



Male and female face of Machiavellianism: Opportunism or anxiety?



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ABSTRACT

The relationship between Machiavellianism and emotion management features is highly debated. In our study we try to clarify the controversial findings by highlighting the role of gender differences. Three studies with different (undergraduate and employed) participants were conducted to investigate gender differences in Machiavellianism-related personality characteristics. We used different measures of Machiavellianism and explored their connection with temperament and character traits (Study 1), with scales of six-factor (HEXACO) model of personality (Study 2), and with different types of psychopathy and narcissism (Study 3). Our results show that there are gender differences in the connection of Machiavellianism and other personality traits, and that most of the differences were found in the field of emotion management. We found that women's Machiavellianism scores were correlated with harm avoidant, anxious, vulnerable, hypersensitive features, while Machiavellianism among men was associated with risk taking, self-confidence, and an opportunistic worldview.

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1. Introduction

1.1. Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism refers to individuals' tendency to use other people as tools to maximize their personal benefits and to achieve their goals (Bereczkei, 2015; Christie & Geis, 1970; Fehr, Samsom, & Paulhus, 1992; Wastell & Booth, 2003). According to Christie and Geis (1970), Machiavellian worldview is a measurable individual-difference variable including three core domains: (1) intention and ability to use manipulative tactics, (2) cynical view of human nature and (3) disregard for conventional morality. Individuals who strongly endorse Machiavellian attitudes are usually described as callous, untrustworthy, calculating, egocentric, self-serving, exploitative and deceitful (e.g. Austin, Farelly, Black, & Moore, 2007; Christie & Geis, 1970; Fehr et al., 1992; Jones & Figueredo, 2013).

Those high in Machiavellianism exhibit flexibility and external control as a key part of their behavioral strategy when interacting with others. For example, those high in Machiavellianism intensively monitor their partners' behavior in social situations and change their tactics if the characteristics of the given situation require such a change (Czibor & Bereczkei, 2012; Jonason & Krause, 2013; Jones, 2014; Jones & Paulhus, 2009a, 2009b). Machiavellianism can also be characterized

by behavioral opportunism; individuals high in Machiavellianism are usually concerned with maximizing their own profit, without concern for the interest of their exchange-partners (Bereczkei & Czibor, 2014; Fehr et al., 1992; Gunnthorsdottir, McCabe, & Smith, 2002; Sakalaki, Richardson, & Thépaut, 2007). Overall, those high in Machiavellianism tend to exhibit a selfish and flexible behavioral style in their interactions with others.

1.2. Machiavellianism and other personality traits

Machiavellianism is one of three personality traits referred to as the Dark Triad – including subclinical psychopathy and subclinical narcissism – which have been studied as distinct but overlapping dimensions of exploitative personality (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). Together, the Dark Triad traits have a shared tendency towards callousness, emotional coldness, and aggressive, manipulative behavior (Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013; Paulhus & Williams, 2002). However, Machiavellianism represents a distinctive profile in the cluster of dark personality traits. Machiavellianism facilitates long-term strategizing, and lower levels of impulsivity (Jones & Paulhus, 2010, 2011; Reidy, Zeichner, & Martinez, 2008) compared to psychopathy and narcissism. Machiavellianism is also developmentally more sensitive to environmental cues than the other two traits (Vernon, Villani, Vickers, & Harris, 2008; Veselka, Schermer, & Vernon, 2011).

Several studies have also investigated the relationship between Big Five personality traits and Machiavellianism. These studies have found

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that Machiavellianism is negatively associated with Agreeableness and Conscientiousness (Austin et al., 2007; Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006; Jonason, Koenig and Tost, 2010; Jonason, Li and Teicher, 2010; Lee & Ashton, 2005; Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Vernon et al., 2008; Veselka, Schermer, & Vernon, 2012). Furthermore, studies using the HEXACO model of personality have revealed that Machiavellianism is negatively correlated with Honesty/Humility (De Vries & van Kampen, 2010; Jonason & McCain, 2012; Lee & Ashton, 2005).

The nature of the relationship between Machiavellianism and the Neuroticism trait of the Big Five personality traits, however, has been the subject of some debate. Studies using different measures of the Big Five personality traits (e.g. BFI, NEO-PI-R, IPIP scales) have variously found positive (Austin et al., 2007; Kessler et al., 2010; Monaghan, Bizumic, & Sellbom, 2016; Szijjártó & Bereczkei, 2015; Veselka et al., 2012) or no correlation (Austin et al., 2007; Jakobwitz & Egan, 2006; Lee & Ashton, 2004; Paulhus & Williams, 2002) between Machiavellianism and Neuroticism. Additionally, another study found a weak negative correlation between Machiavellianism (measured by IPIP scale) and Emotionality (HEXACO) and Neuroticism (5-Dimensional Model of Personality) respectively (De Vries & van Kampen, 2010). A more recent study found a negative association between Emotional stability (i.e., the opposite of Neuroticism; BFI-S) and Machiavellianism (German Machiavellianism Scale) among men, but weak positive association among women (Rauthmann, 2012).

