Does Self-Monitoring Affect The Relationship Between Job Insecurity and Impression Management?

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Abstracts

Previous studies found inconsistent results on the relationship between job insecurity and impression management. This study aims to investigate the moderating effect of self-monitoring on the relationship between job insecurity and impression management. Drawing on the job adaptation and self-monitoring theories, we expected that the relationship between job insecurity and impression management will be stronger for individuals with a high level of self-monitoring than for individuals with low level of self-monitoring. Data were collected among employees from various organizations in Jakarta (N = 281). We analyzed the data using Hayes' PROCESS macro on SPSS v.21. Results indicated that there was a significant positive effect of job insecurity and impression management (B = 0.20, SE = 0.069, $p < 0.01$, 95%CI = [0.0681, 0.3393], wherein individuals who feel insecure about their employment in the organization tend to show positive behaviors to impress others. However, there was no moderating effect of self-monitoring on the relationship between job insecurity and impression management (*B* = 0.04, *SE* = 0.125, *p* > 0.05, 95% *CI* [-0.2062, 0.2870]), indicating that regardless of their self-monitoring capability, individuals who feel insecure about their employment in the organization would show behaviors that impress others**. For practical implications, we suggest managers be aware of employees who show impression management but may not perform well. On the other hand, performing impression management may also reduce employees' perception of job insecurity and increase organizational image outside the organization.

Keywords: *Impression Management; Job Adaptation Theory; Job Insecurity; Self-Monitoring*

1. Introduction

As the global economy develops, the labor market in Indonesia is becoming more competitive. The Minister of National Development Planning of the Republic of Indonesia, Bambang Brodjonegoro, explained that the labor market is becoming more competitive in response to the implementation of ASEAN Economic Community (AEC) in 2016. As an implication of AEC, competition is not only happening locally but also among other ASEAN countries because a large number of foreign workers with higher competencies is entering the Indonesian labor market (Virdhani, 2016). This is a challenge for employees in Indonesia to prepare for the competition among employees. According to job advisor, Herman Yudiono, employees are required to show their best to face the increased competition among employees (Herlinda, 2016). In addition to mobilizing and improving competence, it is important for employees to be able to display a good impression. A good impression will help an employee to stand out among other coworkers to get the management's attention. In this case, the employee is performing impression management (Cuyper, Schreurs, Elst, Baillien, & Witte, 2014; Leary & Kowalski, 1990).

According to Leary and Kowalski (1990), impression management is a process in which individual tries to control someone else's impression of themselves. Bozeman and Kacmar (1997) state that impression management can be shown to make or maintain the desired identity as others see themselves. This will affect the situation and environment so that they can achieve the desired goals. Impression management can determine how much they are liked by others, what benefits they get, and how quickly they will get promoted (Bolino

et al., 2016). Other than for the many benefits of the employees (DuBrin, 2011), impression management also has an important role in shaping the resources in the organization that will affect the organization's ability to strive and grow (Bolino et al, 2016). In this study, we focus on how individuals tend to perform impression management.

Jones and Pittman (1982) explain that there are five dimensions of impression management that are also identified as tactics in impression management. The five dimensions of the tactics are: (1) ingratiation, which focuses to make others like him (attribution of likability); (2) intimidation, where one tries to convince another person that he is a dangerous person; (3) self-promotion, where one tries to show the competence it possesses: (4) exemplification, where one wants to gain integrity and moral honor such as to be seen as honest and generous; (5) supplication, where someone will show their vulnerability. Nagy, Kacmar, and Harris (2011) then divide the five tactics into two types based on the perception from the target, which is tactics that elicits a positive perception of the target (ingratiation, self-promotion, and exemplification) as well as the second type of tactics that create negative perceptions (intimidation and supplication). Bolino, Long, and Turnley (2016) found that positive tactics could make employees look better, more competent, and are considered as model employees. Based on the previous statement, this study will focus on positive impression management tactics because we are interested in knowing why one tries to look better in front of the target so that it can be more beneficial for them.

Bolino et al. (2008) and Nagy et al. (2011) describe several antecedents of impression management that can be divided into two factors, namely individual differences and situational factors. Individual differences factors are factors that come from within an individual such as age, gender, and self-monitoring or how one controls their self-expression (Nagy et al., 2011). Meanwhile, situational factors are factors derived from work environments, such as employee status, long distances between employees and supervisors and the existence of unfavorable and ambiguous situations at work that can lead to feelings of job insecurity in employees (Bolino et al., 2008; Cuyper, et al., 2014; Grant & Ashford, 2008; Huang, Niu, Zhao, Ashford, Lee, 2013).

