

Leader Impression Management Strategy and Subordinate Work Attitude in Nigeria: The Moderating Roles of Social Interaction and Perception

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Abstract

This study investigated the moderating influences of social interaction and social perception in the leader impression management strategy and subordinate work attitude relationship, in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. Adopting a cross-sectional survey design and the questionnaire as the dominant research instrument, data were obtained from a sample of 306 employees from 6 firms that are operational in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. A total of 279 sets of the questionnaire were retrieved representing 91%. The emphasis on demographic characteristics of respondents was on gender, academic qualifications, status and tenure. Due to the number of study variables, multiple regression analysis was employed for multivariate hypothesis testing, using the SPSS version 21 software. Results indicate that social interaction and social perception moderated the relationship between leader impression management strategy and subordinate work attitude. The study concluded that leader impression management strategy leads to subordinate work attitudes, under the moderating influences of social interaction and social perception in the Nigerian telecommunication industry. The study recommends that managers in the focal industry, should be savvy in utilizing effective interpersonal skills when they interact with their subordinates for them to be perceived and evaluated positively. This will enhance good quality leader-member exchanges and provide basis for attitudinal and behavioural compliance.

Keywords: Leader Impression Management, Ingratiation, Self-Promotion, Exemplification, Intimidation, Subordinate Work Attitude, Job Involvement, Affective Job Commitment, Job Satisfaction, Social Interaction, Social Perception.

1. Introduction

The attitudes employees show at work have become an area for theoretical espousals and empirical explorations by scholars, for some decades. This is underscored by the fact that attitudes at work are inextricably bonded with an array of behavioural components (Robbins *et al.*, 2012; Jayan, 2006). Environmentally triggered pressures that organizations face have made it inevitable for them to manage the work demeanors of their employees in harnessing behavioural compliance and positive organizational outcomes. As part of corporate culture, work attitudes encapsulate the lasting feelings, beliefs and behavioural tendencies employees show (favourable & unfavourable) toward diverse aspects of the job; the job itself, the context and the people (Auerbach & Dolan, 1997; Greenberg & Baron, 2002), or an individual's general disposition towards his or her job and the organization (Kappagada *et al.*, 2014). According to Pierce *et al.* (2002), and Robbins *et al.* (2012), people show various forms of attitudes concerning their work environments in three focal components: the cognitive component that consists of the beliefs and opinions an individual holds about an event or person; the affective component involving the emotional or sentimental dispositions induced by that person, event or object; and the behavioural component that involves the actions resulting from the induced feelings.

Various studies associating work attitudes with other behavioural correlates have been profiled in literature. Examples are: absenteeism (Cheloha & Farr, 1980), employee turnover and internal motivation (Brown & Leigh, 1997), job performance (Manikandan, 2002; Frank & David, 2003; Flossain, 2000), organisational citizenship behaviours - OCBs (Organ *et al.*, 2006; Rosenberg & Moberg, 2007). Lynn *et al.* (1990) described the different relationships between organizational attitudes (organizational commitment and satisfaction) and job attitudes (job involvement and satisfaction) and other behavioural intentions (turnover, absenteeism and performance). Scholarly choruses contend that the work attitudes that frequently influence employee performance are job satisfaction, organizational commitment and job involvement (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004; Auerbach & Dolan, 1997; Hettiarachichi & Tayarathan, 2014). Empirical investigations have found significant association between job satisfaction and performance (Judge *et al.*, 2001; Ricketta, 2008; Robbins, 2003). Other lines of inquiry in this regard are significant relationship between organizational commitment and

performance (Thomas & Douglas, 2002; Ricketta, 2002; Jayan, 2006; Johnson *et al.*, 2010). Positive relationship has been reported between job involvement and performance (Patterson *et al.*, 1990; Hackett, *et al.*, 2001). In emphasis, what is beamed is the fact that employees who are satisfied, emotionally committed, and job involved perform impressively. Organizations should therefore, reckon with all the composing facets of the work environment.

Sociability between managers and their constituents is one critical factor that prompts employee's satisfaction and commitment. According to Shein (1985), as cited in Mullins (1999), managers and their cultures are inseparable, and they continually influence and affect the perceptions and attitudes of their subordinates. Invariably, the impressions managers convey to their subordinates of them is a substantive recipe for social facilitation and lubrication (Nguyen *et al.*, 2008). In social arenas, individuals attempt to control the impressions others have of them (Leary & Kowalski, 1995). Rosenfeld *et al.* (1995) did argue that impression management is a vent through which the psychology of individuals and teams could be comprehended and interpreted. Studies associating leadership impression management and other correlates such as employee work attitude suffer neglect (Hinkin & Schriesheim, 1999, Kaemar *et al.*, 1994). What has overwhelmed the impression management discourse, is how subordinates manage the impressions their supervisors have of them (Wayne & Ferris, 1995; Wayne & Kacmar, 1997). Consequently, we propose that leader impression management would lead to desired subordinate work attitude under the moderating influences of social interaction and social perception; having empirically established a relationship between leader impression management and subordinate job involvement (George & Zeb-Obipi, 2016). This is the gap the study addresses.

