

## MACHIAVELLIANISM IN EDUCATIONAL SETTING: WHAT IS KNOWN? A SCOPING REVIEW

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### ABSTRACT

*A Machiavellian can persuade people, but his connotation is more in the negative sense. They do it merely for their own benefit. Machiavellianism has allegedly been found in various contexts, such as politics, business, and organization, including education. Among others, spoofing, using writing without the owner's permission, and plagiarism are commonly done. This can be serious because this behavior will harm others. Through this study, literature related to Machiavellianism in the educational setting of 20 pieces will be studied. This review will be done using the PRISMA guide. The research samples typically consist of school students and university students with an age range of 20 to 40 years. The results of the review found that Machiavellianism influenced most of the problematic behavior that exists in the educated world. It is hoped that the results of this study can be used as a source of knowledge and the basis for developing interventions so that Machiavellianism does not ruin the world of education.*

**Keywords:** Machiavellianism, education, academic, scoping review

### 1. PREFACE

Machiavellianism has been investigated since the 1970s. Even though this topic started as a political issue, many are trying to find other connections, such as business, organizational, and even clinical (Láng & Lénárd, 2015). Machiavellians can persuade others to get what they want through deception, manipulation, or coercion (McCleskey, 2013). These deeds apparently also happened in the education sphere, particularly among many educators, regarding competitive situations.

In an educational setting, Machiavellianism is one of the factors that influence how a person can develop unethical behavior. Maggalatta an Adhariani (2020) stated that Machiavellianism is associated with unethical behavior. When someone does something they shouldn't do, they are engaging in unethical behavior. If seen in the world of education, this behavior includes cheating (Esteves et al., 2021) using writing without the owner's permission, plagiarizing a work, and much more. These do not only neglect the ethical code of conduct but also possibly violate the law. Machiavellianism can occur both in students and teachers. In fact, their behavior can influence each other in shaping Machiavellianism.

Machiavellianism most pronounced in students of politics and law, least pronounced in students of social work, nursing and education (Hedrih, 2023)

Concluding the above, one question arises that can be raised as a formulation of the problem in this research: what is Machiavellianism like in the world of education? In answering this question and understanding the scope of Machiavellianism in educational settings, we conducted a systematic literature review. The author reviews and summarizes various pieces of research and literature regarding Machiavellianism, especially those relevant to education. Hopefully, this article can provide insight into Machiavellianism in the world of education and can become the

basis for further research and efforts to design prevention and intervention so that it does not get worse.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

This systematic literature review uses assistance from the 2020 Preferred Reporting System for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analysis (PRISMA) (Haddaway et al., 2022) in selecting the literature. The articles were searched through several databases, including Google Scholar, Semantic Scholar, and PubMed, with the keywords "Machiavellianism" AND "Education" OR "Academic" OR "School" AND "Learning" OR "Competition" AND "Student" OR "Students" OR "Teacher" AND "Dishonest" OR "Misconduct" OR "Cheating". The article search focused only on the last 10 years, namely from 2013 to 2023.

This study initially obtained 769 articles. However, another 423 articles were removed due to article duplication checking and automated eligibility testing by the tool. This left 346 articles, and a further 308 were excluded due to discrepancies in the title and abstract of the literature. There were 48 articles that entered the eligibility test stage, but for several reasons, 18 articles were discarded, including population error ( $n = 16$ ) and wrong results ( $n = 2$ ). In the end, there were 20 articles left in total to be used in this literature study.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

There are 20 articles that meet the criteria. These articles focus on topics that discuss Machiavellianism in the education sphere, such as school and campus environments in several countries. These articles use various study designs, namely quantitative studies (17 articles), qualitative studies (2 articles), and experimental studies (1 article). The sample involved in those studies comprises students (4 articles) and university students (13 articles). These studies involved professors, assistant professors, and associates as participants, whereas the rest (1 article) did not specify at which level the participants were. The age of the sample ranged from 20 to 40 years. There are two instruments for measuring the Machiavellianism variable that are most widely used in this collection of articles, namely the Mach-IV Scale and the Short Dark Triad.

