



# Machiavellianism and Prosocial Behavior: A Study on Indian Lawyers

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## Abstract

The current study aims to investigate the gender difference and relationship between Machiavellianism and prosocial behavior in lawyers. The sample was collected from 200 advocates (males = 140, females = 60) from New Delhi, India. The tools used for the study were the Machiavellian Personality Scale (MPS) and the Prosocial Tendencies Measure (PTM-23). MPS consists 16 items with four dimensions: amoral manipulation, distrust of others, desire for status and desire for control. PTM-23 consists of 23 items with six subscales: altruism, anonymous, compliance, dire, emotional and public. Independent t-test and correlation analysis were carried out to assess gender differences and relationships between the variables, respectively. The finding revealed a significant difference on compliant prosocial behavior between male and female

lawyers. The correlation analysis revealed significant relationships for Machiavellianism and dimensions of prosocial behavior.

*Keywords: Machiavellianism, prosocial behavior, dark triad*

## Introduction

The personality of lawyers, are often considered to be immoral i.e., displaying “dark” traits of personality as a common phenomena According to Friedman (1989), lawyers, to a layperson, are viewed as callous, wicked and only concerned about making money; Friedman, on the other hand, also described lawyers to be “gentlemen”, who prefer to keep their profiles low. Law is considered to be a response to a social need that involves dealing with social values like justice, and lawyers are expected to engage in maintaining those values. Even though the profession speaks of fairness and justice; it interferes with the very nature and personality of lawyers. It is nearly impossible to avoid manipulation in this professional environment of deception, power and manipulation; however, there are moral limits to manipulation, and to limit one’s behavior is an individual choice. Media, in addition, contributes to this negative stereotype about them.

The work environment of legal system is such that it generates paranoia leading to be suspicious of other people and doubting their motives; thereby resulting in the use and encouragement of manipulation, and this use of manipulation of lawyers assuming to be potentially beneficial enables lawyers’ willingness to involve in manipulative behaviors. Daicoff (1997) suggested that one of the strongest reasons for an individual to enter the legal profession of law was the need to attain occupational status.

## Aim

The paper aimed to understand the relationship between Machiavellianism and prosocial behavior in lawyers.

## **Machiavellianism**

Machiavellianism has its roots connected with the “dark side” (Griffin & O’Leary-Kelly, 2004). Tracing back to the 16<sup>th</sup> century, Niccolo Machiavelli, in the books *The Prince*, highlighted the significance of power and how rulers manipulated their subordinates for their selfish gains. Christie and Geis in 1970 introduced a similar personality syndrome that they labeled as *Machiavellianism*. They identified various themes in relation to Machiavellianism or effective manipulators: willing to adopt manipulative tactics, acting amorally, and, projecting a cynical view of the world. They also developed the Mach-IV scale.

Machiavellian individuals often view others with negative intentions with least expectation of cooperation; they have a pre-existing notion that others will only use and exploit them (Repacholi, Slaughter, Pritchard, & Gibbs, 2003) Past research argues that Machiavellian individuals are able to detach emotionally from emotional situations; however, they have the ability to understand the perspectives of others without burdening themselves with emotions (McIllwain, 2003). Machiavellians would generally offer assistance if they are ought to receive something in return. Fehr et al., (1992) identified Machiavellian as someone who are selfish. According to Wilson et al., (1996), “the central element in designating an act as Machiavellian is self-interest- an ultimate goal that is both rigorously and strategically pursue. High Mach individuals were characterized as people with high achievement needs and treacherous in nature. High Mach individuals gave more importance to money, status, power and competition (Stewart & Stewart, 2006) as these tend to provide maximum benefits in the long run, and they intended to win at any cost (Ryckman et al., 1994). High Mach individuals have an external locus of control i.e., they believe that outside environment or external situations have control over people’s behaviors and their consequences (Gable & Dangelo, 1994; O’Connor & Morrison, 2001; Young, 1994).