On this presumption, the main purpose of this study is to examine the relationship between leader impression management strategy and subordinate work attitude under the moderating influences of social interaction and social perception. The specific objectives are as follows:

- a. To examine the relationship between leader ingratiation IM strategy and subordinate work attitude in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.
- b. To examine the relationship between leader self-promotion IM strategy and subordinate work attitude in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.
- c. To examine the relationship between leader exemplification IM strategy and subordinate work attitude in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.
- d. To examine the relationship between leader intimidation IM strategy and subordinate work attitude in the Nigerian telecommunication industry.
- e. To examine if social interaction and social perception moderate the relationship between leader impression management and subordinate work attitude in Nigeria telecommunication industry.

2. Literature Review

In this study, we examine the relationship between leader impression management strategy and subordinate work attitude as moderated by the influence of social interaction and social perception through the theoretical thrusts of the social exchange and social network theories.

2.1 Social Exchange Theory (SET)

Social exchange theory posits that social interactions involves the exchange of rewarding activities in which individuals are inclined to maximize their rewards (tangible and intangible), and minimize costs (Blau, 1964). The theory perceives social life as one that is analogous to economic transactions (Stafford, 2008; Xerri & Brunitto, 2010). Social exchange theory holds that interpersonal exchanges can be viewed from a cost-benefit perspective that seeks the exchange of tangible and intangible social costs and benefits: (respect, honour, friendship and caring (Cropanzano & Mitchell, 2005). The presumption is that, employees will be inclined to enter an exchange transaction that will be beneficial to them, when compared to the cost. Opinions converge that social exchanges are dependent on social interactions and the principle of obligation. The recipient is usually obligated to return similar gestures through reciprocation. In tandem with Gouldner's (1960) norm of reciprocity, mutual exchange provide the foundation for the stability of social relationships. According to Cole *et al.* (2007), exchange relationships are better nurtured under certain ideal conditions, that must be obeyed by the actors in enhancing positive exchanges. The relevance of the social exchange theory to this study lies in the fact that, in social relationships that are characterized by unequal power status; like that of managers and their constituents. When subordinates are fairly treated through rewards, show of commitment and friendliness, they will reciprocate in same manner (Coyles - Shapiro & Cornway, 2005; Netemeyer *et al.* 1996). Stated differently, they will compliment goodwill and helpfulness to another in the mutual transaction (Malatesta, 1996; Cropanzano & Mithell, 2005).

2.2 Social Network Theory (SNT)

The social network theory places premium on the relational ties or linkages that exist between individuals or

interactants in a social system (Wasserman & Faust, 1994; as cited in Essays UK, 2015). As part of its theoretical ambience, the theory assumes interdependence between actors, as distinct from the individualistic notion that emphasizes independence between the actors. Mainly, the theory captures both the attributes of the actors and their relational ties with other interactants (Knoke & Kuklinski, 1982, as cited in Essay UK, 2015). Social network theory stresses on the social context and the relational linkages among individual actors on two main behavioural assumptions. First, it assumes that a social system is made up of various actors that interact with each other on the one hand, and serve as reference points in the decisional process of other systems' interactants on the other hand. Second, various levels of social structure exist in a social system with enduring patterns of relational bonds among the actors (Knocks & Kuklinski, 1982). Social network theory holds that the relational ties between the actors serve as vents for the transfer of information and resources. These are constrained or facilitated by the environment and opportunities for interaction (Wasserman & Faust, 1994). The point of note is that, the location of an actor in the network shows how the person relates with other actors that affect the behaviour, perception, and attitudes of the focal actor.

Social network theory hinges on the precipice of social interaction and bonds between interacting parties in a social system. Ahiauzu (2010) argued that the fulcrum on which the social network theory lies, is the "social man's construct" which holds that the existence of man is a function of a web of relationships in every social context. The social network theory is relevant to this study on the premise that the relationships between managers and their constituents in workplaces involve an interpersonal relational ties, based on social interaction and exchange of tangible and intangible resources (Jaja, 2009). By implication, social factors, to a large extent, determine behavioural outcomes, regarding enhanced productivity and motivation. The perceived nexus between the social exchange and social network theories on social relational ties may have given rise to the recent emergence of the social network exchanges paradigm among interactants (Cole *et al.*, 2007; Cropazano & Mitchell, 2005).

2.3 Definitions and Dimensions of Impression Management

The inquisitiveness of people to create favourable impressions is an essential alloy of human life, and a natural consequence of interpersonal relationships in every social context (Dubrin, 2011; Frink, 2000). Social interactions are mediums people utilize to convey their self-reliant information or images to their target audiences (McMinn, 2007). Since the advent of the impression management construct through the pioneering works of sociologist Ewing Goffman (1959) in his book "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life, in which he utilized the dramaturgical metaphor to popularize its relevance in social interactions, it has attracted massive scholarly definitions. We shall appraise a few of these definitions here.

Leary & Kowalski (1995) defined impression management as the process by which people attempt to control the impressions others have of them. Roberts (2005) defined impression management as "a new form of social competence in organization, which individuals employ to master organisational politics, facilitate better work relationships, increase group cohesiveness, avoid offending co-workers and create a more pleasant organizational climate. The preceding definitions unveils certain salient elements. Firstly, impression management generally involves the ultimate goal of creating desired positive impressions. Second, impression management is a processual construct involving two parties; the impression manager and the target audience. Third, it is a psycho-social construct that is pervasive and occurs concomitantly within every social context (milieu). Fourth, impression management does not occur in a vacuum, rather it is both interactively and perceptually based. For our purpose, we define impression management as a process by which individuals employ social skills to control the impressions others have of them.

