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# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN MACHIAVELLIANISM AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

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## ABSTRACT

*The intention of this study is to identify the relationship between Machiavellianism and the three determinants of career development i.e. career satisfaction, career goals, and career path. 170 employees employed by three retail companies in Lebanon were surveyed. The results from the regression analysis show that high Machiavellian orientation moderated by age and educational attainment, is positively correlated with career goals, and career path. While Low Machiavellian orientation is negatively correlated with career satisfaction and career path.*

Keywords: High Mach's, Low Mach's, Career Development, Career Path, Career Goals, Career Satisfaction.

## INTRODUCTION

Many researchers have studied the different personality traits of individuals, that offered a broad explanation about their effect on human behavior (Hamer and Bruch, 1997). The most accepted and studied among them is the Big Five personality traits introduced by MacCrae and Costa (1982) that relates personality to organizational outcomes. These traits were found to be predictors of career development variables. A study by Reed, Bruch, and Haase (1997) found that career exploration which is a variable of career development can be predicted by the Big Five personality traits. For example, openness to experience and neuroticism held unique relations with all the variables of career exploration, while the trait of extraversion and conscientiousness had unique relation with only one exploration variable. On the other hand, shyness proved to impede the career development process during the college years (Hamer and Bruch, 1997).

Overall, employees' personalities, values, attitudes, norms, and behaviors affect their interactions and performance in the work place. Hence, the study of the relationship between personality traits, management, and organizational behavior is crucial. It helps managers match the right person for the right task (Chung C.Liu, 2008).

## MACHIAVELLIANISM

Machiavellianism is a personality characteristic that describes individuals who mislead and manipulate others for personal gain and success. Christie and Geis (1970) describe Machiavellian oriented individuals as charismatic, confident and smooth as well as proud, distrustful, and prone to influencing and exploiting others. On the other hand, low Machiavellians are kind, submissive, and socially incompetent. Machiavellian candidates are liable to experience negative personality, depend on their logic more than emotions and feelings, disregard personal relationships, and use their emotions to influence others in order to reach their desired destinations (Lau and Shaffer, 1999). This is why Machiavellianism as a personality trait has been regarded negatively.

So far, research on the relation between Machiavellian orientation and behavioral outcomes has been substantial. High Mach individuals tend to manipulate more, persuade other more than they are persuaded when compared to low Machs (Ramanaiah et al., 1994). Thus, they tend to be distrustful of others and as such, may act in an unethical way. Research suggests that Machiavellian orientation can predict unethical employee actions (Andersson & bateman, 1997).

Gemmill and Heisler (1972) studied 150 managers working in a large manufacturing firm in the Northeastern section of the United States and found a positive relation between Machiavellian orientation and job strain, and formal control. However, the relation with job satisfaction was negative, with no relation to upward mobility. A recent study by Chung C.Liu (2008) concluded that managers can predict employees' knowledge sharing willingness based on the employees' Machiavellian orientation, and that Machiavellian orientation and Knowledge sharing willingness are negatively related.

Yet, with all the negative implications towards Machivallian orientation, we find that more High Machiavellian individuals are chosen as leaders since they are very effective in manipulating others and tend to be very skillful in finding a satisfying environment that fits their values and beliefs (Gemmil and Heisler). However, Hambirk and Bradon (1988) argued that Machiavellian oriented CEO's will apply a hierarchical and centralized organizational structure that will grant them power. As such, they prefer employees who are dependent (Zaleznik and Kets de Vries, 1975).

According to McGuire & Hutchings (2006), although Machiavellian thinking ignores the importance of integrity and honesty in their pursuit for power, this thinking plays an important role in understanding and managing change in a complex business environment. Leaders and teams should seize this way of thinking because it improves their dealing with change and all the related variables a business faces. This thinking also provides a precious guide for leaders and managers when facing challenges and barriers while negotiating especially when it relates to accepting or rejecting organizational change.