1.3. Machiavellianism and emotion management

In addition to the conflicting findings regarding the relationship between Machiavellianism and the emotional stability factor of the five-factor personality model, the relationship between Machiavellianism and emotion management is also unclear. Research aimed at exploring the relationship between Machiavellianism and emotion management, concentrates mainly on two central topics: firstly, on the emotional intelligence of Machiavellian individuals, that is, how they process emotions and emotional information (Salovey & Mayer, 1990), and secondly, on the correlates between Machiavellianism and emotional problems: anxiety and depression.

1.3.1. Machiavellianism and emotional intelligence

Some have proposed Machiavellianism to have a positive association with emotional intelligence (EI) due to the often-successful manipulation tactics employed by those high in Machiavellianism (e.g., Jones & Paulhus, 2009a, 2009b). However, empirical investigations of this relationship found a negative correlation between trait EI and Machiavellianism (Ali, Amorim, & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2009; Austin et al., 2007; Pilch, 2008; Szijjártó & Bereczkei, 2015). This negative correlation suggests that those higher in Machiavellianism have difficulty or a decreased motivation to process the emotional states of themselves and others. Although the poor ability to express emotions may be a kind of deficit, it may actually be advantageous for deceiving and manipulating others. The inability to express and share emotions with others may help those high in Machiavellianism to conceal their emotions, along with their intentions, and in doing so, manipulate others effectively (Szijjártó & Bereczkei, 2015).

1.3.2. Machiavellianism, anxiety and depression

On the other hand, lower levels of EI can also lead to less effective management of stressful situations (Schutte et al., 2001). Indeed, a greater incidence of anxiety and mood disorders has been observed among individuals with lower EI levels (Schutte, Malouff, Thorsteinsson, Bhullar, & Rooke, 2007). However, despite the relationship between Machiavellianism and lower EI levels, the relationship between anxiety and Machiavellianism is unclear. Some studies have reported a moderate positive correlation between Machiavellianism and self-report measures of anxiety (Jones, Nickel, & Schmidt, 1979; McHoskey, Worzel, & Szyarto, 1998; Nigro & Galli,

1985; Poderico, 1987), while other studies have found no relation between them (Ali et al., 2009; Christie & Geis, 1970; Jonason, Baughman, Carter, & Parker, 2015).

Depression shows a similar pattern: while some studies have found a moderate positive correlation between Machiavellianism and depression (Bakir, Yilmaz, & Yavas, 1996; Jonason et al., 2015), other studies have found no association between these variables (Skinner, 1982). Further, another study (LaTorre & McLeod, 1978) conducted among participants with clinical depression showed that among men Machiavellianism was negatively associated with depression, while this relationship was positive among women. Together these contradictory findings demonstrate a lack of understanding of the fundamental relationship between Machiavellianism and emotion management features.

1.4. Gender differences in Machiavellianism

One potential explanation for these contradictory findings is that gender differences affect the emotion management features expressed by those high in Machiavellianism. This assertion is supported by the divergent relationships found between Machiavellianism and emotional stability (Rauthmann, 2012) as well as clinical depression (LaTorre & McLeod, 1978) among men and women. In general, most studies using self-report measures of Machiavellianism have found that men tend to have higher scores on Machiavellianism self-report scales than women (e.g. Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010; Jones & Paulhus, 2009a, 2009b; Linton & Wiener, 2001; McHoskey, 2001; Wilson, Near, & Miller, 1996).

Besides the gender differences in the magnitude of Machiavellianism scores, relatively few studies have been done on gender differences between Machiavellianism and other personality traits or behaviors. Studies focusing on the Dark Triad have revealed that the correlation between the Machiavellianism and empathy (Jonason, Lyons, Bethell, & Ross, 2013), forms of impulsivity (Jones & Paulhus, 2011), conscientiousness (Carter, Campbell, & Muncer, 2014) and sexual tactics (Jonason & Buss, 2012; Jonason & Kavanagh, 2010) show different patterns among male and female participants. For example, although psychopathy is an equal predictor across men and women of having ever been unfaithful to a romantic partner, Machiavellianism was only a predictor among women (Jones & Weiser, 2014). Further, some preliminary results show, that when examining the Dark Triad traits simultaneously, psychopathy is a better predictor of sociosexual behaviors in women than it is in men (Jones & de Roos, 2016).

In the light of these findings, we hypothesize that gender may moderate the relationships between Machiavellianism and emotion management, thus accounting for the contradictory results of past studies evaluating these traits (reviewed above). In the following studies we will focus on various personality correlates of Machiavellianism among men and women.

2. Overview of the studies

We will present three studies to investigate the gender differences in personality characteristics related to Machiavellianism. In these three studies we use different measures of Machiavellianism and explore their connection with temperament and character traits (Study 1), scales of six-factor (HEXACO) model of personality (Study 2), and the other two Dark Triad traits (Study 3). Besides undergraduate participants (Studies 1 and 3) we also worked with an employed sample (Study 2), to enlarge the generalizability of our findings. After presenting the three studies, we synthesize the results from the three studies in a model of Machiavellianism's different roots by the two genders.

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