As part of its theoretical trajectory, Leary & Kowalski (1995) in their two-component model espoused impression management as composed of two discrete processes namely: impression motivation and impression construction. On the former, when individuals are motivated to control the impressions others have of them, they do so as prompted by the context. Three factors influence this process namely: the goal relevance of the impression, the value it portends and the discrepancy between a desired and present goal. Alternatively, people could also be motivated to construct desired self-images in tandem with contextual realities. This process is also influenced by five factors encompassing: self-concept of the person, desired and undesired identity images, role constraints, the target value and the actor's perception of his or her current potential self-image. Mainly, the foregoing IM components are at best inter-twinned and complimentary in most social contexts.

Individuals employ quite an expanse of impression management behaviours to regulate the perceptions others have of them. These behaviours are categorized into verbal and non-verbal typologies (Schneider, 1981). Verbal tactics are protective and assertive/acquisitive, while non-verbal tactics include artefacts and expressive behaviours (Tedeschi & Melburg, 1984). Jones & Pitman (1982) were the first to develop a taxonomy of assertive/acquisitive behaviours encompassing (a) ingratiation (b) self-promotion (c) exemplification (d) intimidation, and (e) supplication. These tactics are examined briefly in the subsequent paragraphs.

Ingratiation: The tactic of ingratiation is one of the multi-forms of assertive/acquisitive IM tactics individuals

employee to control the information about themselves, which they convey to their audiences in the contexts of interpersonal behaviours. It involves the use of a set of assertive tactics that attracts approval from target audiences that are accompanied by certain rewards for the ingratiation (Tedesco & Melburg, 1984, as cited in Appelbaum & Hughes, 1998). Ingratiation is an act of getting the other person to like you (Dubrin, 2011). Hence, the aim of ingratiation is to enhance the horizon of the ingratiation's likeability and attractiveness to his or her target audience. According to Jones (1982), four ways people utilize to ingratiate include (a) other-enhancement or complimentary other-enhancement, which is synonymous with "flattery" or "apple polishing" or "kissing the boot" (b) opinion conformity (c) self-presentation, (d) favour-doing.

Self-Promotion: Contrastingly, while the ingratiation intends to be liked and attracted by target audiences, the self-promoter shows competence and knowledgeability (Jones, 1990). According to Giacalone & Rosenfeld (1986), the self-promoter influences others to be perceived as one who is competent concerning ability dimensions such as intelligence, specific skills and other related spheres. In social interactions, people as diverse forms to promote themselves including: competence demonstration, pronouncements or acclamation for entitlements, enhancements or self-glorifying actions (Shtenker, 1980). Hence these behaviours present the self-promoter as competent and knowledgeable in achieving attributed competence (Soran & Balkan, 2013).

Exemplification: The impression management tactic of exemplification typically involves managing the impressions of integrity, self-sacrifice, and moral worthiness when perceived by target audience (Rosenfeld *et al.*, 1995). The authors argued that exemplifiers render themselves for difficult assignments, and go all out to do so. Exemplifiers portray behaviors that make them appear as ideal models to be emulated by others, and perform duties that go beyond their confines (Arif *et al.*, 2011). It is this line of commonality, exemplification shares with organizational citizenship behaviours (OCBs). In essence, the tactic of exemplification presents the exemplifier as one with integrity, self-sacrifice, ethical and moral worthiness that could be emulated, and influences the perception of others in social interactions.

Intimidation: As distinct from the ingratiation who is desirous to enhance his or her expanse of likeability and attractiveness by target audiences, the self-promoter who wants to be seen as competent and knowledgeable, and the exemplifier who work to be perceived as morally, worthy and imitable, the intimidation is one who wants to be feared and seemingly looking dangerous when perceived by target audiences (Rosenfeld *et al.*, 1995). The intimidator is not willing to be seen as affable or benign, rather he or she harnesses social power and influence, by appearing dangerous; someone whose orders must be obeyed or get punished for disobedience. The intimidator appears tenacious and forceful when perceived by others (Soran & Balkan, 2013), thus arousing fearful emotions in them for submission (Coley & Rozelle, 2011). We shall examine the criterion variable and its measures in the next segment that follows.

2.4 Work Attitude

Behavior at work encapsulates knowledge, skills, abilities, perception, attitudes, values and ethics; and these are seen to be integral to organizational culture that influence employee performance. As acknowledged by many scholars, the work attitudes that are most frequently investigated in influencing employee performance are job involvement, organizational commitment and job satisfaction (Kreitner & Kinicki, 2004; Robbins, 2005). We shall examine these measures of the criterion variable immediately below.

Job Involvement: Job involvement is one of the vital work attitudes employees show at work, and has attracted the attention of many organizational theorists and researchers alike. Since the job involvement construct came to lime-light through the works of Lodahi & Kejner (1965), it has been numerously espoused. Kanungo (1982a, 1982b) defined job involvement as an individual's psychological identification or commitment to his or her job. Similarly, Pierce *et al.* (2002) defined the construct as an employee's psychological association with the job. Invariably, job involvement expresses the love an employee has for his or her job (Pollock, 1997). Studies have variously associated job involvement with individual and organizational level outcomes. Examples of organizational or macro level outcomes are: significant association between job involvement and employee commitment (Mathieu & Zajac, 1998), absenteeism and turnover (Diefendorff *et al.* 2002), job performance (Mathieu & Zajac, 1995; Frank & David, 2003). Individual level example are positive association with job satisfaction, personal growth, motivation and goal-oriented behaviours (Hackett *et al.*, 2001). Employees that are job involved regard their organizations highly in terms of loyalty, identification and organizational involvement (Wentland, 2009).