## **Prosocial behavior**

Prosocial behavior is important. Prosocial behaviors are the actions by people with the intent to help others with no spontaneous benefit to the helper are quite common in our social lives. Such behavior is considered to be altruistic if it is motivated by a genuine desire to benefit another person, without any

expectation of benefits to oneself (Eisenberg & Miller 1987; Feigin, Owens & Goodyear, 2014). Prosocial behavior encourages people to live together harmoniously. It may vary in different forms ranging from small acts of kindness (e.g., giving rides to friends or lending money or books) to more regular or constant acts (e.g., doing charity).

Empathy was identified one of the powerful driving force for carrying out prosocial behaviors (Mathews et al., 1981). It is characterized as the tendency to help others in emotional situations (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). Altruism was more looked at as a form of prosocial behavior and is defined as voluntary help that concerns with the welfare of others (Eisenberg & Fabes, 1998). Batson (2011) suggested that there could also be some egoistic reasons for helping such as to receive praise and attention, to reduce the feelings of guilt, or expecting to receive something in return. Carlo and Randall (2002) identified six types of prosocial behavior: altruistic prosocial behavior, compliant prosocial behavior, emotional prosocial behavior, public prosocial behavior, direct prosocial behavior, and anonymous prosocial behavior

### **Personality and prosocial behavior**

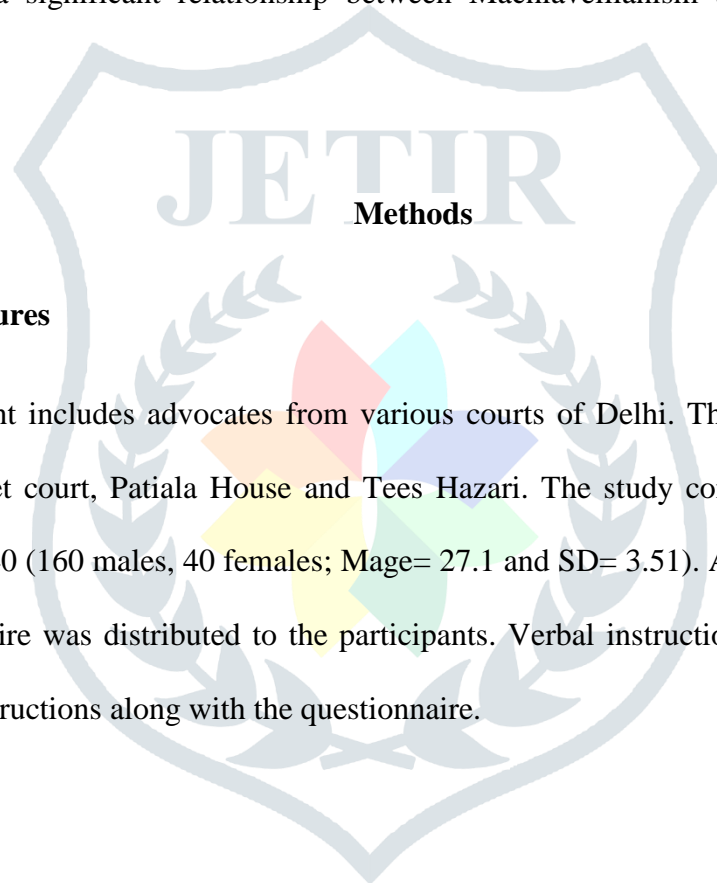
Several aspects of personality play a significant role for carrying different prosocial behaviors. However, along with personalities, the situational context should also be considered. As empathy and altruism were key factors for projecting prosocial tendencies, research has suggested that high Mach individuals were low on affective empathy (McIllwain, 2003), and were more cognitively oriented (McHoskey, 1995), and thus may not be positively associated with all forms of prosocial behaviors. Individuals with dark triad personality are more likely to have agentic goals; might be positively associated with some forms of prosocial behavior such as public prosocial behavior (Kauten & Barry, 2016; Zuo, Wang, Xu, Wang, & Zhao, 2016). Palmer (2018) reported that Machiavellianism was negatively with altruism.

In general, Machiavellianism has been found to be higher in men than women (Ali & Chamorro-Premuzic, 2010; McHoskey, 2001). In a study conducted by Collison et al., (2021) showed that men had higher levels of antagonism, social dominance, and Machiavellianism. Gender differences on prosocial behavior have accounted for mixed results. Espinosa and Kovarik (2015) found that social framing

encouraged prosocial behavior in women but not men. An Indian study conducted by Chadha and Misra (2006), revealed that age, social economic status and gender had no significant influence prosocial behavior. Abdullahi and Kumar (2016) also found no significant differences in prosocial behavior.