As mentioned above, job insecurity is one of the situational factors that can lead to impression management. According to Sverke, Hellgren, and Näswall (2002), job insecurity is a subjective experience perceived as an anticipation of important and undesirable events related to job loss. This study focuses on job insecurity as the antecedent of impression management, because it is quite common in the workplace, where job insecurity is likely to be experienced by employees because of changes that occur in the organizations, such as changes in structure, policy, or other conditions that can increase their chances to be fired (De Witte, De Cuyper, Elst, Vanbelle, & Niesen, 2012). Staufenbiel and König (2010) then explained that job insecurity can be perceived as a challenge that motivates employees to make themselves more valuable to the company. Previous research conducted by Cuyper et al. (2014) and Huang et al. (2013) found that job insecurity was positively related to impression management behavior. Therefore, we argue when employees feel their job is being threatened, they will direct their behavior in a certain way to adjust to others' expectations so that the company knows that they are valuable. Thus, we predict:

H1. There is a positive effect of job insecurity on impression management.

Some previous studies found that job insecurity was positively correlated with impression management (Cuyper et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2013). However, Kang, Gold and Kim (2012) found different result, where job insecurity negatively affected impression management. These results indicate that the relationship between job insecurity and impression management is inconsistent, that there may be other variables affecting the relationship. Sverke and Hellgren (2002) mentioned that inconsistent results between these two variables allow for the role of a moderator variable which will affect the relationship and one of the possible moderators that were mentioned is individual differences. Huang et al. (2013) contended that there has only been few studies conducted on the role of individual differences as moderators on job insecurity and impression management relationship, despite the fact that it has been said individual differences may serve as moderators of the relationship between job insecurity and its possible responses (Greenhalgh & Rosenblatt 1984; Sverke & Hellgren, 2002). Huang et al. (2013) then suggested future research to examine self-monitoring as a moderator in the relationship between job insecurity and impression management.

Based on the suggestion given by Huang et al. (2013), in this study, we argue that self-monitoring moderates the relationship between job insecurity and impression management. Self-monitoring is one of the individual differences variables, defined as the ability of an individual to monitor his/her own self-presentation, expressive behavior, and non-verbal affective behavior (Snyder, 1974). Individuals with high self-monitoring will be more responsive to social cues and can adapt their behavior and expressions to the expectations of others, while individuals with low self-monitoring will behave in accordance with their dispositions regardless of their environment (Snyder, 1979).

Previous research by Bolino and Turnley (2003), Day and Schleicher (2006), and Turnley and Bolino (2001) have found that self-monitoring has a positive effect on impression management. Based on the job adaptation theory explained by Hulin (1991), the individual will perform a variety of adaptive behavior to reduce the feeling of dissatisfaction in the work environment. We argue that impression management can be a form of adaptive behavior that individual uses to reduce the discomfort they have as an effect of perceived job insecurity. Roznowski and Hulin (1992) added that individual differences play a role in choosing the adaptive behavior of the individual. Using job adaptation and supported by self-monitoring theory, we argue that self-monitoring moderates the relationship between job insecurity and impression management, in which people with high self-monitoring will do more impression management in response to job insecurity because they are more motivated to reduce their sense of job insecurity by trying to act on the expectations of others. On the contrary, when faced with job insecurity situations, people with low self-monitoring tend not to use impression management because they are unable to adapt to the expectations of others to discomfort situations.

H2: Self-monitoring moderates the relationship between job insecurity and impression management such that the positive relationship between job insecurity and impression management will be stronger on people with high self-monitoring versus people with low self-monitoring.

2. Methods

Sample. The respondents of this study are employees from nine organizations who are actively working on an organization for a minimum of one year. The status of the employees consists of two types of employment, permanent and non-permanent. The samples are taken from several types of organizations such as government, state-owned companies, and private companies in several industries such as oil and gas industry, banking, and technology. We separated data collection into two: first, we collected the predictor data, and two weeks later we collected the outcome data and the moderator data. We distributed 300 questionnaires to the organization. We received 281 completed data by the end of second data collection. From the total respondents, 154 respondents (54.8%) were male, while 127 respondents (45.2%) were female. The majority of respondents in this study were in the age range 20-38 years (43.77%), followed by 19-28 (30.6%), 39-48 years (18.15%), and 49-59 years (7.47%). The participants consisted of two types of work status, namely permanent employment status of 172 persons (61.2%) and non-permanent (contract worker) consists of 109 respondents or 38.8%.

Research Design. This study is a non-experimental study with a cross-sectional design (Kumar, 2011). To reduce common method bias, we employed temporal separation in which the data collection of predictors and outcome variables were separated by two weeks.

