Effects of Machiavellianism on Ingratiation in Organizational Settings

EFFETS DU MACHIAVÉLISME SUR LA COMPLAISANCE DANS LES ORGANISMES ORGANISATIONNELS

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Abstract: Influential behaviour has generally been shaped by personality. In organizational research, Machiavellianism has commonly been defined as the need to develop and defend one's power and success. It is the utilisation of power to incite other people to act or believe in conformity with one's own principle and a personality disposition that involves manipulative and deceptive intent. Whereas, ingratiation is an influence tactic to obtain favour from somebody by purposeful efforts. It is depicted as subordinates' improper efforts within an organisation to enhance their interpersonal allure in the eyes of their superior. In other words, the subordinates are attempting to obtain the superior's approval with the aim of attaining favourable perquisites such as promotions and raises. Thus, such influence tactic is more often than not, a reflection of a personality trait found in Machiavellianism. On this premise, this paper elucidates the relationship between Machiavellianism and ingratiatory behaviours of subordinates in organisations.
Key words: Machiavellianism; Ingratiation; Employees; Influence; Management

Résumé: Les comportements influents ont généralement été façonnés par la personnalité. Dans les recherches organisationnelles, le machiavélisme a souvent été défini comme la nécessité de développer et de défendre le pouvoir et succès de quelqu'un. L'utilisation du pouvoir peut inciter d'autres personnes à agir ou à croire en conformité avec son propre principe et une disposition de personnalité qui implique l'intention manipulatrice et trompeuse. Alors que, la complaisance est une tactique d'influence pour obtenir la faveur de quelqu'un par des efforts constructifs. Elles sont considérées comme des efforts incorrects des subordonnés au sein d'une organisation pour améliorer leur allure interpersonnelles aux yeux de leur supérieur. En d'autres termes, les subordonnés tentent d'obtenir l'approbation du supérieur dans le but d'atteindre les avantages indirects

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favorables telles que la promotion et l'augmentation de salaire. Ainsi, ce genre de tactique d'influence est souvent un reflet d'un trait de personnalité trouvé dans le machiavélisme. Sur ce prémisse, ce document met en lumière la relation entre le machiavélisme et les comportements de complaisance des subordonnés dans les organisations.

Mots clés: Machiavélisme; Complaisance; Employés; Influence; Gestion

1. INTRODUCTION

The key determinant to a successful leadership in an organization is the ability to influence. Influence, which is considered as the central part of managerial work, connotes the exercise of power. Therefore, in order to successfully influence others, a manager must be able to comprehend what their subordinates think. On the other hand, the desired results and resources from the employees' superiors can be secured if the said employees manage to use influence and power effectively. When existing sources of power are not available, individuals will engage in greater use of influence (Westphal, 1998).

Machiavellianism, a person's personality trait, is related with the concept of acquiring and using power to manipulate others. Machiavellian employees tend to have high need for developing and defending power and success. Machivellianism is considered for its moderating value in the correlation between enthusiasm to achieve success and influence tactics. The perspective of organizational dynamics expressed by Machiavelli has been criticized because of its honest acceptance of aggressive - and perhaps unethical - behaviours to achieve a goal. The essence of Machiavelli's assertion is the notions of power and influence.

Leaders normally call for a better understanding of how to utilize "human capital", while employees are eager to decipher how to better communicate their ideas and accomplish goals. Too many managers and leaders make poor bosses, and fewer good ones could be even better. What may come as a surprise, however, is how much the boss's effectiveness relies on the employees. For the past two decades, scholars and researchers have made substantial contribution to the understanding of the influence processes in the organizations where the use of appropriate upward influence strategies paves the way to effective functioning of the organization.

