

Preference for Leadership Styles in High and Low Machiavellians

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Abstract—The purpose of this study was to determine the preferred leadership style of people who have found to be high and low on Machiavellianism. The study established that people high on Machiavellianism personality attribute would show a different leadership style as compared to people with low Machiavellianism. For this purpose, three hundred and thirty men/women graduate and post graduate students and executives working at supervisory/ managerial level having a minimum of total three years' experience were selected randomly from different geographical background and having different socio-economic status. The sample was administered a battery of tests which included: Mach IV Scale, and Leadership Style Indicator along with the demographic sheet. The data has been statistically analyzed using suitable descriptive and inferential statistics, central tendencies, measurement of variability and measurement of correlation to determine the relationships that exist between the variables. Individuals on their basis of their scores on Mach IV scale have found to differ significantly in terms of their preference for selection of leadership styles. Different leadership styles were indicated by individuals with high and low Mach IV scores. Alpha levels of used measures are moderately high and have found to be significant. Correlation values are found significant at 0.01 level.

Index Terms—Leadership styles, machiavellianism, tactics

I. INTRODUCTION

Almost six decades ago, an Italian philosopher Nicolo Machiavelli gave the concept of a personality type called Machiavellianism in the context of power and politics. Underlying it are the concepts of manipulation, power hunger, exploitation and justifying any act (fair or otherwise) which result in goal achievement. The individuals who have labeled as High Machs (Machiavelli) are likely to get involved in behaviors to achieve their goals by any means.

Individuals with high Machiavellianism attribute may tend to rationalize use of fair or unfair means in order to achieve what they desire. Research supports that High Machs (Machiavellians) have found to be high achievers in different endeavors of their lives;

Academic, vocational or personal as compared to people who are Low Machs. High Machs can manipulate situations in their own benefits, they are found to be highly adaptable

to the environment which further helps them to attain their desired goals and objectives. High rate of goal achievement may likely to result in a smooth sailing both in academic and professional environment which may further strengthen their belief that ends can justify means.

Personality traits and leadership styles have long been studied with various situational variables. A popular style of leadership is charismatic style and it is said to be acquired through our genetic map [1] and that leaders and non-leaders can be differentiated on the basis of certain personality traits [2]. It was concluded that neuroticism is negatively related to emergence and effectiveness of a leader, whereas extraversion has found to be positively related to it [3]. Having more positive dispositional effects result in better [4] and more charismatic [5] and transformational leadership behaviors [6].

Manipulating people and things around indicates presence of strong leadership skill in High Machs. Leadership is said to be able to influence people around to get the goals achieved. Leadership is further characterized by competency, knowledge, emotional intelligence, interpersonal skills, etc. individuals differ on selection of leadership styles in accordance to their personality type. Since the notion here is Machiavellianism – it is assumed that people with high and low Machiavellianism possess different styles of leadership and this difference in their leadership styles makes difference in the probability of their goal achievement again.

Cold-blooded, cynical, evil were words used to describe Machiavelli writings, but it was surely his way to rebuild his political career, it was his attempt to reinstate his political life and in a way where he became an advisor on how the governments must be run effectively.

The Prince constitutes a political theory which says that Political decision making and judgments all rest with the use of coercive power i.e. people obey because they fear the consequences of not obeying. In his theory, Machiavelli concludes that goodness and being right are not enough to gain power in political high offices. It is more vital for the person in power to know how he must use his power and how can he influence his people by maneuvering things around. "It is necessary to a prince, if he wants to maintain himself, to learn to be able not to be good, and to use this and not use it according to necessity" — Niccolo Machiavelli

The term Machiavellianism became popular in 16th century but the concept was mainly about gaining power and being deceptive and manipulative within political context. It is applied in politics where person is not good enough in his own capacity but by manipulating people around him and making some cunning moves he gets the thing done. High Machs are more difficult to be driven and persuaded by other people around them. They tend to influence others

Manuscript received December 9, 2016; revised May 1, 2017.

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more and they do not get influenced! Later the term is used in workplace where being manipulative and deceptive to the extent to achieve personal and organizational goals is taken as 'good' employees characteristics. They have found to be more successful in jobs which require negotiations and bargaining as a key skill and also where good enough rewards are offered on achievement of goals.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Significance of personality traits in predicting human behavior has long been studied. The most popular Big Five Personality model [7] relates personality to working environment. It has been found that Big Five Personality model helps to determine the career choice of a person, for example openness to experience and neuroticism have found to be related to career exploration, whereas extraversion and conscientiousness tends to predict limited career exploration variable [8].