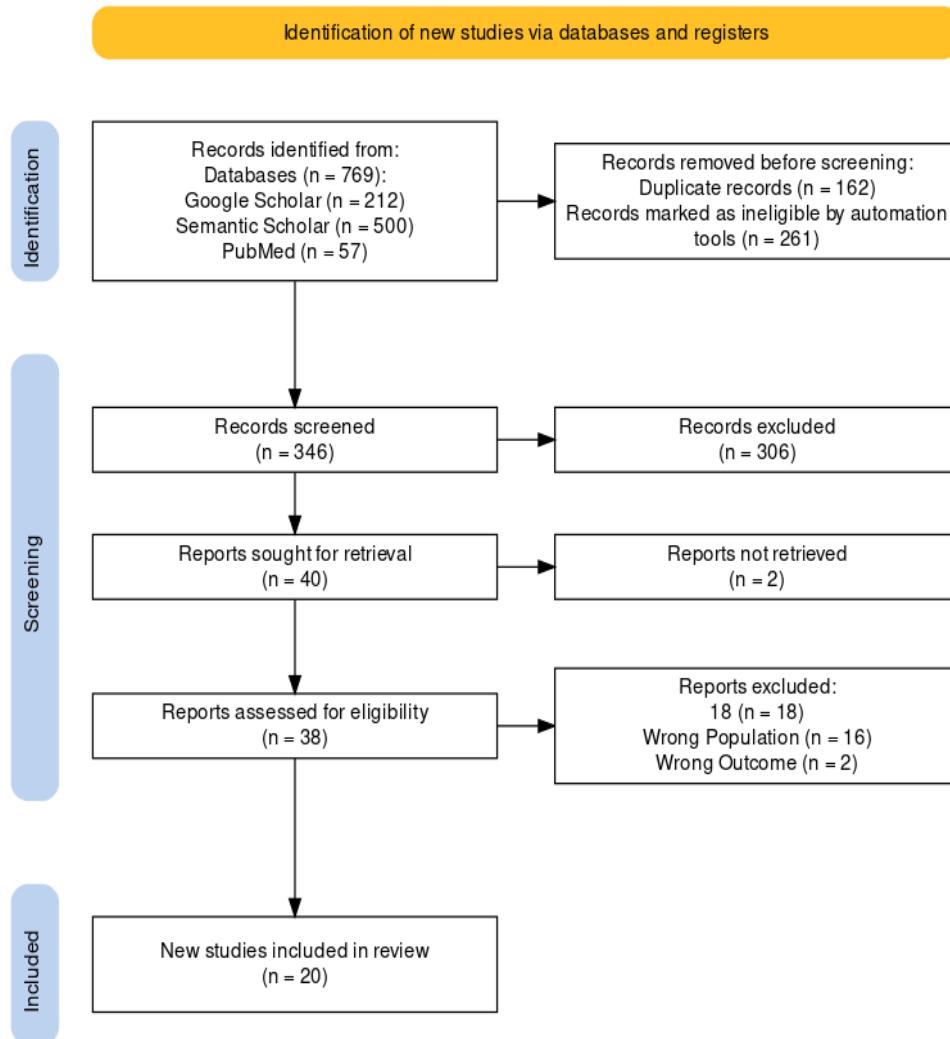
### **Machiavellianism in the Educational Context**

Based on the results of the review of several studies above, Machiavellianism is often associated with several variables related to the educational context, such as academic misconduct, academic entitlement, cheating, aggressiveness, knowledge, academic incivilities, tactics, demographic features, bullying, gambling, education, ethical perception, well-being, and choice or career.

### **Machiavellian Behavior in Students**

According to a study, male students are more prone than female students to exhibit Machiavellianism (Bekiari & Spanou, 2018). In addition, Bekiari and Spanou identified several patterns that might be considered Machiavellianism. They claimed that students who frequently travel for athletic events are viewed as Machiavellian. This is true since there is fierce competition in the sporting events industry. It's most likely that the exposure he had whilst undergoing training led him to demonstrate traits associated with Machiavellianism. People who use the internet frequently may be seen as Machiavellian, particularly when they gather information online and utilize it against those they oppose. Additionally, Machiavellianism has a tendency to overestimate someone's intelligence.

**Figure 1**  
*Study Selection Process Through PRISMA*



This is in line with (Karim, 2022) findings that Machiavellianism, along with two other Dark Triad traits, has a significant relationship with knowledge-hiding behavior. They tend not to share knowledge with their friends, and they even underestimate other people's knowledge. Another tendency of Machiavellians is that they are usually strategic and think things through. This can be seen from the results of research conducted by Onyedire et al. (Onyedire et al., 2021). He found that Machiavellianism was not related to problem gambling. After research, the results show that Machiavellianism will do something if it has definite benefits for itself. They don't like things that are uncertain and make them lose money.