The success of human resource management processes and systems can be scrutinized through a political influence insights in an organization (Ferris and Judge, 1991). The focal point of this viewpoint is on the influence strategies directed upward at superiors. The effectiveness of an influence endeavour depends on several issues, such as the selection of tactics, organizational attributes and interpersonal relationships. It can be taken into account as the effort made by an employee to influence the superior to the manner of thinking that is along the lines of the employee's intentions. Kipnis and Schmidt, 1988 have categorised influence tactics into rational persuasion and ingratiation. Ingratiation is everyday and everywhere occurrences that frequently impinges the effectiveness of organizations (Ralston, 1985). The role that Machiavellianism plays in organizational behaviour have been examined by several researchers, but only a few looked at influence tactics (Harrell-Cook et al., 1999; Hochwater et al., 2000). Furthermore, there is a small number of empirical studies exploring the use of ingratiation in organizations (Liden and Mitchell,1988), especially so in its relationship with Machiavellianism. This article delves into the employees' Machiavellian personality and its relationship with ingratiation which is one of the upward influence tactics.

2. INFLUENCE TACTICS

Influence tactics is the attempt to induce or persuade the target persons to change their behaviours, opinions or attitudes. Kipnis, et al. (1980) suggested a method of conceptualizing the use of influence tactics into strategy groups. Soft strategies consist of interpersonal tactics which are considered as friendly or non-coercive and fair; whereas hard tactics involve more overt pressure or resistance generating deeds, and are perceived as being unfair (Barbuto et al., 2001).

Table 1: Types of Influence Tactics

Soft Tactics	Hard Tactics
• Rational Persuasion. Trying to convince others with reason, logical arguments, or factual evidence.	• Exchange. Making express or implied promises and trading favours to gain compliance from the target.
• Inspirational Appeal. A request or proposal that attempts to build enthusiasm by appealing to others' emotions, ideals, or values.	• Coalition tactics. The agent enlists the aid of others as a way to influence the target to do something.
• Consultation. Inviting others to participate in planning, making decisions, and changes to obtain buy-in with the leader's initiatives.	• Legitimating tactics. Basing a request on one's authority or right, organizational rules or polices, or express or implied support from superiors
• Ingratiation. The practice of putting others in a good mood before attempting to influence them, often in the form of flattery.	• Pressure. Using demands, threats, frequent checking, or persistent reminders to influence the target to do something.
• Personal Appeal. Referring to friendship and loyalty when making a request.	

Source: Kipnis D, SM Schmidt and I Wilkinson, 1980. Intra-organisational Influence Tactics: Exploration in Getting One's Way. *Journal of Applied Psychology, 65*, 440-452.

3.   WHAT IS INGRATIATION?

Ingratiation is delineated as subordinates' dishonest attempts to increase their interpersonal temptation in the eyes of their superior within organizations. The ingratiating subordinate would only underline the positive facets of the targeted superior in embellished proportion so that he or she would be favoured. This approach is normally effective since it is difficult for people not to like those who think highly of them. Ingratiation is an informal tactic which considers interpersonal attraction, impression management, flattery, and creation of good will (Kipnis and Vanderveer, 1971). Subordinates opt for this tactic with the intention of creating a favourable impression. An employee using this ploy has a goal of being liked by the manager. Some common features of ingratiation are articulating positive things about others or uttering negative details about his/herself slightly, statements of modesty, familiarity, and humour.

By gaining influence with the bosses, the employees can build a relationship and create benefits for both parties. Lots of perquisites, such as promotion, easier interactions and bigger bonuses would be secured if better working relationship with the superiors is nurtured. In some cases, the chances for future advancement may be enhanced by helping the superiors becoming more effective with his or her higher-ups. Ingratiation has also been demoted to as the influence strategy of favour rendering (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1988). The ingratiator using this strategy depicts favours with the purpose of ingratiating himself with the target. It has been examined that ingratiation and reason would be utilised when subordinates are less influential than the managers that they are attempting to influence (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1983).

Ingratiatory behaviours can be considered as the most finely distilled form of organizational politics, even though they are often viewed as part of the darker side of organizational life. A great deal can go wrong when ingratiation is used in organizational settings as a political influence tactic and there is a prevailing wisdom behind it (Kumar and Ghadially, 1989). When it is raised in "polite" business company, the term ingratiation itself usually triggers mildly disturbing and frequently negative connotations. A teacher who ingratiates poorly or fails to excell in school runs a severe risk of being perceived as insincere or as a sham. This is due to the fact that, in his or her encounters with colleaques, many people would automatically turn on their "nonsense" detectors (Cialdini, 1988).