Organizational Commitment: The commitment employees signify toward their organizations has equally attracted considerable attention from scholars as an important attitudinal index at work. Like most concepts and constructs, organizational commitment lacks a precise definition, owing to its multi-dimensional nature. According to Dennis & Griffin (2005), organizational commitment is a state in which an employee gets identified with an organization, its goals, maintaining membership of the organization, and facilitating the attainment of such goals. Nelson & Quick (2010) defined organizational commitment as "the strength of an individual identification with an organizational. What is clearly amplified is the tenacity of identification and

oneness of goals individuals exhibit towards their organizations. Meyer & Allen (1997) in their popularized taxonomy, theorized commitment on three dimensional foci namely: affective, continuance and normative commitments. Affective commitment relates the psychological or emotional attachment employees express to their organizations. Those who show this, have resolved to be with their organizations harmoniously for their goals and values. Continuance commitment places premium on the recognition they have for the costs associated with the decision of exiting the system. Lastly, normative commitment defines the option of continually remaining with the organization on moral grounds. In the aggregate, employees who are committed seldom exhibit withdrawal and abandonment behaviours, turnover and tardiness, willing to be involved in extra-role activities of creativity and innovativeness for organizational competitive edge (Katz & Khan, 1978; Lumely *et al.*, 2011).

Job Satisfaction: Like the previously examined measures, the mantra chanted by various scholars regarding the inevitability of the satisfaction employees signify at work as an attitude, has steadily increased over the decades. Consequently, it has attracted a volume of definitions. Locke (1976) as cited in Nelson & Quick (2010), defined job satisfaction as a pleasurable or positive emotional state emanating from the appraisal of one's job experiences or values. Ivancevich & Matterson (2002) and Spector (1997) also defined the complex construct as the total feelings individuals have about their jobs and the attitudes and perceptions they exhibit towards various aspects of their jobs that has the efficacy of influencing the degrees of fit between them and their organizations. In essence, job satisfaction reflects the happiness or pleasurable affectivity employees exhibit towards distinct facets of their jobs. The various aspects of the job that is linked with employee job satisfaction are: pay, promotion, leadership, benefits, operating procedures, the job itself, co-workers support and communication (Spector, 1997; Sempene *et al.*, 2012). This implies that, either of these aspects of the job, could result employee satisfaction or dissatisfaction at work (Spector, 1997). In this study our focus is on the interpersonal behaviours between leaders and their subordinates regarding exchange quality. Rothmann & Coetzer (2002) held that job satisfaction among people at work, indicates organizational effectiveness capable of being influenced by personal or contextual factors. It is a common place that the level of satisfaction of the employees in any organization, determines the maximal level of its performance. Hence, employees that show happiness at work, are adjudged to be productive in performance (Saari & Judge, 2004). Basically, what is of immediate concern to us, is the nexus between leader impression management strategy and the respective work attitudes we have examined, and this the ensuing phase of this discourse x-rays.

2.5 Moderators of Leader Impression Management and Subordinate Work Attitude Relationships

According to Jones & Pitman (1982), group leaders have often employed certain self- presentational strategies that are tailored to facilitate their influence processes namely: perception of competence which is analogous to self-promotion, ingratiation, exemplification and intimidation. In the early phase of this review, we have discussed the thrust and essence of each of these IM strategies as mediums of gauging the perceptions of people their target audiences have of them.

Many studies have associated the IM strategies of ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplification and intimidation with positive outcomes and theoretical underpinings. Examples of such outcomes on ingratiation are: significant relationship between supervisors liking, subordinate performance appraisal and good exchange quality (Wayne & Ferris, 1990), positive association ingratiation and extrinsic work successes (Higgins *et al.*, 2002), ingratiation and supervisor's liking (Gordon, 1990), and with successful downward influence process (Rozzel & Gunderson, 2003). Studies have similarly shown leadership as a dramaturgical performance, presenting leaders as competent professionals celebrating knowledgeability, skills, ability and values in influencing subordinates (Anderson, 2005, Brown, 2005; Gardner & Avolio, 1998). On exemplification, Gardner & Avolio (1998) had advanced that leaders may explore this tactic to be perceived as morally worthy, disciplined and trusted by subordinates. Finally, French and Raven (1959) did acknowledge that leaders exploring the intimidation tactic can use moderate level of coercive power to enhance subordinate behavioural compliance. In consonance with the foregoing review expositions. These established relationship between leader impression management and subordinate work attitude occur within a context that involve certain moderating variables.

As a purposive and processual set of strategic behaviors, impression management tactics inform conscious or unconscious endeavour control images exhibited in real or imagined social interactions (Schlenker, 1980, Lim *et al.* 2008). The essence is to project one's desirable image to target audiences or define a situation (Goffman, 1959), norms and behaviours (Bozeman & Kacmar, 1997). Also as pervasive and all-inclusive construct, impression management is a natural consequence of interpersonal behaviors. Baron & Bryne (1997) and Frink (2000) had held that, impression management is both interactively and perceptually based and does not occur in a cognitive vacuum. Therefore, this prompts the salience and inevitability of social interaction and social perception as fundamental social factors in impression formation and management processes. These factors are discussed subsequently.

