Table 2. Mean ranks and reliability statistics of the measurement model

Research variables	Sex	<i>N</i>	Mean rank	Sum of ranks	Cronbach's alpha	No of items
Self-promotion	Male	586	466.01	273083.50	0.887	4
	Female	341	460.54	157044.50		
	Total	927				
Ingratiation	Male	586	487.88	285895.00	0.908	4
	Female	341	422.97	144233.00		
	Total	927				
Exemplification	Male	586	489.51	286852.00	0.883	4
	Female	341	420.16	143276.00		
	Total	927				
Intimidation	Male	586	491.37	287940.00	0.866	5
	Female	341	416.97	142188.00		
	Total	927				
Supplication	Male	586	474.46	278036.00	0.958	5
	Female	341	446.02	152092.00		
	Total	927				
<i>IM</i>	Male	586	489.88	287071.00	0.921	22
	Female	341	419.52	143057.00		
	Total	927				

Note: *N* = 927.

Table 3. Mann-Whitney U test statistics

	<i>Self-promotion</i>	<i>Ingratiation</i>	<i>Exemplification</i>	<i>Intimidation</i>	<i>Supplication</i>	<i>IM</i>
Mann-Whitney U	98733.500	85922.000	84965.000	83877.000	93781.000	84746.000
Wilcoxon W	157044.500	144233.000	143276.000	142188.000	152092.000	143057.000
Z	-0.306	-3.579	-3.824	-4.103	-1.581	-3.859
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)	0.759	0.000	0.000	0.000	0.114	0.000

Note: N = 927. Grouping variable – Sex.

We employed the Kruskal-Wallis analysis of variance (ANOVA) test to examine the remaining hypotheses. The analysis revealed statistically significant differences in *IM* among occupational roles, including “employee” (mean rank = 460.21), “supervisor” (mean rank = 585.52), “head of department” (mean rank = 471.66), “assistant manager” (mean rank = 449.10), “vice general manager” (mean rank = 372.77), and “general manager” (mean rank = 412.36), as presented in Table 4. The test resulted in H (corrected for ties) = 21.427, df = 5, N = 927, p = 0.001, as shown in Table 5, with an effect size (Eta-squared, η^2) of 0.023, considered a small effect according to Cohen (1988).

Table 4. Mean ranks statistics of the measurement model (Occupation role)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Occupation role</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean rank</i>
<i>IM</i>	Employee	634	460.21
	Supervisor	67	585.52
	Head of department	117	471.66
	Assistant manager	34	449.10
	Vice general manager	57	372.77
	General manager	18	412.36
	Total	927	

Note: N = 927.

Table 5 displays the results of the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA test, which was utilized to investigate *H2* regarding differences in *IM* among various occupational roles.

Table 5. Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA test statistics (Occupation role)

<i>Test results</i>	<i>IM</i>
Chi-square	21.427
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	0.000

As presented in Table 6, the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences in *IM* among various organization types, including “education sector” (mean rank = 322.98), “health sector” (mean rank = 667.51), “tourism sector” (mean rank = 403.41), “telecommunication sector” (mean rank = 701.00), “energy sector” (mean rank = 572.57), “financial sector” (mean rank = 367.00), “construction sector” (mean rank = 711.57), “municipalities and council sector” (mean rank = 295.36), “civil status and passport sector” (mean rank = 367.00), “military sector” (mean rank = 389.18), “Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs” sector (mean rank = 226.35), “Parliament and Senate Council” sector (mean rank = 725.72), “Ministry of Sports and Youth” sector (mean rank = 362.68), and “other sectors” (mean rank = 363.69). The test resulted in H (corrected for ties) = 364.745, df = 13, N = 927, p = 0.000, as indicated in Table 7, with an effect size (Eta-squared, η^2) of 0.393, considered large according to Cohen (1988).