## Hypotheses

- There would be a significant gender difference on Machiavellianism in lawyers.
- There would be a significant gender difference on different types of prosocial behavior in lawyers.
- There would be a significant relationship between Machiavellianism and prosocial behavior in lawyers.



## Participants and procedures

The sample of the current includes advocates from various courts of Delhi. The data was collected from three district courts: Saket court, Patiala House and Tees Hazari. The study consisted of 200 participants between the ages 23 and 40 (160 males, 40 females; Mage= 27.1 and SD= 3.51). All participants were Indian nationals. The questionnaire was distributed to the participants. Verbal instructions were provided to them along with the written instructions along with the questionnaire.

## Measures

**Prosocial behavior (PTM).** Prosocial behavior was assessed using the 23-item Prosocial Tendencies Measure (Carol & Randall, 2002). The scale is rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1 (*does not describe me at all*) to 5 (*describes me greatly*). PTM measures prosocial tendencies on six subscales: altruistic prosocial behavior, anonymous prosocial behavior, compliant prosocial behavior, dire prosocial behavior, emotional prosocial behavior, and public prosocial behavior Cronbach's alpha reliabilities of the six subscales: altruistic ( $\alpha = .689$ ), anonymous prosocial behavior ( $\alpha = .795$ ), compliant prosocial behavior ( $\alpha = .758$ ), dire prosocial behavior ( $\alpha = .720$ ), emotional prosocial behavior ( $\alpha = .774$ ), and public prosocial behavior ( $\alpha = .824$ ).

**Machiavellian Personality Scale (MPS).** Machiavellianism was assessed using the 16-item Machiavellian Personality Scale (Dahling Whitaker, & Levy, 2009). The scale is rated on a 5-point scale, ranging from 1(*strongly disagree*) to 5(*strongly agree*). The scale also consists of four dimensions: amoral manipulation, distrust of others, desire for control, and desire for status. Cronbach's reliabilities of the scale and its dimensions: MPS ( $\alpha = .825$ ), amoral manipulation ( $\alpha = .743$ ), distrust of others ( $\alpha = .647$ ), desire for control ( $\alpha = .583$ ), and desire for status ( $\alpha = .741$ ).

## Results

Table 1 represents the mean scores of 200 lawyers. The mean score of Machiavellianism is 48.73 and the standard deviation is 8.73. The scores of the dimensions of Machiavellianism: amoral manipulation ( $M = 11.71$ ,  $SD = 4.04$ ), desire for control ( $M = 9.66$ ,  $SD = 2.22$ ), desire for status ( $M = 2.65$ ,  $SD = 1.16$ ), and distrust of others ( $M = 2.59$ ,  $SD = 1.22$ ). The scores of the dimensions of prosocial behavior: altruism ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = .86$ ), anonymous ( $M = 3.11$ ,  $SD = .94$ ), compliant ( $M = 3.78$ ,  $SD = .92$ ), emotional ( $M = 3.23$ ,  $SD = .84$ ), and public ( $M = 2.07$ ,  $SD = 1.02$ ).

Table 2 represents the independent t-test scores of male and female advocates on Machiavellianism and prosocial behavior. A significant difference was found only on the compliant prosocial behavior dimensions. The score on the compliant prosocial behavior dimension were found to be higher for male lawyers ( $M = 3.89$ ,  $SD = .95$ ) than the scores of the females lawyers ( $M = 3.55$ ,  $SD = .87$ );  $t(198) = 2.34$ ,  $p = .020$ ,  $d = .35$ . The effect size was found to be medium. There were no significant differences found on the scores of the other dimensions of prosocial behavior: altruism, anonymous, dire, emotional, and public- for male and female lawyers. Also, no significant difference was obtained for the variable Machiavellianism, or any of its dimensions.

