

## **Political Skills towards Personal Reputation Among Academicians in Malaysia: A Conceptual Study**

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### **Abstract**

Educational qualifications and skills by themselves are no longer sufficient to ensure an employee's continued professional success due to the industry's accelerating situation. Thus, in order to sustain a highly competitive labour market, another significant intangible asset that an employee ought to prioritise is having a strong personal reputation within the organisation. In any line of business, having a stellar personal reputation is vital because it helps employees stand out from the crowd. Globalisation that demands online interaction also urges all employees to have a pleasant reputation to win trust and confidence from customers and gain noble personality. Undeniably, great personal reputation enables individuals to have amazing career prospects, better recruitment, minimise negative sentiment and leads to high prestige as well as recognition from the company and the community. Moreover, it has been proven that social skills provide additional value to an employee's personal reputation. Therefore, the aim of this study is to provide a conceptual framework for investigating the roles of political skills, including its dimension: networking ability, interpersonal influence, social astuteness, and apparent sincerity, in relation to the personal reputation of academicians in Malaysia. We anticipate that by providing a research framework, future researchers will be able to evaluate the presented model and fill knowledge gaps in the field of research on academicians' personal reputation.

**Keywords:** Political Skills, Social Astuteness, Interpersonal Influence, Networking Ability, Apparent Sincerity, Personal Reputation, Academicians, Higher Institution.

### **Introduction**

Reputation signifies the sum of images that comprehend the combination of performance, behaviour, and communication (Doorley & Garcia, 2020). Personal reputation is the term used to describe an individual's past behaviours, actions, personality, human capital such as education, as well as social activity, including social and political skills (Gok, 2022). Hence, to

build an admirable personal reputation within an organisation, individuals employees should possess good behaviours as well as good competencies and talents in both their personal and professional lives. Individual employees should skillfully demonstrate themselves presentably in a professional manner, as this will continue to shape their image and personality, contributing to the development of their personal reputation over time. (Citra, 2018). People are driven by various motives to develop their personal reputation, for instance, a desire to gain approval from others and to maintain consistency in beliefs and behaviours across all aspects of life.

A great reputation not only increases the revenue of an organisation, but it also allows them to recruit and retain more competent, loyal personnel, drastically lowering hiring and turnover expenses. According to Chen et al (2021), in addition to job satisfaction, personal reputation deemed as a sense of triumph from the perspective of a subjective emotional reaction to achieving one's career success. Subsequently, Hennequin (2007) found individual employees would analyse their own personal success not only in terms of their solid financial status but also by looking at their reputation. Above all, personal reputation is critical to preserve lifetime employment (Zinko et al., 2017), however there is a lack of research investigate how individuals develop their personal reputation within the organisation. Thus, this study aims to address a conceptual framework on how individual employees might develop their own personal reputation in the context of academicians' personal reputation in Malaysia. Indeed, a reputable higher institution demands academicians who can uphold their personal reputations (Sanders et al., 2022).

## **Literature Review**

### *Academician's Personal Reputation*

It is believed that in the academic profession, it is essential to have a favourable personal reputation. This belief stems from the recognition that the value of academicians, including their intangible assets, is enhanced by maintaining a positive personal reputation. (Mai Ha et al., 2021). Moreover, the roles of academicians include communicating with a wide number of students, which entails developing their own professional image and personal reputation, while also serving as a platform for promoting and elevating the importance of the profession of "academicians" (Khrulyov & Khrulyova, 2020).

There are different methods and ways the academicians ought to do to achieve a reputable personality. The publication of academics' studies in top international journals is one of their most significant responsibilities. According to Arsyad et al (2019), the paybacks of publishing in reputable international journals include recognition for career advancement, self-satisfaction, promote personal integrity and interestingly enhance academicians' personal reputation. Furthermore, academicians who are driven to share their knowledge are believed to contribute to building their personal reputations, as they become recognised as experts in their fields (Akosile & Olatokun, 2019). Indeed, academicians' personal reputation is regarded as their extrinsic goal (Gegenfurtner, 2019).

The world of education that is highly influenced by globalisation drives academicians to utilise Twitter as a desire to enhance their personal reputation (Knight & Kaye, 2016). Additionally, they use social media for self-promotion and boost their reputation (Chugh et al., 2020). On top of that, one way to attain a positive personal reputation among academicians involves having proficiency in English or the local language, this proficiency can carry prestige and serve as a strategic communication tool. (Lauring et al., 2022). Overall, all the means and strategies to achieve reputable identity require an academician to understand the valuable

skills that could aid them in achieving the ideal personal reputation because reputation takes significant time and effort to build (Ang & Wight, 2009). Therefore, this research emphasis on the roles of political skills towards academicians' personal reputation in Malaysia.