Table 6. Mean ranks statistics of the measurement model (Organization type)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Organization type</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean rank</i>
<i>IM</i>	Educational sector	309	322.98
	Health sector	199	667.51
	Tourism sector	27	403.41
	Telecommunication sector	3	701.00
	Energy sector	29	572.57
	Financial sector	17	367.00
	Constructions sector	35	711.57
	Municipalities and local council	33	295.36
	Civil status and passports sector	3	597.00
	Military sector	60	389.18
	Ministry of Awqaf and Religious Affairs	20	226.35
	Parliament and Senate Council	76	725.76
	Ministry of Sports and Youth	11	362.68
	Other sectors	105	363.69
	Total	927	

Table 7 presents the outcomes of the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA conducted to explore the observed differences in *IM* across various organization types.

Table 7. Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA test statistics (Organization type)

<i>Test results</i>	<i>IM</i>
Chi-square	364.745
df	13
Asymp. Sig.	0.000

As indicated in Table 8, the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences in *IM* across different age groups, including “from 18 to < 25 years old” (mean rank = 375.74), “from 25 to < 35 years old” (mean rank = 537.57), “from 35 to < 45 years old” (mean rank = 497.96), “from 45 to < 55 years old” (mean rank = 380.24), “from 55 to < 65 years old” (mean rank = 426.94), and “from 65 years old and above” (mean rank = 249.75). The test resulted in H (corrected for ties) = 50.396, df = 5, N = 927, p = 0.001, as shown in Table 9, with an effect size (Eta-squared, η^2) of 0.054, considered a medium effect according to Cohen (1988).

Table 8. Mean ranks statistics of the measurement model (Age)

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Mean rank</i>
<i>IM</i>	From 18 to < 25 years old	58	375.74
	From 25 to < 35 years old	163	537.50
	From 35 to < 45 years old	430	497.96
	From 45 to < 55 years old	233	380.24
	From 55 to < 65 years old	41	426.94
	65 years old and above	2	249.75
	Total	927	

Table 9 presents the results of the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA conducted to examine the variations in *IM* across different age groups.

Table 9. Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA test statistics (Age)

Test results	IM
Chi-square	50.396
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	0.000

The analysis revealed statistically significant differences in *IM* among employees with different education levels, including “high school and lower” (mean rank = 381.61), “diploma” (mean rank = 568.20), “Bachelor” (mean rank = 470.28), “higher diploma” (mean rank = 404.55), “Master” (mean rank = 465.46), and “PhD” (mean rank = 375.83). The test resulted in H (corrected for ties) = 45.026, $df = 5$, $N = 927$, $p = 0.001$, as shown in Table 11. The effect size (Eta-squared, η^2) is 0.048, considered a small effect according to Cohen (1988).

Table 10. Mean ranks statistics of the measurement model (Education level)

Variable	Education level	N	Mean rank
IM	High school and lower	109	381.61
	Diploma	154	568.20
	Bachelor	420	470.28
	Higher diploma	43	404.55
	Master	118	465.46
	PhD	83	375.83
	Total	927	

Table 11 presents the outcomes of the Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA conducted to explore the differences in *IM* across various education levels. Overall, the proposed hypotheses were accepted.

Table 11. Kruskal-Wallis ANOVA test statistics (Education level)

Test results	IM
Chi-square	45.026
df	5
Asymp. Sig.	0.000

5. DISCUSSION

Various social roles including age, gender, education, occupational role, and organization type impact the choice of *IM* strategies among Jordanian public sector workers. The extent of this influence varies, with organization type having the most significant effect, followed by age, while gender, occupational, and educational levels have relatively smaller effects. This finding is somewhat consistent with Leary (1996) who claims that most behavior is a function of both the person and the situation, while the nature of the situation exerts a strong influence on behavior. However, these results contradict to some extent, Bolino et al. (2008) claim that although economic, environmental, or leadership factors may explain most of the variance in *IM* strategies, individual-difference factors may explain the bulk of the variation in the extent of *IM* used by different employees.