Table 3 represents the correlation analysis between the variables Machiavellianism and prosocial behavior for the total sample. A positive significant was found between Machiavellianism and dire prosocial behavior,  $r(198) = .27$ ,  $p < .05$ . A positive relationship was yielded between desire for control and dire prosocial behavior,  $r(198) = .33$ ,  $p < .01$ . The dimension desire for status established a significant positive



relationship with public prosocial behavior,  $r(198) = .26, p < .01$ . The dimension distrust of others showed a positive correlation with dire prosocial behavior,  $r(198) = .19, p < .01$ .

Table 4 represents the correlation analysis between the variables Machiavellianism and prosocial behavior for male advocates. A significant positive correlation was found between desire for control and dire prosocial behavior,  $r(138) = .18, p < .05$ . A significant positive correlation was found for distrust of others with compliant prosocial behavior,  $r(138) = .18, p < .05$  and, dire prosocial behavior,  $r(138) = .24, p < .01$ .

Table 5 represents the correlation analysis between the variables Machiavellianism and prosocial behavior for female advocates. A positive correlation was found between Machiavellianism and dire prosocial behavior,  $r(58) = .27, p < .05$ . A positive relation was found between desire for control and dire prosocial behavior,  $r(58) = .33, p < .01$ . A significant positive relation was seen between desire for status and public prosocial as well,  $r(58) = .26, p < .01$ .

## Discussion

In the results section, we examined the gender differences and correlation for the variables Machiavellianism and prosocial behavior. The first hypothesis stated a significant difference for gender on the scores of Machiavellianism. The results indicated no significant difference in our study for gender on Machiavellianism (and its dimensions). According to past literature, the entire construct of Machiavellianism is more closely related to men over women (Brown & Guy, 1983). Traits of Machiavellianism are more situations based. Women may take on men roles exceeding their Machiavellian traits over men. Studies of business executives have indicated no gender difference (Okane & Murray, 1980), or instead a difference in Mach scores with women scoring higher than men (Burnett, Hunt, & Chonko, 1986; Gable & Topol, 1987). With the rapid influx of women into the profession of law since 1970s, the gender differences have seemed to decline. Thus, the first hypothesis has been accepted.

The second hypothesis stated a significant difference for gender on prosocial behavior. A significant difference was indicated only for one dimension of prosocial behavior: compliant prosocial behavior. According to the findings, women were found to be less compliant as compared to men. Literature has

indicated that men are less compliant than women, with some findings suggesting no effects at all (Child, 2012); however, overall men are more helpful than women (Eagle & Crowley, 1986). A deviant workplace behavior is quite a common phenomenon in the organizations. Employees are often required to behave in unethical manner (Anand, Ashforth, & Joshi, 2004; Rehman & Shahnawaz, 2018). Helping in uncertain or unknown situations involve risks, the helper takes substantial risk and often labeled as *hero* (Becker & Eagly, 2004). So, even though men are less likely to obey rules; nonetheless, they are more likely to comply with the unethical requests and behaviors. .

The third hypothesis stated a significant relationship between Machiavellianism and prosocial behavior. In the current study, the scores of the scores of Machiavellianism showed a positive association with dire prosocial behavior; desire for control showed a significant correlation with dire prosocial behavior; desire for status yielded an association public prosocial behavior; distrust of others yielded a positive correlation with dire prosocial behavior. Machiavellian individuals are less likely to help others unless they are driven by self interest or external reward (Lannin, Guyll, Krizan, Madon, & Cornish, 2014; White, 2014). Providing help to people in emergency situations or in emergency situation might bring an opportunity to gain reputation as a social reward. In the profession of law, it is becomes imperative to form and maintain a solid reputation in order to attract more clients. For men, a positive correlation was seen between desire for control and dire prosocial behavior; a positive association was seen for desire for distrust of with compliant prosocial behavior and dire prosocial behavior. The competitiveness around them may drive them to help others as they may be worried about others taking advantage of the opportunity to help. For females, a positive association was seen between Machiavellianism and dire prosocial behavior; a positive correlation between desire for control and dire prosocial behavior; a positive association between desire for status and public prosocial behavior.

### Conclusion

The study contributes in understanding the personality of lawyers and helping attitudes. The study has revealed association of Machiavellianism and prosocial behavior in lawyers. The legal profession has a sustaining negative image of being callous and immoral. Machiavellian individuals are generally willing to



offer help if any form of award associated by helping others, or earning reputation and making impression. Further studies are required in Indian context for investigating the relationship between Machiavellianism and helping attitudes.