In exploring personality, researchers have not only labeled certain displayed characteristics but they have also found some personality attributes which determine the success of a person in different phases of life. And further to this, they have found strong correlation in some of those attributes with success rate at the workplace. Locus of Control, Risk-taking, Self-Monitoring and Machiavellianism are some of those important attributes. The concept of Locus of Control has been studied a lot and it has been found that those who have high internal locus of control are more successful at workplace as compared to those with external locus of control [9]. Risk taking attribute have also found to be more successful where decisions are required to be taken at a fast pace and innovation is sought.

The attribute Machiavellianism is first introduced in Machiavelli famous book "The Prince" where he talked about rules to attain and exercise power. The main character of the book, an Italian prince is willing to do everything and anything to gain and maintain power. Machiavelli stated that successful leaders must be cold, calculating and must never feel guilt or shame for manipulating others to acquire power. The concept outlines use of fraud, force and terror in a nice manner to acquire, extend and retain power. High Machiavellianism person will exercise a control over information / communication to alter general perception of the public and disown the political moves made by his people. In other words, the big political figureheads get their lackeys to do their dirty work and then use them as scapegoats.

Machiavelli wrote "Any person who decides in every situation to act as a good man is bound to be destroyed in the company of so many men who are not good. Therefore, if the Prince desires to stay in power, he must learn how to be not good and must avail himself of that ability, or not, as the occasion requires" [10]. It simply means that a person who wants to achieve success and be considered as a skillful and capable being should also be capable of doing some manipulation and exploitation of the situation as and when require. A person must learn to alter his actions and learn the difference between the ethics and the demands put up by his professional life. If a person decides to hold-on to the value systems and his ethical beliefs, the professional life

demands are bound to counter these beliefs, the result would be a dissatisfied and unsuccessful individual. A successful person must learn to not only differentiate between the personal values and professional demands but also he should be highly self-monitored to change his action according to the situation around him.

Machiavelli writings are conveying contrasting messages to his readers about him [11]; he may appear as a human and at the same time a beast that is propagating his evil thoughts on how to gain and retain power. Though Machiavelli lost his political life (1512) but to him politics was life! He couldn't live without it, after being arrested, tortured and then released he lived a life of poverty at his family farm but he clung to politics through his writings. In his book "The Prince" he proposes a plan for gaining and retaining power through practical though not idealistic approaches. His prince is unmoved by ethical and moral values and concentrate on gaining power by making different moves and manipulating situations. His prince makes political moves which are free of moral and ethical entanglements. Machiavelli frames a political space where no religion and moral values exist, if they do not serve political ends.

High Machs are more prone to be part of politics at workplace and hence they view others' moves as political too as compared to low Machs [12].

Selection of influencing tactics vary between high and low Machs [13] Where high Machs are more focused on attainment of goals and successes, found assertive in their approaches in problem solving and manipulative where they can. High Machs tend to use indirect, emotional appeals and reward-based influencing tactics. In addition to this, high Machs prefer usage of positive emotional persuasion techniques like friendliness and flattery but as they are goal-focused they use tactics like these in stronger manner. Machiavellianism involves manipulating other for personal gains and success. It is a social conduct strategy where high Machs advocate the idea that people should believe in what they do rather than people should do what they believe in [14].

A study found that subordinates tend to use Machiavellian tactics to influence superiors and even the relationship can be affected negatively [15]. Subordinates with high Machiavellian trait would be able to exercise control over work situations and their supervisors by influencing them in group discussions specially at critical decision making phases. High Machs tend to actively participate and give more rich information and input in term of ideas and analysis while in group discussions [16].

The differences in charisma, ethics, personality, and Machiavellian characteristics of male and female marketing students was studied [17]. Addressing a major concern of the organizations these days on exercising ethical behavior, this study explored the relationship between gender and willingness to get involve in unethical behavior. Females have found to be high academic achievers and ethical oriented as compared to their male counterparts but no significant difference could be made in Machiavellian and Personality Type A/B scores with respect to genders.

The extent to which manager, manager-to-be, MBA students and faculty members exhibit the manipulative skills and how these skills are related to the concept of leadership

[18]. Machiavellianism scale and the Theory X & Theory Y leadership scale were used and it was found that MBA students are more Machiavellianism than managers and to the top of the list faculty members scored highest on the scale. It was found that Machiavellianism tends to be negatively related to participative leadership attitudes for both students and managers.