The large effect of organization type on *IM* could be due to variations in organizational culture, expectations, and structures within the public sector. Different organizations may have distinct cultures, values, norms, processes, and structures that affect how employees tailor their *IM* strategies and this effect has a prominent influence over

the traditional gender or occupational level differences. Thus, employees are likely to adopt *IM* strategies that align with the prevailing cultural norms. They may need to present themselves in ways that fit the organizational culture to be successful. In a related context, Zivnuska et al. (2004) noted that the effectiveness of *IM* can differ based on the organization’s political environment. Further, organizational type can influence *IM* because it shapes the context and expectations within which employees operate. Different organizational types create distinct pressures and opportunities for *IM*, making it an important aspect of workplace behavior. The goals and values of an organization can significantly influence how employees manage their impressions. For instance, empirical studies have revealed that both men and women demonstrate flexibility in adjusting their *IM* strategies in response to the particular contextual demands they encounter (Eagly & Steffen, 1986; Gabarro & Kotter, 2005). In a similar context, Drory and Zaidman (2007) suggest that employees in mechanistic systems engage more in *IM* behavior and direct their efforts more toward their superiors. Conversely, in an organic system employees use *IM* management to a lesser extent, and they direct it more equally toward superiors and peers. These results highlight the differences in the norms and structural characteristics of organizational systems and their effect on *IM*. Further, McFarland et al. (2023) claim that impression motivation is shaped, in part, by the situation’s evaluative potential, and the nature of the workplace interaction moderates the impression motivation-impression construction relationship. In summary, organizational contextual factors can influence *IM* because they shape the context and expectations within which employees operate. By understanding and aligning with the unique characteristics, values, and norms of their organizations, individuals can enhance their effectiveness and success within their work environments.

Age, a dimension that has received limited attention in previous studies (Anglin et al., 2022), was found to have a medium effect size, indicating notable differences in *IM* strategies across various age groups. In a related context, Krings et al. (2021) found some differences in using *IM* on LinkedIn between generations. Social role theory offers valuable insights into understanding these age-related differences, as individuals are assigned predefined roles and expectations based on their age, which, in turn, influence their *IM* strategies. In this context, Koenig and Eagly (2014) demonstrate that the core concepts of social role theory extend to various stereotypes, including age, which reflects stereotypical roles shaped by historical, social, and economic influences. Further, age-related norms and stereotypes evolve over time, leading to varying socially acceptable behaviors across different age groups. Older employees, drawing on their experience, may employ different strategies compared to younger employees who are still developing their *IM* approaches.

Studies have consistently demonstrated that individuals conform to gender norms in their *IM* behaviors (Eagly & Karau, 2002; Guadagno & Cialdini, 2007; Wood & Eagly, 2010; Leary & Allen, 2011). Our results indicate that while gender can play a role in *IM*, its influence is often superseded by the broader

and more significant impact of organizational type. Organizational norms, expectations, and values tend to be more salient in shaping how individuals present themselves at work, as they are central to an employee's success and professional identity within the organization. Therefore, the small effect size in the gender factor might be because while there are gender-related expectations, they are not as pronounced as the work context and age expectations. In a related context, Rudman et al. (2012) assert the presence of within-gender variation, underscoring the influence of individual distinctions, environmental factors, and cultural settings. Likewise, Eagly and Steffen (1986), as well as Gabarro and Kotter (2005), posit that individuals of both genders may tailor their IM strategies in response to the specific contexts in which they are situated. This suggests that gender does play a role in influencing the choice of IM strategies among Jordanian public sector workers, but the effect size is relatively small. It may be worthwhile to further investigate the specific strategies employed by each gender to better understand the nuances.

Results indicate that occupational roles influence the choice of IM strategies, although the effect size is small. In this context, Anglin et al. (2022) explained that a role represents a core set of behavioral expectations tied to a social group or category that defines appropriate and permitted forms of behavior for group members, including status roles (e.g., supervisor or subordinate). According to social role theory, individuals occupying different job levels are subject to distinct role expectations, these differential expectations may lead individuals to engage in IM strategies tailored to their roles. However, the small effect indicates that while role expectations can influence IM, they are just one of many factors at play. Other organizational and contextual factors as well as individual differences, particularly age have more power over the situation.