Lau and Shaffer (1999) based their study on social learning theories and stated that personality traits such as self mentoring, self esteem, locus of control, Machiavellianism, and their

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correlations are determinants of career success. They found that Machiavellian orientation is a predictor of job performance, and subjective and objective career success.

### **CAREER DEVELOPMENT**

The University of Wisconsin Adult and Student services (2007) defines Career development as an unending and active process that starts with gathering information, setting goals and making decisions. The career development process/path is defined by a model based on continually assessing, exploring, setting goals, and acting. It is a long term process that begins in early childhood and progresses through adulthood (Ginzberg & et.al, 1951).

Several studies have highlighted different approaches for defining the career development process. Parson (1909) proposed the matching approach which defines congruence between career development, individuals' personality, and their occupation. On the other hand, Super's (1974) defined career development in a five stage development process with many tasks in every stage i.e. growth, exploration, establishment, maintenance, and decline. At a later stage, Holland (1997) proposed a match between job requirement and personalities, and presented six personality types (Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, social, Enterprising, and Conventional). Holland argued that a person's behavior is the interaction between his/her personality and the environment. That is why individuals should seek out environments that fit their abilities, skills, attitudes, and values. In addition, Lent, Brown, and Hackett's (1994) proposed the Social Cognitive Career Theory (SCCT) which defined the building blocks of career development as self efficacy and outcome expectation. Recently, there has been renewed interest in the topic of career development due to its relative importance as a competitive edge for organizations (McCarthy & Garavan, 1999). It is a useful mean for facing the social and demographic trends, and the changing nature of work and technology. Thus, the career development process is vital and should be applied by both the employer and the employee. A study by Kuijpers & Scheerens (2006), discussed the many facets that relate to career development i.e. career development ability, reflection on capacities, reflection on motives, work exploration, career control and networking, and there relation to modern career variables (mobility perspective, career support at work and private life). They concluded that increasing mobility, dynamic work environment, and career support within organizations will assist individuals' self management in developing their career.

McCarthy and Garavan (1999) indicated that self awareness is a vital component for career development. They emphasized that the more the individual understands his strengths, weakness, work approaches, and personality type, the more effective his/her training and development. Furthermore, Hamer and Bruch (1997, p.382) concluded that "the social nature of many career development tasks, roles, and personality factors that have relevance to the social realm can be expected to predict career success".

## CAREER DEVELOPMENT & MACHIAVELLIANISM

Lau and Shaffer (1999), Hamer and Bruch (1997), Lounshury, Hutchens and Loveland (2005) agreed that a correlation exists between personality traits and career decidedness, career success, and job satisfaction. According to Reed, Bruch, and Haase (1997), personality traits should play a crucial role in promoting behavior models that could assist or delay career development behaviors such as career exploration. However, researchers have passed out examining the relation between Machiavellianism which is a personality trait and career development.

In sum, the literature review suggests that high Machs are more capable of manipulating and influencing others in various situations. As such, they have an advantage over others in achieving their goals i.e. in support of their career (Ramanaiah et al., 1994; Lau and Shaffer, 1999). Gemmill & Heisler (1972) concluded after reviewing the literature that high Machs appear to be better at finding a satisfying position and in supporting their own career. On the other hand, since low Machs are good natured, trustful, sociable, and honest (Christie, 1970), they are then expected to impede their career development process. The following hypothesis can be drawn:

*H1: High Machs improve individuals' career development*

*H2: Low Machs impede individuals' career development.*

## METHODOLOGY

To test our hypothesis, a survey was carried out between June and August 2008. 200 questionnaires were distributed across 3 retail companies in Lebanon with a letter indicating the purpose of the survey and assurance of anonymity. The response rate was 85% or 170 individuals.