Social Interaction: According to Turner (1988), social interaction involves a situation where the behaviours of a social actor are consciously re-organised by, and influence the behavior of another actor, in a reciprocal manner. The author further acknowledged that the behavior encapsulates overt actions of individuals in space, covert and mental deliberations of individuals and their processes. But distinctly, social interaction underscores how people act or respond to others around them (Maines, 2005). As noted by Deputter (2007), interactionists study how individuals enact and interpret their social worlds. Through social interaction individuals interpret their surroundings, identities, obligations and relationships. Apparently, through these processes of shaping and constructing realities, social life is determined (Prus, 1996; Atkinson & Hamersely, 1994; Blumer, 1960; Guba & Lincoln, 1994).

Another perspective that elucidates social interaction is the interpretivist theory of “symbolic interactionism”. The thrust of this theory is that social activities encompass the identification of actions, interpretations and meanings people ascribe in interacting with others in using symbols. Blumer (1969:72) defined symbolic interactionism as an “activity in which human beings interpret each other’s gestures and act on the basis of the meaning yielded by that interpretation”. What is portrayed is that through symbolic interactionism, humans craft and interpret their social world on the basis of symbols and meanings. Goffman (1959) in his treatise on theatrical dramaturgy, perceived social interaction as a performance; leadership inclusive. Leaders through the acts of setting and utilizing props, adjust their manners and appearances and utilize symbolic resources to enable them convey idealized images of themselves to earn followers positive evaluations and believability. The insight provided is that, leaders regulate the impressions they convey to their subordinates in enhancing likeability, competence, self-worthiness and threats to elicit compliance in a complex and relationship-driven environment. In sum, individuals present their scripted behaviors before those they interact with to elicit desired behavior (Holstein & Gubrium, 2000). Relying on the foregoing theoretical premises, we are hypothesizing.

Social Perception: Social perception is yet another contextual alloy of this study. As we have earlier noted, impression management behaviours between social actors are both interactively and perceptually-based. As social structures necessitate social interactions, social perception precede impression formation and the subsequent management of the impressions. According to Nelson & Quick (2010), social perception is the process of interpreting information about another individual. Accordingly, Kreitner & Kinicki (2004:151) defined social perception as “the study of how people make sense of other people and themselves. They christened the construct as social cognition or social information processing. Essentially, social perception involves the perception of human beings (self, others). Kreitner & Kinicki (2004) in a four-stage model, identified perception as an information processing sequence selective attention/comprehension, encoding/simplification, and storage/retention and retrieval/response. While the first three stages of the model are concerned with how an information and the environmental stimuli are observed and retained in the memory, the fourth stage turns the mental schemes into concrete judgments and decisions. In essence, these stages elucidate how perceptual schemes are processed for individual decisions.

Similarly, Gioia’s (1989) work on sense making in organizations, further explains the influence and relevance of social perception as a moderator of the conceived relationship in this study. The author thus observed “In any organizational experience, a person’s most pressing cognitive task (whether explicit and conscious or tacit and unconscious) is to make sense of the situation, to account for it or to understand it in meaningful terms (Gioia’s 1989:221). What is made lucid is that as organizational experiences occur, individuals frame them in ways they can perceive, based on their mental schemes for meaning making and attendant interpretations. Consequently, perception and interpretation define reality at the workplace. Exploring the nexus between this line of reasoning and this study, Gardner (1989) had argued that the two-way conversation between leaders and followers is greatly influenced by the expectations of followers. Managers utilize appropriate influence tactics to present themselves competent in earning positive evaluations from subordinates (Yukl & Falbe, 1990). Leaders with enhanced latitude of freedom; control and easily elicit subordinate behavioural compliance and performance when they earn the respect and admiration of their constituents (Wilt, 1995, as cited in Kacmar *et al.*, 1996).

From the theoretical expositions made so far, it appears logical to argue that social interaction and social perception are prime contextual factors moderating the relationship between leader impression management (predictor) and subordinate work attitude (criterion). In consonance with the earlier arguments of Bryne & Baron (1997), and Frink (2000), impression management is interactively and perceptually-based. When individuals interact and perceive one another in social avenues, they do so, by presenting impressive self-reliant information of themselves or images to earn positive evaluations from target audiences. As the focus of this study, our interest is to establish the moderating influences of social interaction and social perception on the linkage between the two variables examined. According to Preacher *et al* (2007), moderation occurs when the strength of the relationship between the predictor and the criterion variables depends on the third variable; the moderator interacts with the predictor variable in predicting the occurrence of the criterion variable. In the light

of the emerging theoretical realities, we hypothesize as follows:

- HA₁: There is a moderating influence of social interaction on the relationship between leader impression management and subordinate work attitude.
 HA₂: There is a moderating influence of social perception on the relationship between leader impression management and subordinate work attitude.