The findings also suggest that educational level does play a role in shaping IM strategies, although with a relatively small effect size. Social role theory posits that an individual's societal roles are intricately linked to their demographic attributes, including their educational level. Similarly, Koenig and Eagly (2014) claim that social role theory can be applied to various stereotypes, including those related to education. These stereotypes are shaped by historical, social, and economic factors and come with established expectations for behavior, which can influence individual actions and perceptions. Consequently, individuals with varying levels of education often occupy distinct social roles, each carrying its own set of norms and expectations. These roles may necessitate the deployment of IM strategies that align with an individual's particular expertise or field of knowledge. However, the results suggest that while educational level does have an effect, it appears to be relatively small. This effect may be attributed to the unique dynamics within the Jordanian public sector, where organizational and age-related factors may eclipse the effect of education. Accordingly, it seems that educational level exerts less influence on employees' selection of IM strategies once they are already in the workplace.

Overall, results suggest that different organizations and situations have distinct norms for behavior and affect the use of IM. Furthermore, individuals adapt their IM strategies to align with

the expectations of their immediate environment, making their strategies variable across demographic and contextual factors based on the specific circumstances, tasks, and goals they encounter within the organization. Organizational type, culture, and objectives are stronger and therefore exert a consistent influence on IM.

6. CONCLUSION

While gender, occupation, and educational level were found to influence IM strategies, their effects were relatively small. This suggests that in the context of the Jordanian public sector, organizational and age-related variables may exert a more dominant influence on IM. It was found that different organizations create unique pressures and opportunities for IM, emphasizing the importance of aligning with the prevailing cultural norms to achieve success within the workplace. As such individuals adapt their strategies to align with the expectations and norms of their immediate environment. Age also plays a medium role in shaping IM strategies, with notable differences across various age groups. Social role theory provides a framework for understanding these age-related differences, as societies assign predefined roles and expectations to individuals based on their age, influencing the strategies individuals employ to conform to or challenge these expectations. These results underscore the importance of considering not only demographic attributes but also the specific organizational and contextual factors that shape IM strategies.

Thus, organizations should be aware of the different IM strategies that employees may use, and how these strategies may be influenced by factors such as age, gender, education, occupational role, and organization type. This awareness can guide efforts to promote inclusivity and ensure that employees from diverse backgrounds are not unfairly disadvantaged in their career progression due to age or gender-related stereotypes. Furthermore, this awareness can help organizations develop more effective IM policies and training programs to help employees adapt their behaviors in alignment with the organization's culture and expectations. Thus, organizations should create a supportive environment where employees feel comfortable using IM strategies that are authentic to themselves. This can be done by fostering a culture of inclusion and respect, and by providing employees with opportunities to learn about and develop their IM skills. Organizations can work on fostering positive organizational cultures that align with their goals and values. Cultures that support employees' ability to present themselves authentically while also adhering to organizational norms can contribute to a healthy workplace environment.

Organizations should use IM to promote communication, collaboration, and innovation. This can be done by using IM tools to facilitate team projects, share information, and generate new ideas. Moreover, recognizing the influence of age on IM strategies, organizations can adopt generation-specific approaches to management and communication. Tailoring management and leadership styles to the preferences and communication methods of different age groups can improve workplace relationships and employee satisfaction.

By understanding and responding to the diverse IM strategies that employees may use, organizations can promote inclusivity, innovation, and employee satisfaction.

Finally, this research is limited to the Jordanian public sector; further research is needed to encompass different sectors beyond the public sector to explore how social roles could affect IM in various work environments such as the private sector or non-profit organizations. Further, comparative studies between public and private sector employees examine whether the influence of demographic and contextual factors on IM differs in these contexts.

The results indicate the need for further research into each IM strategy. This can include identifying the specific IM strategies employed by different demographic groups to gain a deeper understanding of these influences. Lastly, given the influence of organization type on IM, it would be valuable to investigate how these findings apply in different cultural contexts. Future research could focus on comparing the IM strategies of public sector workers in Jordan with those in other countries, considering the impact of culture and societal norms.

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