For this investigation the researchers designed a three part questionnaire. The first part collected demographic data and asked about gender, age and position (managerial/non-managerial). The second part included the MACH-IV test developed by Richard Christie (1999). It is a 20-item scale, designed to measure the level of Machiavellian orientation. i.e. high or low. This scale showed high reliability and was used by many (see e.g. Macrosson and Hemphill, 2001; Chung C.Liu, 2008).

The third part had 10 questions that asked about career satisfaction, established goals and career path (Karkouljian & Osman, 2008). All questions were measured using a seven-point Likert scale that ranged from 7= strongly agree to 1=strongly disagree and 4= neutral.

## RESULTS

The purpose of this research was to investigate the relationship between Machiavellianism and career development path and whether it enhances or impedes career development.

The major demographic results were as follows: 75% of respondents were between 20 and 30 years old, with 61% females and 39% males. 70.5% held masters degrees, 18% had a bachelor degree, and the remaining 10.5% high school. 58% had 1 year experience, and 19% -5 years (see Table 1 for all results).

<b>Table-1: Demographic Results</b>		
<i>Gender</i>	# of respondents	% percentage
Female	105	61%
Male	65	39%
<b>Age</b>		
Between 20-29	10	5%
Between 30-39	128	75%
Between 40-49	32	20%
<b>Education Level</b>		
High School	18	10.5%
BS/BA	32	18%
MAB/MS/MA	120	70.5%
<b>Years of Experience</b>		
1 year	97	58%
2 years	9	5%
3 years	8	4.5%
4 years	8	4.5%
5 years	32	19%
8 years	8	4.5%
10 years	8	4.5%
Total	170	100%

The Pearson Chi-square test was used to see the association between the Machiavellian variable and the demographic variables. The null hypotheses for each demographic variable are stated below:

*H1: Machiavellian scores and years of experience are not related.*

*H2: Machiavellian scores and age are not related.*

*H3: Machiavellian scores and gender are not related.*

*H4: Machiavellian scores and level of education are not related.*

The results from the null hypothesis are stated in Table 2

<b>Pearson Chi-Square</b>	<b>value</b>	<b>df</b>	<b>Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)</b>
Machiavellian variable and years of experience	2.016	1	0.156
Machiavellian variable and age	10.919	1	0.004
Machiavellian variable and gender	0.934	1	0.334
Machiavellian variable and level of education	12.959	1	0.002
N of valid cases	170		
Significance level=or < 0.05			

From the above chi-square table results indicate that the null hypothesis H1 and H3 are accepted, while the null hypothesis H2 and H4 are rejected. Then more analysis of the H2 and H4 among High Mach individuals is presented below:

Number of respondents	High Mach	Low Mach
170	90/170=53%	80/120=47%
	Age =82 % (30-39)	Age=67% (30-39)
	Education=81% master	Education=57% master

Among the 170 respondents, those with High Mach orientation (53%), had 82% age range between 30-39, and 81% with a masters degree.

Using SPSS package 16.0, a Pearson correlation was performed to test the relationship between the two dependent variables (High Machs, Low Machs) and the three independent variables (career satisfaction, career path, and career goal) (see results in Table-3).

		Career Goals	Career Path	Career satisfaction
Low Mach	Pearson correlation	-.001	-.217**	-.477**
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.986	.005	.000
High Mach	Pearson correlation	.288**	.256**	-.024
	Sig.(2-tailed)	.000	.001	.760

The above correlation table shows that individuals with high Mach scores indicated a positive correlation with career goals ( $r=0.288$ ) and career path ( $r=0.256$ ), with no relation to career satisfaction.

Those with Low Mach scores had a negative correlation with career path ( $r= -0.217$ ) and career satisfaction ( $r= -0.477$ ), but no relation with career goals.

