

Parent-Child Interaction and Machiavellian Orientation

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The study aimed at exploring the relationship between perceived parental behaviours and children's Machiavellian orientation (MO) and also between parents' MO and children's MO. For this an unselected sample of 300 Plus-Two class male students aged 15-18 years were administered Personal Data Sheet, Parental Behaviour Inventory and Mach IV Scale. After data were obtained from them each subject was given two forms of Mach IV Scale, one-marked 'M' and another marked 'F' to be filled in by his mother and father respectively. The data analysed by product moment correlation coefficient revealed that loving and permissive behaviours of parents were negatively and significantly related with their sons' MO. It was also found that MO of parents and their sons were positively and significantly associated, providing support for modeling hypothesis.

Machiavellian orientation (MO) in interpersonal relation is defined by manipulation and exploitation of people for selfish ends with relative lack of affect and without any concern for conventional morality and ideological commitment (Christie & Geis, 1970). The Machiavellian, thus, stands for some one who views and manipulates others for his selfish ends. A Machiavellian has nothing to do with conventional morality and has low ideological commitment. He views human beings as objects to be manipulated and his views are more utilitarian than moral in interaction with others. The term has been coined after Niccolo Machiavelli, a great Italian political thinker of fifteenth century who wrote two books "The Prince" and "The Discourses". The ideas expressed in the books were associated with use of guile, deceit and opportunism in interpersonal relation, and one who is found to agree with those ideas is termed as Machiavellian. The Machiavellian philosophy is that man is basically weak, fallible and gullible and therefore a rational man

should take advantage of this human weakness to maximise his own gain by manipulating people. Machiavellianism is found more or less in every individual but it is noted most obviously among politicians, administrator and heads of institutions

As regards personality characteristics, Machiavellians are distinguished by external locus of control orientation (Mudrack, 1990), dogmatism (Hunter et al., 1982), psychopathy (Skinner, 1982) moderate anxiety (Podrico, 1987), high risk-taking (Rim, 1965), high ego strength and dominance and low friendliness and responsibility (Jha, 1995) and high leadership qualities (Bharathi & Sunitha, 1994). Their values are found to centre round power and utility (Ojha, 2007).

Machiavellianism has wide spread use. Some have used it as an attitudinal factor (Bogart, 1971), while others have termed it a behavioural style (Geis & Moon, 1981, Tripathi & Sinha, 1981), but majority of social scientists have frequently used it as personality

disposition (Christie & Geis, 1970; Kuo & Marshella, 1977; Pandey, 1981). As a personality disposition it is affected by several social and personal variables. One of the most crucial variables to influence this is parent-child interaction.

Every moment a child spends in contact with parents and family has some effect on his present behaviour and future potentialities (Sears et al., 1957). There are three aspects of childrearing which can be clearly distinguished. They are 1. childcare, i.e. feeding, weaning, toilet-training and bed-habit training, etc, 2. child discipline, which refers to the control of undesirable and antisocial behaviour; and 3. parental childrearing attitudes. The latter two are interrelated. While attitude is the cognitive aspect, discipline is the conative aspect. In fact parents' attitudes and their resulting behaviours towards children have been found to be of greater importance in the development of personality (Sears et al., 1957, Ojha & Parmanick, 1995). Parent's behaviours range from genuine affectionate acceptance to hostile rejection, extreme indulgence to carefree neglect, complete autonomy to licensed permissiveness (Piklinas & Albrecht, 1961, p. 115). Researches have discovered three relevant and important dimensions of parental attitudes viz., love-rejection, autonomy-control and protection-neglect (de Boeck, 1976; Imperio & Chabot, 1980; Ojha, 1993; Schaefer, 1965; Sims & Paolucci, 1975).

Psychological literature is replete with studies regarding relationship between parental behaviours and personality traits. But Studies dealing specifically with Machiavellian orientation are few and far between. Therefore the present study was undertaken to explore the relationship of adolescents' Machiavellian orientation (MO) with perceived behaviours of parents and also the relationship between parents' and children's Machiavellian orientation.

Method

Sample:

The sample constituted of 300 male students of Plus-Two classes selected incidently from the intermediate colleges of Bhagalpur and their 600 parents. The mean age of subjects was 17 years, the age range being 16-18 years. The mean age of parents was 45.25, the age range being 40-55 years.

Measures:

Following tests were administrated to the subjects in small groups of 20-25.

Parental Behaviour Inventory (PBI): The inventory developed and standardised by Ojha (1993) has two separate forms, one each for mother and the father. Each form consists of the same 48 items with the same serial order, the only difference being that in 'Mother Form' the items have been written in feminine gender in Hindi and in 'Father Form' the same have been stated in masculine gender. The inventory consists of three scales viz. restrictive-permissive, neglecting-protecting, and rejecting-loving. There are 16 items for each scale, half of the items being positive and remaining half negative. The items of the scales have been arranged cyclically. Each item has to be responded in four alternatives viz. 'very true', 'true', 'untrue' and 'very untrue'. The subject is required to recollect the behaviours of his mother and father which they displayed towards him/her before 12 years of age and indicate how far each statement is true or untrue. The response categories for positive items are scored as 5,4,2,1. For negative items scoring is reversed. A score of 3 is assigned to omission of an item invariably. The scores are summed up for each dimension for the mother and father form. A score on each scale ranges from 16 to 80. The combined score of three scales is named as overall behaviour score, the high score indicating positive and low score denoting negative behaviour. The average split half reliabilities

for the mother and father form were 0.82 and 0.83 and the average test-retest reliabilities for the same were 0.75 and 0.76. Two sample items of PBI are as follows: Used to keep stern eyes on me, and allowed me to go out with friends.