### *Roles of Political Skills*

Earlier study on political skills found that persons with high political skill tend to have more favourable reputations (Munyon et al., 2015). Political skill is a social skill which allows an individual to negotiate with their surroundings to accomplish specific objectives while also gaining trust within that setting (Tiwari et al., 2021). Gansen-Ammann et al (2017) stated that the notion of political skill has numerous aspects, including networking ability, interpersonal influence, social astuteness, and apparent sincerity. In the context of academicians, political skills could help them enhance their fundamental and common skills such as literacy, communication and influencing abilities especially during online teaching (Oladele et al., 2021). Furthermore, political skills should encourage individuals to engage in cooperative behavior and consequently would contribute to positive personal reputation (Tasa & Bahmani, 2023).

In fact, in the context of higher education Wu et al (2019) claimed social astuteness refer to being keenly aware of the social environment in campus, interpersonal influence permit academicians to influence other academicians members to encourage them to align with the same mission, networking ability empowers the academicians to build network and collaborate with international peers and students, lastly apparent sincerity enable the academicians to enrich personal reliable reputation and uphold the coral values of universities for long-term development. Hence, given the relevance of all dimension of political skills in the higher education context, the present study employs political skills as a multi-dimensional construct (Wee et al., 2019). As political skills could be learned and developed Ferris et al (2007), it is strongly advised that academicians to equip themselves with political skills since it is a vital quality to possess in order to be successful at work (Ng, Hsu, & Parker, 2021; Sun et al., 2021).

### *Interpersonal Influence and Personal Reputation.*

According to Kranefeld et al (2020), interpersonal influence is the ability to speak convincingly with people at work. It is a key aspect of political skill that involves influencing behaviour in delicate, complex, and situationally effective ways (Schütte et al., 2016). Individuals with interpersonal influence should be able to demonstrate excellent rationality, which includes logical reasoning, the use of factual arguments to persuade others, the support of viewpoints with proved facts, and the provision of new information (Solga et al., 2014). According to Ferris et al (2019) framework, interpersonal influence has a beneficial effect on enhancing personal reputation. and suggested future study to analyse further on how interpersonal influence as political action can aid in the development of personal reputation. Teaching needs interaction not just with students, but also with other educators, administrative personnel, and students' parents. These interpersonal skills provide the foundation of good and consistent communication, which is required for academics (Archana et al., 2020).

### *Networking Ability and Personal Reputation.*

The pervasive use of social media and other digital platforms, along with the hyper-connected environment demanded by globalisation, creates new networking opportunities. Therefore, networking skills are crucial to sustain in the extremely competitive employment market.

Networking ability refers to the capacity to build varied social networks and use them to one's benefit (Davis et al., 2020). Owing to the ability to influence others, politically skilled workers are more likely to view the political climate as a chance to advance since they have more influence over it, which makes their environment more predictable (Hochwarter et al., 2020). Furthermore, capability in creating networking among the academicians enables them to achieve collective understanding, togetherness, integration as well as guaranteed beneficial flow of information and resources among them (Hangul et al., 2019). Consequently, politically skilled academicians that possessed networking ability could enrich their personal reputation (Fidan and Koç, 2020).

#### *Social Astuteness and Personal Reputation.*

The social astuteness dimension of political skill helps individuals in approaching important persons inside organisations who might be prospective mentors for them. Individuals who are socially aware may assess their work environment and the people around them and respond appropriately (Usman et al., 2022). They can appropriately comprehend and evaluate their social surroundings and behave in a socially acceptable way (Blickle et al., 2020). This dimension indicates the ability of the academicians to observe and easily adapt to new situation and have strong critical thinking skills (Bostanci, 2020). Along with former study by Ferris et al., (2007) proved that social astuteness as political skills dimension significant in developing personal reputation.

#### *Apparent Sincerity and Personal Reputation.*

According to Fidan & Koç, (2022) dimension of apparent sincerity is crucial to become politically skilled person because it makes people seen them as truthful, honest, and dependable. As a result, it is beneficial in influencing efforts. Factors that motivate people to act sincerity include social status and personal reputation (Baird et al., 2019). Honesty is a critical attribute in any professional position. Specifically, within the higher education context, apparent sincerity enables academicians to construct a personal dependable reputation while also upholding the basic values of universities for long-term development (Wu et al., 2019). Additionally, apparent sincerity could prevent academicians from interpreting actions of students or other academician members as manipulative or coercive (Kim et al., 2016).

### **Research Gap**

In an organisation, reputation has been connected to authority, professional advancement, autonomy, and trustworthiness (Zinko et al., 2012). Despite its numerous paybacks, there is a lack of research investigating how personal reputation is developed in the organisation. Former study by Laird et al (2008) analysed the personal reputation building in the organisation. This study suggested future research to investigate further political skills and influence tactics that could contribute towards personal reputation. Moreover, Laird et al (2013) highly recommend future study to examine each dimension of political skills to find out which of it has the positive impact towards personal reputation development in the organisation. Furthermore, a study on personal reputation development continued by Zinko et al (2017) and suggested researchers discover in depth the construct of personal reputation and characteristics that a person may have to build reputation successfully. Last but not least, recent study by Gok (2022) provides broad literature review on personal reputation in the organisation. This study encourages researchers to further analyse the theoretical structure of personal reputation development and explore how individuals play a role. Figure 1

illustrates gaps discovered in personal reputation studies that motivated present study to develop conceptual framework on personal reputation building.