Instrument and Measurement. Our measures are as follows:

Impression Management. The scale used to measure impression management is Bolino and Turnley's Impression Management Scale (1999). This scale measures five tactics based on the dimensions described by Jones and Pittman (1982). However, this study only used three tactics (ingratiation, self-promotion, and exemplification) which consists of 12 items. We used a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The higher the score, the higher the level of impression management performed. One example of the items is "Compliment your colleagues so they will see you as likable". The alpha coefficient of this scale was 0.89.

Job Insecurity. Job insecurity is measured using Job Insecurity Questionnaire (JIQ) by De Witte (in Bosman, Buittendach & Rothman, 2005). This scale contains 11 items and uses a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The higher the score gained by participants, the higher the level of job insecurity they performed. One example of the items is "I think that I will be able to

continue working here". Alpha Coefficient of the scale was .80.

Self-Monitoring. The instruments used to measure self-monitoring is the Revised Self-Monitoring Scale developed by Lennox and Wolfe (1984) which was later adapted by Trikusumaningrum (2014). The Revised Self-monitoring Scale has 12 items using a Likert scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). The higher the score, the higher the level self-monitoring the participants have. One example of the items is "I can change my behavior according to the expectations of the environment". The alpha coefficient of this scale was 0.84.

Procedure. Researchers conducted a translate-back-translate procedure on Job Insecurity Questionnaire (JIQ) and Bolino and Turnley's Impression Management Scale with the help of an expert judgement. Before conducting the study, we conducted a pilot study on 40 respondents. From the pilot study, it was found that the reliability coefficient of impression management scale is .82, for job insecurity scale is .80, and self-monitoring scale is .88. Accordingly, we distributed 300 questionnaires directly to organizations. The questionnaires were distributed in approximately two months, March and April 2017. The statistical analyses techniques used to analyze our data are descriptive statistics (frequency, mean, variance, and deviation), Pearson correlation, and Hayes PROCESS macro on Statistical Package for the Social Science (SPSS), (Hayes, 2013).

3. Results

First, we conducted an analysis of the correlation between demographic data and the main variables of the study using Pearson Product-Moment Correlation technique. Correlation analysis is done to see if the main variables are correlated with one another and to see if there are demographic variables that need to be controlled in the moderation analysis. Table 1 shows means, standard deviations, and correlations between our study variables.

Based on table 1, it is shown that age has a significant negative correlation with impression management $(r = -0.235, p < 0.01)$ and job insecurity $(r = -0.1, p < 0.05)$. Table 1 also shows that employee status has a significant positive correlation with impression management $(r = 0.128\ p < 0.05)$ and job insecurity $(r = 0.309, p < 0.01)$. The result also suggests that job insecurity has a significant positive relationship with impression management $(r = 0.162, p < 0.05)$. In addition, impression management was also shown to have a significantly

positive relationship with self-monitoring $(r = 0.243, p < 0.01)$. Based on the above results, we control the effect of age and employment status in the moderation analysis. Then, we tested the moderation analysis using the regression method from Hayes on SPSS v.21.

Table 1
Demographic and Research Variables

	M	SD	1	2	3	4
Demographic Variables						
1. Age	33.8	8.31				
2. Employee Status	1.39	0.49	-.469**			
Research Variables						
3. Impression Management	2.71	0.64	-.235**	.128*		
4. Job Insecurity	2.26	0.52	-.100**	.309**	.162*	
5. Self-Monitoring	4.15	0.59	-.165**	.097	-.049	.243**

N = 281
*p < 0.05; ** p < 0.01. Employee Status is dummy-coded (1 = Permanent, 2 = Non-permanent). Age is measure in years.

Table 2 shows that 12.3% variance of impression management is explained by job insecurity, self-monitoring, and the interaction of job insecurity and self-monitoring. Hypothesis 1 stated that there is a positive effect of job insecurity on impression management. The result shows that there is a significant positive effect of job insecurity on impression management (Main Effect = 0.20, SE = 0.069, p < 0.01, 95%CI = [0.0681, 0.3393], therefore H1 is supported. Hypothesis 2 states that there is a moderating effect of self-monitoring on the relationship between job insecurity and impression management. Our results show that the interaction term of job insecurity and self-monitoring is nonsignificant (Interaction = 0.04, *SE* = 0.125, *p* > 0.05, *95%CI* [-0.2062, 0.2870]). Therefore, our H2 is not supported.