By its nature, ingratiation is a clandestine influence tactic since the true intent behind the ingratiatory behaviour remains hidden or concealed. It may be descibed as a politically oriented impression management that usually evokes negative connotations. Ingratiators are popularly described as "apple polisher" or "yes man" due to their covert motives such as manipulation or deceit. In spite of these negative connotations, ingratiation cannot be renounced as being pervasive throughout organizational life (Kipnis et all., 1980). A study found that ingratiation has positive correlations with Machiavellianism (Andersson and Bateman, 2000).

4.   THE CONCEPT OF MACHIAVELLIANISM

Niccolo Machiavelli (1513/1602). Though most of the business literatures focus on Machiavelli's deliberations on leadership, the treatises of Machiavelli are much more lavish than that. Focusing on the individuals, Machiavelli is not only imparting an understanding on the role of managers and power, but also that of the employees within organisations. Some studies that examine the aspects of Machiavelli's work in terms of its application to employees have been conducted. An early study by Guterman (1970) looks at the Machiavellianism's effect on the feelings of solidarity expressed by employees. Grams and Rogers (1989) and Kets de Vries and Miller (1985) consider the consequence of Machiavellian personality traits on the use of influence tactics, and Reimers and Barbuto (2002) explore the moderating effect of a Machiavellian disposition on the relationship between sources of motivation and influence tactics.

Machiavellians are persons willing to forfeit ethics to attain their objectives (Gable and Dangello 1994). In situations where they are unable to obtain the reinforcements needed for survival, they view manipulation of others as a necessary defense (Solar and Bruehl 1971). Machiavellian behaviour is most likely manifested in situations where there is a perception of high degree of control (Gable and Dangello 1994). Mudrack (1989) found that those persons with external locus of control tend to be Machiavellians. He concluded that the use of manipulation, deception, or ingratiation tactics is a reflection of an attempt by the said Machiavellians in asserting some influence over a given environment that produces suitable internal-oriented approaches.

More about Machiavellianism …

In the 16th century, Niccolo Machiavelli, an Italian philosopher, wrote The Prince. He wrote on some rules needed in acquiring and using power. For example, he noted "It is far better to be feared than loved if you cannot be both". In essence, Machiavelli wrote about ways to manipulate other people.

Persons are divided into High Machs and Low Machs, according to their Machiavellian levels. High Machs tend to take control, especially in loosely structured situations; indeed they prefer such situations. Low Machs, on the other hand, like and respond well to structure. High Machs tend to be more logical, rational and pragmatic than Low Machs. High Machs are often skilled at influence and coalition building.

Machiavellianism is required for the manipulation of things and people, to a certain extent in the present management scene. Machiavellianism, if used in the positive direction, results in the organisational effectiveness which is a beneficial concept to both the managers and organization. Hence, there is a strong rationale to study about the concept of Machiavellianism in relation with subordinates' ingratiatory attribute.

5. THE INTERACTIVE EFFECTS OF MACHIAVELLIANISM ON INGRATIATION

The Machiavellian person is characterized by being cunning and using deceit in relationships, acquiring what they want by manipulating others and having a poor view of people's nature or morality and willing to flatter people just to gain some benefits.

The following statements concur with a Machiavellian's way of thinking:

(1) The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear

(2) Anybody who completely trusts anyone else is asking for trouble

(3) Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so

(4) It is wise to flatter important people

Machiavellians are good at manipulating others. They frequently influence others and tend to initiate and control social interactions effectively. In this situation, there is a distinction between Low Machs and High Machs, whereby, High Machs are able to accurately identify situations in which their favoured tactics will work. They excel, literally speaking, in playing around with words and are particularly effective in using power especially in face-to-face contacts. One of the strategies used by high Machs is that they remain calm and rational while creating a social structure that facilitates their personal goals at the expense of others.