### Declaration of Conflict of Interests

The authors, hereby, declare that there is no conflict of interest.

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### Tables

**Table 1**

*Demographic details of the variables*

Variables	N	M	SD
Machiavellianism	200	48.79	8.73
Amoral Manipulation	200	11.71	4.04
Desire for control	200	9.66	2.22
Desire for status	200	2.65	1.16
Distrust of others	200	2.59	1.22
Altruism PSB	200	3.89	0.86
Anonymous PSB	200	3.11	0.94

Compliant PSB	200	3.78	0.92
Dire PSB	200	3.22	0.85
Emotional PSB	200	3.23	0.84
Public PSB	200	2.07	1.02

Note. PSB= Prosocial Behavior

**Table 2**

Mean, standard deviation and t-test independent scores for Machiavellianism (and its dimensions), and different dimensions of prosocial behavior for male and female participants

Variables	Male		Female		t(198)	p	d
	M	SD	M	SD			
Machiavellianism	49.11	8.71	48.03	0.882	0.80	.424	
Amoral manipulation	11.99	4.03	11.05	4.01	1.51	.131	
Desire for control	9.69	2.19	9.60	2.38	0.267	.790	
Desire for status	2.58	1.13	2.80	1.23	-1.19	.234	
Distrust of others	2.48	1.17	2.85	1.28	-1.94	.053	
Altruism	3.87	0.859	3.94	0.879	-0.51	.611	
Anonymous PSB	3.12	0.935	3.11	0.903	0.10	.920	

<i>Compliance PSB</i>	<b>3.89</b>	<b>0.958</b>	<b>3.55</b>	<b>0.878</b>	<b>2.34</b>	<b>.020</b>	<b>.354</b>
<i>Dire PSB</i>	3.20	0.907	3.15	0.790	-.083	.934	
<i>Emotional PSB</i>	3.30	0.850	3.21	0.783	1.172	.243	
<i>Public PSB</i>	2.09	1.03	2.11	1.08	-0.008	.994	

Note. PSB= Prosocial Behavior

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 3**

*Pearson production moment correlations of the MPS scale and its dimensions with the measures of prosocial behavior dimensions for the total sample (N= 200)*

Scale	Alt	Anon	Compliant	Dire	Emotional	Public
Machiavellianism	-.10	.02	.19	<b>.27*</b>	.10	.13
Amoral manipulation	-.13	.10	.13	.21	.09	.14
Desire for Control	.05	.19	.19	<b>.33**</b>	.12	.05
Desire for Status	.10	.09	.03	.05	.06	<b>.26**</b>
Distrust of others	-.12	.05	.04	<b>.19**</b>	-.13	.19

Note. Alt = Altruism, Anon = Anonymous

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 4**

*Pearson production moment correlations of the MPS scale and its dimensions with the measures of prosocial behavior dimensions for males (n = 140)*

Scale	Alt	Anon	Compliant	Dire	Emotional	Public
Machiavellianism	-.10	-.01	-.04	.10	.08	.05
Amoral manipulation	-.15	-.10	-.12	.01	.01	.11
Desire for Control	.05	-.05	-.04	<b>.18*</b>	.09	.01
Desire for Status	.04	-.10	.03	<b>.27</b>	.07	-.08
Distrust of others	.07	-.01	<b>.18*</b>	<b>.24**</b>	.09	-.04

Note. Alt = Altruism, Anon = Anonymous

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

**Table 5**

*Pearson production moment correlations of the MPS scale with the measures of prosocial behavior dimensions for females (n = 60)*

Scale	Alt	Anon	Compliant	Dire	Emotional	Public
Machiavellianism	-.08	.09	.19	<b>.27*</b>	.10	.13
Amoral manipulation	-.07	.10	.13	.21	.09	.21
Desire for Control	.01	.19	.19	<b>.33**</b>	.12	.05

Desire for Status	-.27	.09	.03	.01	.06	.26**
Distrust of others	-.12	.05	.04	.08	-.13	.19

Note. Alt = Altruism, Anon = Anonymous

\* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$

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