For further analysis the researchers conducted regression analysis. The results are presented below:

<b>Anova Table</b>						
	Model	Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	24.340	3	8.113	10.219	.000 <sup>a</sup>
<b>Coefficients Table</b>						
		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std.Error			
1	(constant)	2.458	.363		6.779	.000
	Career Goals	.272	.066	.293	4.091	.000
	Career Path	.227	.060	.278	3.798	.000
	Career Satisfaction	-.083	.074	-.081	-1.112	.268

Significance level= $\alpha < 0.05$

The linear regression equation generated is:

$$\text{High Machs} = 2.458 + 0.272 \text{ career goals} + 0.227 \text{ career path}$$

The two independent variables (career goals and career path) were significantly positively related to the dependent variable (High Machs). No significant relation was found between High Machs career satisfaction.

Regression equation for the Low Mach orientation						
Anova Table						
Model		Sum of squares	Df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
1	Regression	116.890	3	38.963	17.475	.000 <sup>a</sup>
Coefficients Table						
		Unstandardized coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
		B	Std. Error			
1	(constant)	7.381	.608		12.147	.000
	Career Goals	-.006	.111	-.004	-.056	.956
	Career Path	-.179	.100	-.124	-1.780	.004
	C a r e e r Satisfaction	-.808	.124	-.451	-6.496	.000
Significance level=or < 0.05						

The linear regression equation generated is:

$$\text{Low Mach's} = 7.381 - 0.179 \text{ career path} - 0.808 \text{ career satisfaction}$$

The two independent variables (career satisfaction and career path) were negatively related to low Machs. No significant relation was found between Low Machs and the independent variable career goals.

## DISCUSSION

This research studied the relationship between Machiavellian orientation and career development. The results support our two hypotheses in general that High Machs improve individuals' career development and Low Machs impede individuals' career development. High Machs had a positive relationship with career goals and career path i.e. the higher the Mach orientation, the clearer the career path, and the faster the career goals can be reached. This is contrary to previous research conducted in Hong Kong on bank executives. The research concluded that individuals with low Machiavellian scores tend to achieve higher job success, while those with a high Mach scores have a greater satisfaction with their jobs (Siu and Tam, 1995). This could be



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as a result of the Hong Kong banking environment being too structured as opposed to the organizational environment where the research was carried out i.e. retail sector.

Our results also indicated that High Mach orientation had no relation with career satisfaction. This is in agreement with Gemmil & Heisler (1972) who found that the greater the managers' Machiavellian orientation, the lower their career satisfaction.

On the other hand, Low Mach orientation was negatively correlated with career path and career satisfaction, with no relation to career goals. This result seems logical since Low Mach oriented individuals are less manipulative, more persuaded than High Machs (Robbins & Judge, 2007), and socially incompetent, which will cause their career to suffer.

The variables age (30-39) and education (master's degree holders), were the only demographic variables that indicated a significant relation to Machiavellian orientation. Results of previous research investigating Machiavellian orientation and demographic variables are mixed. On one hand, Mudrack (1989) found no direct relation between Machiavellian orientation and age. However, researchers tend to believe that they are somewhat related since younger individuals are likely to be less ethically inclined or less stable in their ethical judgment (Pratte et al., 1983). Also, Tuner and Martinez (1977) found that Machiavellian males with high education will more likely achieve success

## CONCLUSION

These results propose new additions to the theory and practice relating to personality and career development. Our findings show how career development, to a great extent, is influenced by having a high Machiavellian orientation moderated by age and educational attainment in the retail sector in Lebanon. However, since our results can not be generalized, further study needs to investigate these relationships in other cultures and sectors.

Although Machiavellians disregard ethical behavior and believe "ends justify the means", they flourish in situations that are less structured. Nevertheless, it is sometimes important to possess certain characteristics that show relevance to handling and influencing others (e.g. in negotiation) especially in leadership roles. These individuals are able to arouse emotions of love and motivate their followers in a way that improves their own career development process and increases the performance of the organization. We can then conclude that whether having high Machiavellian orientation is a good character depends on the sector and culture. We then recommended that organizations match the right job with the right personality for a better organizational performance.

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