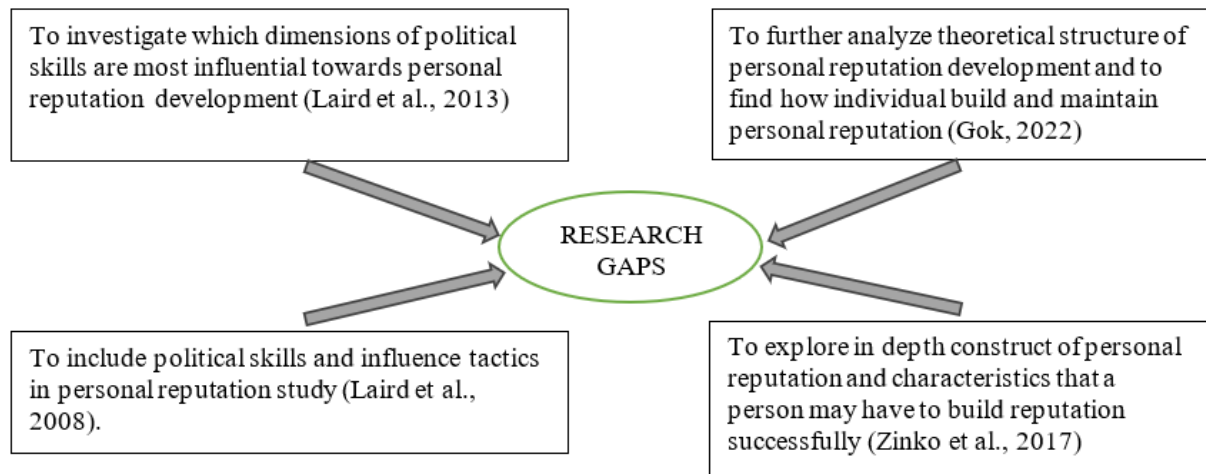


Figure 1. Gaps in personal reputation studies

### Research Model and Hypotheses

The main objective of this study is to propose the conceptual framework in identifying role of political skills towards academicians’ personal reputation in Malaysia. Figure 2 presents role of political skills dimension namely interpersonal influence, networking ability, social astuteness, and apparent sincerity towards the development of the academicians’ personal reputation in Malaysia. The conceptual framework and the development of hypotheses are based on the reviewed literature described at length in the previous section. Therefore, the researcher postulates that

- H1: Interpersonal influence has a positive relationship with academicians’ personal reputation.
- H2: Networking ability has a positive relationship with academicians’ personal reputation.
- H3: Social astuteness has a positive relationship with academicians’ personal reputation.
- H4: Apparent sincerity has a positive relationship with academicians’ personal reputation.

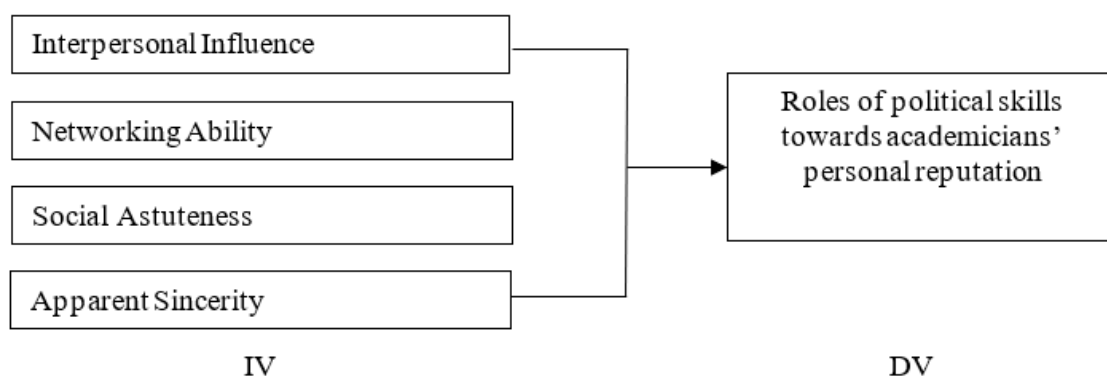


Figure 2. Conceptual Framework



## Recommendation

As a conclusion, this study shall benefit the Ministry of Higher Education (MOHE) in understanding the motivation and success factors of academicians to do well their career. By being able to identify skills that enhance a person's personal reputation, higher education provider shall equip their staffs with the right interpersonal skills and competencies. Additionally, an ability to have a good personal reputation will ensure that academicians possess a rapport and positive relationship with fellow students which eventually contribute to a higher teaching and learning quality.

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