

POSTGRADUATE SEMINAR SERIES

Research Findings Seminar

Topic Title : **From Backstage to Front Stage: Understanding Dramaturgical Work Behavior in the Workplace**

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Abstract : Modern organizations often reward “looking busy” rather than genuinely contributing, prompting employees to engage in superficial displays of productivity. While impression management research has predominantly examined outcome-oriented tactics (e.g., self-promotion, exemplification), it has not fully captured the subtler, non-contributory forms of performative behavior that permeate everyday work life. To address this gap, this dissertation introduces Dramaturgical Work Behavior (DWB), a concept grounded in Goffman’s dramaturgical theory, which outlines how employees enact symbolic “front-stage” performances—such as feigned urgency or exaggerated busyness—to signal conformity without adding substantive value.

Study 1 establishes and validates a dedicated DWB scale through expert evaluations, exploratory factor analysis, and confirmatory factor analysis. This rigorous process ensures both reliability and construct validity, distinguishing DWB from conventional impression management tactics. Study 2 explores key antecedents, revealing how contextual factors (e.g., supervisor bottom-line mentality, job insecurity) and individual traits (e.g., self-monitoring, external locus of control) can heighten employees’ propensity to engage in these theatrical acts. Findings further illuminate how DWB exerts negative consequences across four domains: it undermines genuine task performance, induces psychological strain (e.g., burnout, anxiety), distorts employees’ cognitive processes (e.g., time misperception), and corrodes interpersonal relationships (e.g., coworker contempt, ostracism).

By conceptualizing, measuring, and empirically examining DWB, this dissertation advances impression management theory, highlighting an overlooked dimension of workplace behavior that can erode authenticity and productivity. In doing so, it offers both theoretical insights and practical guidance for organizations seeking to cultivate more transparent, meaningful forms of engagement and reward genuine contributions over surface-level performances.

Date : **26 March 2025, Wednesday**

Time : **14:30 – 16:30**

Venue : **SEK210, 2/F, Simon & Eleanor Kwok Building**

Language : **English**



*** *All are Welcome* ***