Mach IV Scale: The scale is a measure of Machiavellian orientation in interpersonal situations, which is characterised by the use of guile, deceit, opportunism and manipulation of others in self-interest. It is a Hindi adaptation of Mach IV scale of Christie and Geis (1970) by Rai and Gupta (1987). It is a 20-item seven-point scale varying from 'strong agreement' to 'neither strong disagreement' with 'neither agreement nor disagreement' in the middle. It consists of three subscales:- Views, Tactics and Morality. It consists of both positive and reverse items. For positive items a score of 1 is assigned to strong disagreement and 7 for strong agreement. For negative items scoring is reversed. The undecided response is invariably assigned a score of 4. Thus scores of subjects on the scale vary from 20 to 140. But to simplify the interpretation and to get 100 as midpoint, a constant of 20 is added in the score of each subject making highest possible score 160 (140+20) and lowest possible score 40 (20+20). The split-half and test-retest reliabilities of the scale for a sample of 100 Ss were found by the present author to be 0.712 and 0.658.

Two sample items of the scale are as follows: Most people forget more easily the death of father than the loss of property, and it is wise to flatter important people.

Results

In order to know the extent to which parental behaviours are associated with children's Machiavellian orientation (MO) the product moment correlations of coefficient were calculated between Mach IV scores and scores on each PBI scale. The correlations are mentioned in Table-1.

Table 1: Correlation coefficients (r) of Machiavellianism with parental behaviours (N=300).

Parental Behaviours	Mother	Father
Rest-Perm	-0.24	-0.22
Negl.-Protq	-0.08	-0.07
Rej.-Lov.	-0.35*	-0.32*
Overall	-0.21*	-0.18*

* $p < .01$

It may be observed from Table-1 that children's MO is associated negatively and significantly with permissive behaviour of mother ($r(298) = -0.24, p < 0.01$) and father ($r(298) = 0.22, p < 0.01$). Children's MO is found to be related negatively and significantly with loving behaviour of both mother ($r(298) = 0.35, p < 0.01$) and father ($r(298) = -0.32, p < 0.01$). However MO appears to be unassociated with protective behaviour of both mother ($r(298) = -0.08, p > 0.05$) and father ($r(298) = -0.07, p > 0.05$). The relationship of MO with overall behaviour, as expected, is also negative and significant either in case of mother ($r(298) = 0.21, p < 0.01$) or in case father ($r(298) = 0.18, p < 0.01$). Thus it may be concluded that negative behaviour of parents like restriction and rejection foster Machiavellian orientation, while positive behaviours of parents like permissiveness and love hinder the growth of Machiavellian orientation among children.

In order to see the relationship between parents' and children's Machiavellian orientation product moment correlations of coefficient were computed between Mach IV scores of parents and their children. It was found that the value of correlations between MO of fathers and sons ($r = 0.150, p < .01$), mothers and sons ($r = 0.245, p < .01$) and parents (both parents taken together) and sons ($r = 0.197, p < .01$) were significant. Hence it may be inferred that children imitate their

parents and parents serve as models for them.

Discussion

It has been noticed that the negative correlation coefficients of college students' Machiavellian orientation with parental permissiveness and love are higher in case of mother than in case of father. This may happen because there is close interaction of the child with mother than with father. Machiavellian orientation does not develop in children if they get loving attention of parents. According to Horney (1950) the quest for power arises from thwarted childhood needs of parental affection. This quest of power is in the root of Machiavellian orientation in interpersonal behaviour. Machiavellian orientation is associated with interpersonal insensitivity, while non-Machiavellian orientation is associated with interpersonal sensitivity. The child who does not receive unconditional love and affection develops feelings of anger and hostility which can not be openly expressed for fear of further antagonising his/her parents. Thus the child is facing "double blind" of being angry and yet being afraid of being abandoned. When the child is unable to cope with this kind of conflict he/she experiences deep fears and anxieties and to be out of this vicious net he/she becomes exploitative.

Further it was found that the value of correlation coefficient between Machiavellian orientation of mothers and sons was greater than the value of correlation coefficient between fathers and sons. Hence it may be concluded that although parents in general get imitated by their sons with regard to Machiavellian orientation but mother's effect is greater than that of father. Here again the logic of closer interaction with mother applies.

Kraut and Lewis (1975) showed that parental modeling and parent child conflict could be the cause of Machiavellian orientation among children. One cannot refute the modeling hypothesis by demonstrating that children and parents disliked each other.

Indeed in Machiavellian orientation, the reverse is likely to be true. Parents could best provide a model of emotional detachment for their children by being cold to them. In another extensive study Kraut and Price (1976) examined the development of Machiavellian orientation by examining the relationship between parent's and child's Machiavellian orientations, through a direct comparison of parents' and children's scores. It was found that Machiavellian orientations of fathers and mothers were positively related to their children's success at deceiving others but not at seeing through other's attempts at deception. In addition, father's Machiavellian orientation was positively related to their children's Machiavellian beliefs. These data support a modeling hypothesis towards the development of Machiavellian orientation. However, unexpectedly the children's own behaviours and beliefs were unrelated. This pattern of results suggests that a child's manipulative behaviours and beliefs are learned separately and only become consistent overtime. The findings of the present study are quite relevant and consistent in the context of the above mentioned earlier findings.

However the present finding is not consistent with that of an earlier investigation carried in Japan by Dein (1974) who reported no support for "transmission" of Machiavellian orientation through modeling and teaching. Contrary to our results she found that low Mach parents were likely to have high Mach children because they were likely to fail in interactions involving interpersonal control with their children. This indicates that culture may act as intervening variable in modeling process.

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