Table 2.
Means, Standard Deviation, and Intercorrelations Between Variables

Variables	Coeff (B)	SE
Status	-0.05	0.910
Age	-0.015*	0.005
Self-monitoring (SM)	0.25*	0.072
Job Insecurity (JI)	0.20*	0.069
SM x JI	0.04	0.125
R^2	0.123	
F	7.214	
ΔR^2	0.000	
ΔF	0.104	

*$p<0.01$

4. Discussion & Conclusion

Discussion. This study aims to examine the moderating effect of self-monitoring on the relationship between job insecurity and impression management. First, the results of statistical analysis show that there is a significant positive effect between job insecurity and impression management, supporting our first hypothesis. Based on this result, it shows that when someone feels insecure about their job, they will perform impression management. This result is consistent with previous research (De Cuyper et al., 2014; Huang et al., 2013). This is also in accordance with the theory of job adaptation proposed by Hulin (1991), that when someone is faced with an unpleasant situation, they will perform an adaptive behavior to overcome the situation. In this case, employees who are insecure about their employment in the organization would try to get others' attention by performing positive behaviors that would possibly impress them, such as giving compliments to other colleagues.

Our second hypothesis state the moderating effect of self-monitoring on the relationship between job insecurity and impression management. Contrary to our expectation, we found that self-monitoring did not moderate the relationship between job insecurity and impression management. This would mean that regardless of individual's capability to observe environmental cues and to adapt their behaviors accordingly, individuals who perceive that their employment in the organization is insecure would try to show positive behaviors to impress their colleagues, in the hope that their employment would be secured. However, there are other possible explanations for the disappointing results. First, there is a possibility of individual bias in the response given by the respondents. All instruments used in this study are self-reported and this may cause social desirability bias. Social desirability bias is a person's tendency to respond to items in a socially acceptable manner (Podsakoff et al., 2003). The present study was conducted in Indonesia, a country with high collectivistic culture (Hofstede, 2007). Lalwani, Shavitta, and Johnson (2006) and Triandis (in Johnson & Van de Vijver, 2003) found that collectivistic countries have higher levels of social desirability issues because they are more socially oriented and they value relationships with others. This creates the tendency to pretend in order to maintain their image in the society. Based on these findings, it is assumed that as a collectivist country, Indonesians have a higher social desirability and this may affect how respondents respond to self-administered surveys.

Second, moderating analysis requires the sample to be divided into various levels. However, participants' responses on self-monitoring are low in variability, in which the mean score is 4.15 (*SD* = .059) on a 6-point scale response. This indicates most participants were high on self-monitoring scale. Therefore, low levels of self-monitoring are not well represented by the participants used in this study. Both possible causes of nonsignificant moderating effect serve as the limitations of the present study. However, self-report survey is the most appropriate method to measure job insecurity, self-monitoring, and impression management because of these variables o concern about personal feelings and situations. We tried to minimize the common method variance effect in this study by separating data collection of predictor and outcome variables (Podsakoff et al., 2003). However, we suggest future research to employ longitudinal study that measures these variables over some period of time to overcome the bias of self-report study. Thus, we can see the consistency of this behavior for a period of time and reduce the potential of bias. Future studies can also use a wider range of participants to increase variability. Researchers also suggest trying other individual difference variables as moderators between job insecurity and impression management, such as core self-evaluation (Nagy et al., 2011) and Machiavellianism (Bolino & Turnley, 2003). High scores in core self-evaluation indicate positive view of self. In this case, the relationship between job insecurity and impression management would be more positive and significant among individuals with higher levels of core self-evaluation (versus individuals with

lower levels of core self-evaluation. We also suggest future studies to investigate whether individuals who use impression management have higher performance than individuals who do not use impression management.

For practical implications, based on the results of this study, organizations should be aware of employees who proactively use impression management tactics when they are faced with job insecurity. They may or may not actually perform well on-the-job. DuBrin (2011) explains that impression management has a positive effect on performance appraisal in which supervisors tend to like employees performing impression management regardless of their actual performance. On the other hand, impression management as a response to job insecurity may also be important for employees as a mechanism to increase their psychological well-being, career enhancement, cooperative work, and better relationships with co-workers (DuBrin, 2011). Huang et al. (2013) also found that proactive use of impression management as a response to high job insecurity actually reduced the level of job insecurity. Organizations can also take benefit from employees to use good impression management skill for the benefit of the organization by increasing organizational image.

Conclusions. As a conclusion, this study found a significant main effect of job insecurity on impression management. However, we failed to confirm the moderating effect of self-monitoring on job insecurity and impression management relationship. This study has limitations that might serve as a bias in the participant's responses, namely self-reported survey that may cause common method and social desirability biases, and cross-sectional design that may limit the causality of the study.

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