The relationship between Machiavellianism and various leadership styles have been studied a lot and findings conclude that high Machs prefer autocratic leadership traits, they also show preference for group discussions and high interactions among the members of the group as compare to low Machs. Studies also indicated that group leadership or leadership effectiveness is not related to Machiavellianism. High Machs are effective in face-to-face interactions [19]. Additionally, high Machs seem to prefer certain styles of interaction such as “asking for information and directing or making suggestions for action and, finally, to making greater use of negative socio-emotional interaction”. As soon as size of the group increases, reducing the chances of direct interaction, high Machs become ineffective in trying out their influencing tactics in order to achieve goals.

Ethical Leadership was studied and findings suggest that Organizations are eager to know the ways to select, recruit and retain ethical leaders [20]. The construct of ethical leadership has similarities & differences with other constructs of leadership. With lots of scandals & anti-social behaviors reflected in the organizational setting importance of ethical leadership has emerged as a strong indicator. Certain personality traits like integrity, honesty, trust have found to be the basic requirement of any leadership which altogether constitutes ethical leadership construct. Machiavellian personality attribute apparently would not care for these traits when they believe that ‘ends can justify means’...another aspect of ethical leadership poses that how far the leadership is successful in influencing ethical or unethical behavior of their subordinates.

Considering the effect of Machiavellian personality traits on the use of influence tactics [13]. It was explored that the moderating effect of a Machiavellian disposition on the relationship between sources of motivation and influence tactics [21]. Leaders engage in behaviors at the workplace that are intended to influence their subordinates’ actions [22], and leadership is an interpersonal activity [23] that has been studied extensively in the workplace [24].

Leadership styles, Machiavellianism, and needs of Saudi Arabian managers was studied [25], it was found that cultural and religious orientation of Saudi Managers greatly influenced their scores on Machiavellianism and their leadership styles. They were found to be lower on Machiavellianism as compare to US managers though their need for achievement was positively related with need for power and their preference for structured leadership style. Since Saudi Arabian society is a strict culturally and religiously grounded society the findings reflect the same. Lower Machiavellian scores indicated high moral ethical values as promoted by the religion Islam. Saudi society is a cultural and traditionally rich society as well, they had tribal history also which again promotes grounded ethical and moral standards leaving less room for the inhabitants to manipulation of people around them.

Emotional intelligence, Machiavellianism and emotional manipulation were investigated [26] and findings revealed that Machiavellianism has found to be negatively correlated with self-report and performance EI, and also with Agreeableness and Conscientiousness. The important revealing point in these studies is that Emotional manipulation was positively correlated with Mach but unrelated to EI. Though high Machiavellians demonstrate emotionally-manipulative behavior, but this still needs to be checked out that whether they are successful in this behavior because emotional intelligence and Machiavellianism have negative association. High Machs exhibit emotionally detached behavior in their social interactions; empathy and Machiavellianism have found to be negatively correlated [27], [28]. High Machs are also found to be incapable of reading and understanding others emotional states because they are more focused on their own personal gains [29].

Machiavellians negative correlation with self-report EI can be due to the factor that Machiavellians seek more socially desirable responses and self-report results could be affected by that desire. Studies indicated that high Machiavellians lack emotional skills [28]. High Machiavellians prefer emotional manipulation but cannot put the strategies to use because of their desire to keep emotional distance in their interactions [30].

Must Entrepreneurs be Machiavellians? The study investigated the possibility of getting involved in Machiavellian behavior of being cunning, ruthless, manipulative, and exploitative in business men as they tend to focus more on profit making. As they undertake new business ventures (entrepreneurs) they are more exposed to risk, which in turn result in Machiavellian behavioral patterns [29]. Need for achievement, locus of control and Type A have found to be some of the characteristics to be present in successful entrepreneurs. Other personal attributes, i.e. abilities, attitudes, skills and knowledge are also important determinants of an entrepreneurial mindset.

A list of competencies of entrepreneurs was developed [31] which consist of taking initiatives, seeing& acting on opportunities, determination, seeking information, focus on high quality of work, work commitment, being efficient, organizing & planning systematically, solving problem, being confident, being assertive, persuasive, using influence strategies. All these characteristics are found in the prince - the ruler of the state as put forward by Machiavelli. This establishes that an entrepreneur must be a Machiavellian to be successful.

Perceiving that Machiavellianism is related to unethical behavior would be wrong. The research findings suggest that high Machiavellians tend to behave less ethically than low Machiavellians when there are less chances of being caught. Low Machiavellians may take into consideration from whom they are stealing whereas high Machiavellians may not get into that discrimination. Although Machiavellianism appears to be unrelated with the actual frequency of lying, high Machiavellians have found to be more convincing liars than low Machiavellians. As compared to low Machiavellians, high Machiavellians seem more willing to engage in deceptive and self-serving forms of impression management and are capable to project themselves as confident even when they might lack it.