Reimers and Barbuto (2002) argue that Machiavellian personalities begin by using charm, friendliness, and tact to influence others and exhibit influence behaviours that are more consistent with the previous definitions of the term (namely, that they are unethical, forceful and antagonistic), if the initial influence attempts fail.

Furthermore, Machiavellians have engaged in perfectionistic self-promotion, nondisclosure and nondisplay of imperfection that indicate one aspect of the Machiavellian individuals' chameleon-like repertoire of self-presentational behaviours. Machiavellians tend to concentrate on appearing as perfect as ever to others rather than actually striving to be perfect.

Machiavellian individuals may utilize perfectionistic self-presentation in an effort to gain a competitive advantage over others. Such presentation may function as an interpersonal influence tactic through which Machiavellians project their preferred image of dominance and strength to others. Moreover, they are suspicious of and mistrustful towards others (Gurtman, 1992) within a Machiavellian mindset, disclosing or displaying weaknesses to others may tantamount to be inviting victimization from others. Machiavellian individuals are reluctant to exhibit weaknesses to others. For example, Shepperd and Socherman (1997) showed that they tend to portray themselves as possessing high capability and avoiding themselves from being seen as less competent than they actually are - even when such a display is potentially advantageous.

High Machiavellians tend to regard the workplace as more political compared to Low Machiavellians (O'Connor and Morrison, 2001). More often than not, subordinates who possess the high Machiavellian trait are able to manipulate encounters with superiors, resulting in they having sufficient influence and greater control over the work situations for their own benefits. For instance, in a group discussion, high Machiavellians tend to participate more and give extra task information, in which such contributions normally influence the group at critical phases of discussion (Bochner et all., 1975).

Individuals high in Machiavellianism disposition are seen as politically savvy, highly influential, and, at times, morally questionable (Christie and Geis, 1970). In a study of organizational politics, Appelbaum and Hughes (1998) reported that Machiavellians use ingratiation tactics such as self-presentation to increase their attractiveness and upward influence in the eyes of the management. Ingratiation usually works as a tactic since the target usually has a positive feeling towards the source even if the ingratiation attempt is fairly blatant and transparent. The act of ingratiation is relationally focused, requiring some minimal level of good interaction with one's supervisor. Sporting this, ingratiators received higher performance evaluations from their supervisors compared to other influencers (Kipnis and Schmidt, 1988). Hence, subordinates with High Machiavelli traits would use ingratiation to influence their supervisors.

High Machiavellians tend to win in situations involving emotional involvement more often than Low Machiavellians because they have the ability to ignore irrelevant aspects in situations and concentrate on winning, whereas Low Machiavellians are easily distracted by such matters (McIlwain, 2003). Although High Machiavellians are often effective in achieving goals, superiors who interact with them might (a) not perceive them as acting appropriately, or (b) report that they are not satisfied with their interactions. While High Machiavellians may be successful in the workplace, they have low job identification (Mudrack, 1989), are more dishonest (Ashton et all., 2000), and care little about the values of others (Yurtsever, 2003). Ingratiating behaviour, due to the involvement of such demeanours like flattery and humility, also requires some personal control over the expression of feelings. Thus, it can be said that Machiavellianism is higher in ingratiators.

6. CAN INGRATIATION AMONG MACHIAVELLIAN SUBORDINATES BE EFFECTIVE?

The main reason that makes ingratiation an effective tool in influencing managers lies in the fact that the deepest principle of Human Nature is the craving to be appreciated. In other words, the reason why flattery makes others feel good is because they believe they deserve it.

In today's working environment, individuals are very concerned with developing career management strategies that will enhance their career success. One way that a person can impress others in his or her organization is by maintaining a high level of productivity at his or her job. A high level of productivity has always been highly correlated rightly or wrongly with an individual's career success and the number of organizational rewards he or she receives. However, it is also possible for a member of an organization to advance his or her career success through the process of ingratiation. Machiavellian subordinates may use ingratiation in order to increase the pay, promotions, and recognition that they receive within the organization. Furthermore, with many highly qualified workers competing for limited organizational resources and perks, such as desirable sales territories, corner offices, job security, and benefits packages, subordinates can distinguish themselves by means of strategically planted ingratiation.