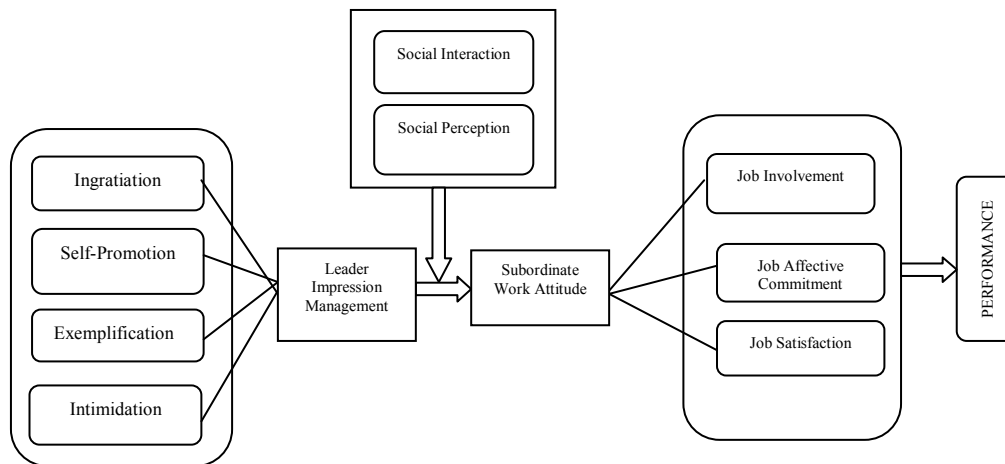


Fig. 1: A Research Model Showing the Moderating Influences of Social Interaction and Social Perception on the Relationships Between Leader Impression Management Strategy and Subordinate Work Attitude.

3. Research Methods

This correlational study adopted a cross-sectional survey design for data collection with a view to testing the research hypotheses and addressing the research objectives. A total of 1500 employees drawn from the 6 telecommunication firms operating in Rivers State constituted the study population. The Krejcie & Morgan's (1970) table was used to derive a sample size of 306 respondents. The stratified sampling technique was used to distinguish between managers and their subordinates, while the sample size was proportionately distributed among the firms on the respective population sizes, using the Bowley's (1964) formulae as adapted in Nwibere (2007).

Data was collected on the following measurements of the primal study variables. Leader impression management (predictor variable) was measured using 4 dimensional referents adapted from Bolino & Turnley (2003) and Bolino *et al.*(2006), originally adapted from Jones & Pitman (1982) namely: ingratiation, self-promotion, exemplification and intimidation. Similarly, subordinate work attitude (criterion variable) was measured with 3 indicators: job involvement, affective job commitment, and job satisfaction) which were originally adapted from Kanungo's (1982a, 1982b) J/Q for job involvement, Mowday *et al.* (1979) and Mayer & Allen's (2007) for affective job commitment and Weiss's (1967) MSQ for Job satisfaction. The moderating variables were measured with 3 items from Blumer (1969) and Prus (1996) for social interaction, and 3 items from Gioia (1989) and Smith (2001) for social perception. A five-point Likert-scale was utilised to collate data, ranging from 5 - strongly agree to 1 - strongly disagree. A total of 306 copies of the questionnaire were administered and 279 copies retrieved and found valid for analysis, representing 91%. The modified instrument yielded Cronbach alpha coefficients of 0.952 and 0.929. For Leader impression management strategy and subordinate work attitude respectively, that surpassed the threshold of 0.7 (Hair *et al.*, 2010; Nunnally, 1970). Multiple Regression Analysis was employed for multivariate analysis, owing to the number of study variables involved. The analysis was aided by SPSS version 21.

4.1 Demographic Analysis

Table 4.1 Sample Description and Distribution

Description	Gender		Qualification			Status			Tenure		
	Freq	%	Respondents	Freq	%	Respondents	Freq	%	Respondents	Freq	%
Male	171	61	HND/B.Sc/			Subordinates	122	44	1-4yrs	5	5
Female	108	39	B.Ed/B.Tech	190	68	Supervisors	94	34	5-8yrs	155	56
			M.Sc/MBA/	72	25.8						
			M.Ed/M.Tech	5	1.8						
			PhD	12	4.3						
Total	279	100	Total	279	100	Total	279	100	Total	279	100

Source: Research Data, 2016

Table 4.1 above describes the demographic data on the respondents in this study. Emphasis were placed on four demographic characteristics namely: gender, academic qualifications, status and tenure. The data signified a dominance of male to female respondents 61-39%, with many possessing HND/BSc/B.Ed qualifications 44%, and majority having spent 5-8years with their organizations.

4.2 Univariate Analysis

Table 4.2: Statistics on Leader Impression Management strategy (predictor variable)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation
Ingrate	279	1.33	5.00	3.8166	.80188
SelfPromotion	279	1.00	5.00	3.9570	1.07062
Exemplify	279	1.33	5.00	3.9200	1.00268
Intimidation	279	1.00	5.00	3.2282	1.44894
Valid N(listwise)	279				

Source: Research Data, 2016

Table 4.2 above, describes the statistics representing the views of respondents on the dimensions of leader impression management strategy (predictor variable). The cumulative means scores are as follows: Ingratiation — 3.8, Self-Promotion -3.9, Exemplification -3.9, and Intimidation — 3.2; (where $x > 2.50$). This affirms the manifest presence of the use of these impression management behaviours by managers in relating with their subordinates.

Table 4.3: Statistics on Subordinate Work Attitude (Criterion Variable)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation
Job involvement	279	1.29	5.00	3.8198	.64720
Affective job commitment	279	1.17	5.00	3.9617	1.04810
Job satisfaction	279	1.14	4.86	3.5579	.80946
Valid or otherwise	279				

Source: Research Data, 2016

Table 4.3 above describes the statistics representing the views of respondents on the measures of Subordinate Work Attitude (criterion variable). The cumulative mean scores are as follows: Job Involvement - 3.8, Affective Job Commitment - 3.9, and Job Satisfaction - 3.5; (where $x > 2.50$). This also affirms the manifest presence of the above attitudinal dispositions amongst subordinates.