Machiavellians are people who keep themselves emotionally detached and they are not concerned with moral principles of morality like being fair with others, being loyal, manipulation of others, and fairness in distribution of rewards. High Machs are not to be easily manipulated by people around them. Generally High Machs are perceived as having tendency to take advantage of situation and opportunities which come their way. But the likelihood of them to get engage in unethical behavior is more or less same as the likelihood of low Machs. High Machs should not be necessarily viewed as exercising unethical behavior or being habitual liars or manipulators. They rather sacrifice values and ethics to achieve goals.

It was found that a positive relationship exist between Machiavellianism and formal control and job strain [32]. They reported a negative relationship with job satisfaction [33]. It was found that people with Machiavellian orientation do not show willingness to share knowledge. Willingness to share knowledge is a helping behavior which is a contradictory trait to being High Machiavellian. High Machs have found low on exhibiting helping behavior as they want to keep their control and exercise power over others.

Machiavellianism is also studied under negotiating organizational change. It was studied the role of leaders and top management teams and the nature and level of power which they possess perform an important role in negotiating organizational change [34]. They identify role of strong leadership as critical to the successful implementation of change. People who are high Machiavellians have this ability to enhance commitment and readiness to change. In an organization it is the role of a manager not only to bring change but make his subordinates accept it readily and also commit to the change. A high Machiavellianism will be able to create that vision by describing the outcomes of change as favorable to the organization and its people; he would be able to develop support by exercising his power on his people.

In 1960s a test was developed for measuring level of Machiavellianism in a person, popularly known as Machiavellianism IV Scale [14]. It is a 20 item scale. It is now the standard self-assessment tool of Machiavellianism. People scoring 60 out of 100 on Machiavellianism IV are considered as high Machiavellians. Manipulation is studied as one of the most common variables under Machiavellianism concept, it defined successful manipulation as “a process by which the manipulator gets more of some kind of reward than he would have gotten without manipulating and someone else gets less, at least within the immediate context.” [14] High Machiavellians have found to come out as winners in certain situations where there is an opportunity for them to manipulate and when they are face to face with low Machiavellians they tend to control the situation and win. Low Machiavellians on the other hand get themselves involved emotionally with others and hence lose.

It was elaborated that Machiavellian personality has a charisma which enables them to exercise power and control over others [14]. They portray high Machs as having more confidence, take pride in them, and not to be trusted. High Machs are less emotionally involved people and they have difficulty in expressing their feelings for any relation

development. As compared to Low Machs who appear more considerate, kind & having social interactions [35].

Rationale of the Study - the study has been undertaken to provide a better and culturally relevant understanding on Machiavellianism and different leadership styles.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Problem

To seek if any difference exists in selection of leadership styles between High and Low Machs.

B. Hypothesis

High and Low Machiavellians individuals would indicate a preference for different leadership styles.

C. Sample

Three hundred and thirty men/women age range between 25-40 years having minimum graduation degree were selected randomly, belonging to different geographical and socio-economic background administered with the battery of tests (Machiavellianism IV Scale and Leadership Style Indicator).

D. Measures

Demographic sheet demographic sheet consisted of five items: age, gender, marital status, academic level and total household income.

- 1) *Machiavellianism*. The Machiavellianism IV scale commonly known as MachIV Scale [14]. The scale is 20-item scale of statements scored on a 7-point response category: (1) strongly agree, (2) agree, (3) slightly agree, (4) neither agree nor disagree, (5) slightly disagree, (6) disagree, (7) strongly disagree. The Mach-IV Machiavellianism scale produced a norm split-half reliability of .79.
- 2) *Leadership Style Indicator Scale*. The Leadership Style Indicator [36]. It is a 20-item scale of statements, to be scored on a 5-point response category: (5) strongly agree, (4) agree, (3) neither agree nor disagree, (2) disagree, (1) strongly disagree. The total 20-item Scale Cronbach's $\alpha = 0.68$.

E. Procedure

The researcher contacted three hundred and thirty men and women on random basis with minimum graduation as education level with different geographical and socio-economic background were administered the battery of tests (Machiavellianism IV Scale and Leadership Style Indicator).

(Mean, Median, Mode), Measurement of variability (variance, standard deviation), Measurement of correlation (Pearson r) has been applied to measure relationship between the variables.

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

TABLE I: INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF LEADERSHIP STYLE INDICATOR

	Standardized Items	N of Items	N
Cronbach's Alpha			
.738	.831	30	330

Table I illustrates that internal consistency of Leadership Style Indicator is .834 which is highly reliable.