The norm of reciprocity is also a reason for ingratiation to be effective in influencing managers. The major part of a human behaviour is the exchange function. In fact, cross cultural research indicates that the norm of reciprocity is a powerful and universal standard of behaviour. A Machiavellian subordinate's insincere support for a manager's idea is transacted for something that the subordinate desires and the manager has. Precisely, both parties obtain what they want; the manager gets the needed support and the subordinate receives the salary increase.

7. THE DARK SIDE OF MACHIAVELLIAN SUBORDINATES' INGRATIATORY BEHAVIOURS

Although ingratiation can effectively promote careers among Machiavellian subordinates, the endeavour is not without its price. Ingratiation can become detrimental to an organization if it becomes excessive (Wortman and Linsenmeier, 1977). There is an insidious dark side to the ever-present ingratiatory behaviours that can be harmful to individuals and organizations. For example, subordinates who deliberately praise managers, copy the manager's ideas, perform out of the ordinary services, and/or exceptionally endorse themselves as model subordinates may obtain the manager's high regard. In return, the subordinates may possibly be assigned with desirable tasks and receive enviable promotions. Conversely, because these rewards were incongruously influenced by ingratiation rather than exclusively on merit, subordinates could become overwhelmed, perform poorly, and spoil their careers as well as the corporation.

Additionally, the destructive aspects of ingratiation might emerge when Machiavellian subordinates uncritically agree with the manager's stance on important issues leading to a situaution where the managers shall be having a difficulty in determining the truth of the information received from organizational "yes men" and become shielded from scrutinizing advice. Under these conditions, manager's important decisions are not put under the required assessment, which may consequently results in unchallenged and unchecked resolutions with the real risk of less than optimal results.

Whenever there was an ingratiating Machiavellian subordinate in an organization, individuals who believed in their capabilities to achieve a particular goal would be unsatisfied with their superior. This is understandable as the ingratiating subordinate is being favoured by the superior over those non-ingratiating ones who are more capable and higher in self-efficacy. If the unfair treatment continues, relationships between managers and workers with higher motivation will deteriorate. Eventually, this deterioration will result in lower outcomes such as decreased passion, lesser commitment and mediocre performance by the once good employees. These highly motivated subordinates are the *bona fide* valuable asset of the organization since they can identify goals to be accomplished, focus on things they would like to transform and accomplish, besides forming a stronger sense of commitment to their interests and activities. If managers are trained to understand and recognize ingratiating behaviours, they would be more capable of treating all workers fairly.

8. HOW CAN MANAGERS RECOGNIZE AND MINIMIZE INGRATIATION IN THE ORGANIZATION?

It is essential that managers learn more about this political process to enable them to assume a more effective role in the organization. Although ingratiation is often viewed as an individually initiated behaviour, there is evidence to show that ingratiation is organizationally induced, as well as individually instigated. It is the combination of these forces that determines the amount of ingratiation wielded within an organization (Ralston, 1985). Thus, management is left with the responsibility of structuring and controlling the organization in a way that limits the negative effects of ingratiatory behaviour. Managing human resources denotes acknowledging that the human elements in the organization are the most important component. The Human Resource approach assumes that no amount of clever work with figures, or the latest technical equipment, will deliver anything unless the people agree to work in co-ordination with each other. This is applicable to everyone in the organization. Therefore, it is crucial for managers to identify Machiavellian subordinate ingratiation.

Machiavellians are likely to employ ingratiation in order to achieve their own personal goals, and in the process, would dig for information and getting others to assist them in achieving their targets (Gable and Dangello, 1994). To cite as an example, if Machiavellians are obligated to work on extra time or handed with unpleasant tasks, they may react by ingratiating their bosses in order to gain useful information or to make a good impression. They might even avoid doing the assigned task by merely talking to coworkers in the coffee room, reading newspapers or surfing the internet.

Unfortunately, ingratiation can easily be overlooked since it is human nature to favour those who show admiration and approval. The praise attests the worthiness of the manager's ideas and raises self-esteem. Thus, the ambiguous nature of ingratiation is hardly detectable. In a nutshell, ingratiation makes the manager feels good.