Table 4.4: Statistics on Contextual Factors (Social Interaction and Social Perception)

	N	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	Std Deviation
Social interaction	279	1.33	5.00	3.9785	1.05387
Social perception	279	1.33	5.00	3.8423	.75852
Valid (listwise)	279				

Source: Research Data, 2016

Table 4.4 describes the statistics representing the views of respondents on the moderating variables. The cumulative means scores are as follows: Social Interaction 3.9, and Social Perception 3.8; (where $x > 2.50$). This affirms the processes of social interactions and mutual perceptions between managers and their subordinates.

4.3 Multivariate Analysis

This section presents the results of the tests on the last two hypothesized statements of the moderating influences of social interaction and social perception in the significant relationship between leader impression management and subordinate work attitude, using multiple regression analysis set at 95% confidence level.

HA₁: **Moderating influence of social interaction on leader impression and subordinate work attitude**

Step 1

Table 4.5: Coefficient of regressing social interaction as leader impression management strategy

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std error	Beta		
1.	(constant)	.418	.048		8.799	.001
	Leader impression	1.098	.039	.0862	28.294	.000

a. Dependent variable: social interaction

Source: Research Data, 2016

Table 4.5 presents the results of regressing social interaction (Moderatign variable) on leader impression management strategy (independent variable). The outcome is significant at ($p < 0.05$). Thus satisfying the first condition of significant relationship between the two variables, as espoused by Baron & Kenny (1989) for accepting a moderating effect.

Step 2

Table 4.6: Coefficient of regressing subordinate work attitude on leader impression management

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std error	Beta		
1.	(constant)	1.089	.697		11.239	.000
	Leader impression	.748	.025	.871	29.550	.000

a. Dependent variable: subordinate work attitude

Source: Research Data, 2016

Table 4.6 presents the results of regressing subordinate work attitude (dependent variable) on leader impression management strategy (independent variable). The outcome is also significant at ($p < 0.05$), thus satisfying the second condition of significant relationship between the two variables, as espoused by Baron & Kenny (1989) for accepting a moderating effect.

Step 3

Table 4.7: Coefficient of regressing subordinate work attitude on leader impression management and social interaction

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std error	Beta		
1.	(constant)	1.136	.077		14.760	.000
	Leader impression	0.11	.140	.162	.896	.083
	Social interaction	.399	.031	.592	12.802	.000

a. Dependent variable: subordinate work attitude

Source: Research Data, 2016

Table 4.7 presents the results of regressing subordinate work attitude (dependent variable) on leader impression management strategy (independent variable) and social interaction (1st moderating variable). The outcome showed a

weak relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable, when the proposed moderator is in the regression, thus satisfying the third condition of a weak relationship or no significance espoused by Baron & Kenny (1989), and Chrobot-Mason (2003), for accepting a moderating effect. Consequently, the alternate hypothesis is accepted as a finding regarding full moderation (Wat & Shaffer, 2005).

HA₂: Moderating influence of social perception on leader impression management and subordinate work attitude

Step 1

Table 4.8: Coefficient of regressing social perception on leader impression management

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std error	Beta		
1.	(constant)	2.796	.200		11.239	.000
	Leader impression	.280	.052	.871	29.550	.000

a. Dependent variable: social perception

Source: Research Data, 2016

Table 4.8 present the results of regressing social perception (2nd moderating variable) in leader impression management strategy (independent variable). The outcome is significant at ($p < 0.05$), thus satisfying the first condition of significant relationship between the two variables, as espoused by Baron & Kenny (1989) for accepting a moderating effect.

Step 2

Table 4.9: Coefficient of regressing subordinate work attitude on leader impression management

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std error	Beta		
1.	(constant)	1.089	.097		11.239	.000
	Leader impression	.349	.025	.871	29.550	.000

a. Dependent variable: subordinate work attitude

Source: Research Data, 2016

Table 4.9 presents the results of regressing subordinate work attitude (dependent variable) on leader impression management strategy (independent variable). The outcome is also significant at ($p < 0.05$), thus satisfying the second condition of significant relationship between the two variables, as espoused by Baron & Kenny (1989) for accepting a moderating effect.

Step 3

Table 4.10: Coefficient when Subordinate Work Attitude is Regressed on Leader Impression Management

Model		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std error	Beta		
1.	(constant)	.0682	.121		5.655	.000
	Leader impression	.108	.025	.124	.344	.212
	Social perception	.445	.028	.028	5.228	.000

a. Dependent variable: subordinate work attitude

Source: Research Data, 2016

Table 4.10 presents the results of regressing subordinate work attitude (dependent variable) on leader impression management strategy (independent variable) and social perception (2nd moderating variable). The outcome resulted a weak relationship between the independent variable and the dependent variable when the proposed moderator is in the regression, thus satisfying the third condition of a weaker relationship or no significance as espoused by Baron & Kenny (1989), and Chrobot-Mason (2003), for accepting a moderating effect. Consequently, the alternate hypothesis is accepted as a finding regarding full moderation (Wat & Shaffer, 2005).