Machiavellians have their own tactics for action. Bekiari (Bekiari, 2017) found that other people influence it. To understand this, Bekiari conducted a study to see how Machiavellian tactics could develop. Research shows that how verbally aggressive the instructor is influences tactic shaping. The more verbally aggressive the instructor becomes, the more the Machiavellian develops his tactics so as not to fall for this. They usually want complete control over themselves. This may cause them to develop various ways of manipulating others to avoid aggression from others. This intensive tactic was often found in male students compared to female students. The more frequently exposure to verbal aggression is received, the more varied the tactics produced. As

stated by Rehman et al. (Rehman et al., 2018), people with low and high Machiavellianism have differences regarding their tactics.

### **Student Unethical Behavior**

Basically, Machiavellianism is a person who is willing to get anything for his pleasure, regardless of whether it is good or bad. This explains why they are often involved in bad behavior, even at school. Machiavellianism is associated with unethical behavior, academic misconduct, academic entitlement, and scholastic cheating (Elias, 2015), (Maggalatta & Adhariani, 2020), (Nkundabanyanga et al., 2014), (Zhang et al., 2018), (Turnipseed & Cohen, 2015). They are also often associated with bullying (Spanou et al., 2020), (Yuan et al., 2020). This is because people with Machiavellianism are willing to exploit someone, especially if they hold the target's weaknesses (Bekiari & Spanou, 2018).

Additionally, Machiavellianism is associated with a tendency to perceive behavior consisting of low-class engagement, poor class attendance, cheating, class disruption, and attempting to dominate the class as appropriate (Turnipseed & Cohen, 2015). Even though they have carried out various kinds of bad behavior, they usually consider this to be normal. This is in accordance with what Pratama ("Machiavellianism, Tax Knowledge, and Ethical Perceptions of Tax Avoidance: Survey of Undergraduate Students in West Java, Indonesia," 2017) found in his research that, as Primarily found, if they get benefits for themselves, individuals with high Machiavellianism consider unethical things to be normal.

### **Well-Being of Student Machiavellian**

Machiavellians themselves are manipulative, cynical, and willing to do anything for their personal gain. So how is their life at school? People around them, particularly friends, shun them. Yang et al. (Yang et al., 2022) found that the higher the level of Machiavellianism, the lower the subjective well-being related to learning in high school students. It happens because they like to take advantage of, exploit, and manipulate someone just to get certain advantages. Since other people shun them, it leads them to be alone. They must try on their own to solve the learning problems they face because no one wants to help. If this happens frequently, his view of the welfare of learning will certainly decrease. In addition, when participants were faced with a dilemma, Machiavellianism had a significant influence on their psychological stress or anxiety (Tang & Li, 2021). Because of the dilemma they are experiencing, Machiavellians will feel inner conflict, which may cause them to become stressed or anxious.

### **Machiavellian Student at College**

A Machiavellian in higher education has his own preferences in choosing his college major. However, this personality also influences these preferences. According to Gruda et al. (Gruda et al., 2023) Machiavellians are more likely to prefer majors that are more oriented toward things than caring for people. This may also happen because their nature is more selfish. As is known, Machiavellianism itself can develop due to the influence of other people. Gruda's research results are also in line with Bekiari's findings (Bekiari, 2016) that male students who were taught Machiavellianism were more likely to choose college majors that were more oriented toward things than majors that focused on caring for others. Because accepted habits can make someone choose the same thing in the future, including when choosing a college major.

Additionally, Yildirim et al. (Yildirim et al., 2020) found that individuals who received education on health education had low levels of Machiavellianism. This shows that the more individuals understand their own health, the more aware they will be of its nature and choose what is good or

bad. Even though individuals with Machiavellianism have strong thoughts and are difficult to change, this can be one way to prevent the increase in Machiavellianism in someone so that they can become better individuals in the future and be ready to enter the real world.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The results of the review answer the problem formulation in this research. Among others, some articles uncover that Machiavellianism is related to most behavioral problems in educational settings, such as unethical behavior, academic misconduct, academic entitlement, and scholastic cheating. It is no wonder due to the nature of Machiavellianism itself, namely manipulative deeds in order to gain their own benefits. The development of this dark personality is also apparently influenced by the school environment, one of which is the teacher's attitude. This review also found that children's possible exposure to aggression makes them more susceptible to producing behavior associated with Machiavellianism and more prone to Machiavellianism.

We hope this scoping review can be a basis for us to design interventions for teachers and schools to maintain the quality of learning and teaching in reducing Machiavellianism in schools. We also hope this study stimulates subsequent research focus on deepening and extending Machiavellianism in the educational realm.

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