It is often very difficult for superiors to differentiate between an honest appraisal and a manipulative ingratiation of a Machiavellian subordinate. However, there are several means to determine whether a subordinate's flattery or complete agreement is fake or genuine. Managers can do so by evaluating the frequency and range of the ingratiatory behaviours, observing the subordinate's interactions with others, and soliciting feedbacks from reliable colleagues. Therefrom, the subordinate's sincerity can be judged by assessing the frequency of his or her compliment giving, opinion conformity, rendering favour and self-enhancement. The following test questions should be posed: Does the subordinate praise the superior at every given opportunity? Does the subordinate support the superior's notions at all times? Is the subordinate continually volunteering to perform favours? Does the subordinate compliment both work and personal aspects of the manager, e.g. car, dress code, speech and other positive traits? Moreover, superiors can also appraise the subordinate's behaviour by observing how he or she acts with other organisational authority figures.

To diminish subordinate ingratiation in an organization, managers can directly confront Machiavellian subordinate ingratiatory behaviour, become the role models of appropriate conduct, employ subordinate peer pressure, and identify their weaknesses as ingratiation targets. In these ways, managers may alleviate the detrimental aspects of organizational ingratiation.

Ingratiation can be curtailed by directly challenging the subordinate's behaviour. For instance, when the Machiavellian subordinate begins with a flattery statement: "You are so wonderful!", the manager can respond by stating that insincere praise is neither necessary nor acceptable. Managers then can inform subordinates that there are other ways that subordinates can impress them, such as by advancing in careers, uplifting their performance, et cetera. Likewise, managers can get rid of favour doing by resolutely declining the assistance offered. Superiors can also ask a trusted colleague to determine the sincerity of the subordinate's behavioural motives. One question that should always be in the superior's mind: "Is this subordinate flattering me?" If the answer to the question is 'yes', then he/she should be more dubious and straight away put up an ingratiatory alert.

Moreover, managers can hamper ingratiatory behaviour by employing subordinate peer pressure. Group norms would consequently be cultivated among subordinates so much so that ingratiating behaviour will be regarded as deplorable. By so doing, managers can promote a healthy and dynamic corporate atmosphere whereby organizational rewards are conferred mainly by merit, rather than flattery.

9. CONCLUSION

The ultimate goal for management is to have employees with high self efficacy, assigned where they are most needed, with low levels of turnover and incentive system that encourages workers' commitment. Subordinates with self efficacy would understand the parameters of their authority within the organizational environment, resulting in creative and spontaneous workers who are comfortable to try new things, and motivated to pursue organizational goals. Nevertheless, when double standards or politically motivated agendas exist, rules and expectations become unpredictable producing

employees who are afraid to take risks. Hence, it is crucial for the managers to understand and recognize ingratiating behaviours so that they may have the capability to treat all individuals in their domains of supervision more fairly. Only when workers feel that they are being treated equally will they perform at their upmost level and as such, producing better outcome.

In addition, managers can take the edge off ingratiation by controling workplace resources since they are susceptible targets of subordinate flattering efforts. It is human nature to favour the rubbing of our egos. Humans always want to be right because it makes them feel good. However, managers must realize that a Machiavellian subordinate's enthusiastic admiration may be a mere pretense put up for self-advancement.

Nevertheless, not all ingratiatory behaviour is detrimental to the organization; allowing room for some ingratiatory behaviour can also be an important feat to an organization. Politics and ingratiation are vital to the effective functioning of organizations. In fact, these perspectives endorse more accurate descriptions on how career success is determined. The strategies of Machiavelli are even more applicable to the world of business than that of the present day politics. Machiavelli's thoughts can be embraced by subordinates to design and implement positive ingratiatory strategies since superiors will promote and award fast track career only to the one he feels more comfortable with and who can be his or her ally. The subjectivity of career success, *ceteris paribus*, lies with influence factors. As such, socializing and rubbing shoulders with the bosses; or what is being regarded as implementing ingratiatory behaviours may bring about enormous competitive advantage.

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