5. Discussion of Findings

The moderating influences of social interaction and social perception in the significant relationship between leader impression management strategy and subordinate work attitude identified in this study, supports extant theoretical opinions. On social interaction, Deputter (2007) held that interactionists study how individuals enact and interpret their social worlds, including their surroundings, identities, obligations and interpersonal relationships. A progression of the meaning and interpretation process enable individuals to reactively and actively shape and construct their realities and determine their lives (Atkinson & Hammersely, 1994; Guba & Lincoln, 1994; Prus, 1996; Blumer, 1969). Samely, the interpretivist theory of “symbolic interactionism” explains that social activities encapsulate the identification of actions, interpretations and meanings individuals assign with other interactants. Regarding the thrust of this theory, Blumer (1960) highlighted three canonical factors as follows: firstly, human beings respond towards things based on the meanings things have for them; secondly, interactionists do not take meanings for granted, but view it as socially constructed; thirdly, meanings are dynamic and also accorded diverse interpretations. In essence, individuals make interpretations of objects, words, actions and situations that inform their behaviours.

On the same fortress of reasoning, the moderating influence of social perception in the significant relationship between leader impression management and subordinate work attitude found in this study, is similarly supported. According to Kreitner & Kinicki (2004), social perception entails a process where individuals perceive themselves and others in interactions. As noted by Gioia (1989), the most pressing cognitive tasks (overt or conscious and covert or unconscious) an individual has as an organizational experience is to make sense of the situation and account for it. Albert Bandura’s social cognitive theory, as cited in Sims & Lorenzi (1992) advanced that people are said to be active in their mutual influence process in a manner that the mental concept they have, their goals and perception of the environment prompt their behaviours. This implies that people behave in accordance with the mental schemas they have in their social interactions. Hence, meaning and sense making are critical factors in interpersonal behaviours.

A composite of our findings on the moderating influences of social interaction and social perception in the significant association between leader impression management strategy and subordinate work attitude validates the view that impression management do not occur in a cognitive vacuum. Rather, the construct is unavoidably dependent on social interaction and social perception (Frink, 2000). Gardner (1990) held that the two-way conversation that subsists between leaders and followers is uniquely bilateral in nature. On this score,

managers employ a vista of impression management tactics to render themselves positively evaluated by their subordinates as competent professionals with acumen, to earn their admiration (Yukl & Falbe, 1990; Yukl, 2010). When managers are accorded the respect and appreciation of their constituents, it positively accentuates their stretch of freedom to control and influence them (Wilt, 1995), as cited in Kacmar *et al.*, 1996; George, 2015).

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study found that the relationship between leader impression management strategy and subordinate work attitude, was moderated by social interaction and social perception. It was found that social interaction and social perception moderated the relationship between the predictor and the criterion variables. This portrays that when managers religiously impression manage the perception their subordinates have of them, it enhances their spectrum of control which will be prompted by the admiration and positive evaluation their constituents have when subordinates are accorded fair treatments, rewards and show of commitment by their superiors, they also reciprocate same gestures through attitudinal and behavioural compliance. Inferentially, we are inclined to argue that leader impression management tactics lead to subordinate work attitude under the moderating influences of social interaction and social perception.

In line with the findings and conclusions of this study, we make the following recommendations:

- (a) Managers in the Nigerian telecommunication industry, should exhibit effective interpersonal skills, when they interact with their subordinates in order to be positively perceived and evaluated by them.
- (b) Managers in the telecommunication industry should have the finesse to be sociable, when perceived by their subordinates, to be able to influence their desired work behaviours.
- (c) Managers in the Nigerian telecommunication industry should be savvy in relating with their subordinates, to enhance good quality leader-member-exchanges in harnessing attitudinal and behavioural compliance.
- (d) Managers in the Nigerian telecommunication industry should impression manage the perceptions of their constituents effectively as they relate with them, as a medium to earn their admiration and respect for the ease of influencing their attitudes and behaviours.

7. Implications

The findings of our study have both theoretical and practical implications. This study provides an empirical evidence that a significant association exist between leader impression management strategy and subordinate work attitude, under the moderated influences of social interaction and social perception. By extension, the study has equally filled existing gap in literature, as studies linking leader impression management (downward management) and subordinate work attitude are scanty (Hinkin & Schrieshelm, 1990, Kipnis *et al.* 1980). It is further proven that impression management as a psycho-social construct is both interactively and perceptually based (Frink, 2000), and a natural consequence of interpersonal behaviors.

Similarly, the outcomes of this study signify some realities for managerial practice. Foremost, it is instructive for managers and other chieftains of organizations to appreciate the realities and dynamics of impression management behaviours and how integral they are to organizational functioning and successes. This means that managers as leaders of their respective firms in the industry should effectively affect the perceptions their subordinates have of them, in prompting good quality leader-member-exchanges, as grounds for eliciting attitudinal and behavioural compliances. The outcome of this study, further places premium on the effective utilization of the assertive/disguistive impression managers in relating with their constituents to earn positive evaluation and admiration in influencing their attitudes and behaviours.

8. Suggestion for Further Studies

The limitations of this study inform multiple arenas for further investigations. First, the study should be replicated in other industries using bigger population sizes to enhance validity and basis for generalization. Second, other forms of IM tactics should be explored in relation to work attitudes, using social interaction and social perception as moderators. Third, the relationship between the IM ploy of exemplification and OCB behaviours should be investigated to reduce knowledge gap. Fourth, efforts should be hoisted at investigating the nexus between leader impression management strategy and other forms of work attitudes such as organizational loyalty using social interaction and social perception as moderating variables. Fourth, the study should be replicated in other contexts to confirm the potential influence leader impression management strategy has on work attitude, under the moderating influence of social interaction and social perception.

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