TABLE II: INTERNAL CONSISTENCY OF MACHIV

Cronbach's Alpha	Standardized Items	Items	N
.791	.741	20	330

Table II illustrates that internal consistency of MachIV Scale .741 which is highly reliable.

TABLE III: DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS OF MACHIV AND THE SIX SUB-SCALES OF LEADERSHIP STYLE INDICATOR

	Mean	SD
MachIV	68.39	13.55
Pioneer Leadership	16.96	4.739
Strategic Leadership	16.98	5.718
Management & Administration	14.32	5.64.739
Team Leadership	17.20	4.739
Pastoral Leadership	14.98	4.739
Encouraging Leadership	14.49	4.739

Table III illustrates the descriptive statistics for MachIV Scale and the six sub-scales of Leadership Style Indicator. N=330.

TABLE IV: COORELATION VALUES OF MACHIAVELLIANISM AND SIX SUB-SCALES OF LEADERSHIP STYLE INDICATOR

	Coorelation value***
MACHIV & Pioneer Leadership	.712
MACHIV & Strategic Leadership	.656
MACHIV & Management & Administration	-.358
MACHIV & Team Leadership	-.051
MACHIV & Pastoral Leadership	-.292
MACHIV & Encouraging Leadership	-.423

Table IV illustrates the correlation values for MachIV Scale and the six sub-scales of Leadership Style Indicator. N=330.

*** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (1-tailed).

V. DISCUSSION

To determine the different leadership styles preferred by Low Machs and High Machs, a measure Leadership Style Indicator (LSI) was used, α values are 0.834 (see Table I) are good enough to establish internal consistency of the scale. The α values for MachIV is 0.831 (see Table II), high α values indicate that items are positively related and are in harmony with each other. This further establishes that the sample is exposed to global perspective. Both the measures established a high internal consistency which signifies that the scales have not created any cultural and social barriers.

The hypothesis of the study attempted to establish whether different leadership styles are exhibited by High and Low Machs. For this purpose, the Leadership Style Indicator was administered indicating six different leadership styles: Pioneer, Strategic, Management, Team,

Pastoral and Encouraging. Every style signifies use of different influencing strategies. Pioneer leadership style indicates people who are willing to push themselves and take appropriate risks in striving to move forward to discover and reach long term goals. The first three styles appear similar to that of High Machs attributes i.e. Strategic Leadership style talks about people who have the insight and focus to work out ways of achieving the vision, see how the seemingly can be achieved. Management/ Administration style people who are capable to solve problems, plan, delegate and organize. The Team Leadership indicates a profile of people who have the desire to work with others and an ability to trust them. They ensure harmony and effectiveness in the way the group works. People with Pastoral Leadership style are called real 'people people' they are highly supportive. Encouraging Leadership Style people are capable of motivating individuals, support people and when to coach and guide them.

To further establish this descriptive and correlation values were calculated (see Table III & IV). The values for each sub-scale are .712 for Pioneer, .656 for Strategic, -.358 for Management & Administration, -.051 for Team, -.292 for Pastoral and -.423 for Encouraging. These values indicate two interesting patterns; first is that High Machs have shown a preference for Pioneer and Strategic Leadership Styles which matches the characteristics of High Machs as risk takers, focus on goals and achievements, push themselves to discover the ways in order to achieve the assigned tasks. The first three leadership style closely relates with high Machs profile and the last three are more similar to not to take leading role as leadership requires influencing people, taking risks, planning and finding ways to achieve their goals and objectives which all seem contradictory to their personality mapping.

A more interesting pattern establishes where we see almost no preference for any leadership style by Low Machs. Apparently the Low Machs prefer not to take leading role as leadership requires influencing people, taking risks, planning and finding ways to achieve their goals and objectives which all seem contradictory to their personality mapping. Low Machs may fear taking risks and may not feel comfortable in finding ways (by hook or by crook) to achieve the desired goal as compare to High Machs.

VI. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that High and Low Machiavellians prefer selection of different leadership styles that match their respective personality attributes. Since High Machiavellians are goal-focused people, they tend to use manipulative and exploitative tactics to influence people around them so they indicated inclination towards a more dominating, persuading and autocratic kind of leadership styles. Whereas Low Machs indicated a preference for those leadership styles which signifies supporting, coaching and people-oriented use of strategies. The findings of the study further established that High Machs prefer those styles of leadership which matches their personality attributes like risk taking, focus on achieving goals, keeping people motivated on goal path and solving problems. An astounding finding is where Low Machs failed to establish any clear preference for leadership styles. This can be explained as Low Machs have no intention to take leadership role and probably they are more comfortable in

the 'follower' role where they are not required to take lead and manipulate situations in order to achieve the desired goals.

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