Exploring Relationships Among Vocational Categories And Machiavellianism

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Abstract

- The literature indicates that students’ vocational preferences may be related to their personality characteristics (Holland, 1973; Skinner, 1981, 1988). However, recent research has not investigated the possibility that the Machiavellianism may be related students’ vocational choices. Utilizing data gathered from 286 university students in a large Western Canadian city, we examined the possibility that Machiavellianism may be linked to Holland’s (1973) vocational categories (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising, and conventional). A series of six regression analyses were conducted and resulted indicated negative relationships between Machiavellianism and both the social and artistic vocational categories. Furthermore, a positive association was found between the entering vocation category and students’ Machiavellianism scores. The implications of these results are discussed in light of Holland’s theory of vocational choices.

Methods

- Participants
  - Participants were 230 university students enrolled in a psychology course at a large Western Canadian university. 76% females, 24% male (Mean Age = 20.6 years).
  - 88% reported their family background as East Asian, 20% reported their family background as European, 32% reported their background as one other than East Asian or European.

- Materials
  - Mach IV (20 items): "The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear".

- Background

  - As individuals develop, they are confronted with important educational and vocational decisions (e.g., attending post-secondary education, getting a job) that can impact their life trajectories.
  - In his theory of vocational behavior, Holland (1973) suggests that individuals’ choice of vocation is an expression of aspects of their personality and their life history.
  - Holland’s (1973) theory of vocational behavior indicates that individuals’ vocational choices can be categorized as a manifestation of six types of personality: Realistic, Investigative, Artistic, Social, Enterprising, and Conventional.
  - Furthermore, Holland’s theory indicates that when individuals’ personality types (vocational choice) match their environment, their personality types and environments are predictable extensions of one another.
  - Throughout the personality/social psychology literature, researchers have demonstrated that aspects of personality are important related to a host of academic, motivational, and social variables (e.g., Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Skinner, 1981).
  - Contemporary research in the area of personality has indicated that researchers should examine the possible link between Machiavellianism and vocational choices.
  - Wilson, Near, and Miller (1996) describe Machiavellianism as social behaviors and actions that are employed for the purpose of manipulating and exerting interpersonal control over others.
  - Researchers describe the Machiavellian personality as one that is driven primarily by external rewards and success rather than personal goals such as family and community (Christie & Geis, 1970; McHoskey, 1990).
  - Although researchers recognize that Machiavellianism is not necessarily maladaptive, studies have linked it to aggression, antisocial behaviour, as well as subclinical narcissism and psychopathy (Fehr, Samson, & Paulhus, 1992; Gurman, 1991; McHoskey, 1995; McHoskey, 1999; Paulhus & Williams, 2002).
  - The present study extended previous research (e.g., Paulhus & Williams, 2002; Skinner, 1981, 1988) and examined how university students’ vocational choices (as indicated by their university major) were related to their Machiavellianism scores by asking two research questions:
  1. Are students’ vocational choices related to their Machiavellianism scores?
  2. Do students’ vocational choices as indicated by their university majors predict their Machiavellianism scores?

Results

- Table 1: Means and Standard Deviations For The Machiavellianism Variable By Vocational Category
  
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocational Category</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>SD</th>
<th>N</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>55.47</td>
<td>8.21</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>55.24</td>
<td>6.64</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprising</td>
<td>56.42</td>
<td>7.14</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Table 2: Intercorrelations Among The Vocational Categories and Machiavellianism Variables

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Realistic</th>
<th>Investigative</th>
<th>Artistic</th>
<th>Social</th>
<th>Enterprising</th>
<th>Conventional</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mach IV (r)</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Realistic</td>
<td>.29</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>-.11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investigative</td>
<td>-.12</td>
<td>-.52</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>.33</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.18</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>-.15</td>
<td>.15</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprising</td>
<td>.23</td>
<td>-.20</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.14</td>
<td>.17</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.27</td>
<td>.27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Table 3: Bivariate Regression Analyses Predicting Machiavellianism Scores From Students’ Vocational Categories (N = 230)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Vocational Category</th>
<th>b</th>
<th>t</th>
<th>R²</th>
<th>F</th>
<th>Sig.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Artistic</td>
<td>-.08</td>
<td>-.11</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.50</td>
<td>.21</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social</td>
<td>-.01</td>
<td>-.03</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Enterprising</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.05</td>
<td>.00</td>
<td>1.00</td>
<td>.31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conventional</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- Participants were 230 university students enrolled in a psychology course at a large Western Canadian university. 76% females, 24% male (Mean Age = 20.6 years).

- Materials
  - Mach IV (20 items): "The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear".

- Procedure
  - Data were gathered in a group administration questionnaire session during the Fall and Winter of 2005.
  - Questionnaires were administered by two research assistants.
  - Students were free to withdraw from the study at any time and without consequence.

- Coding For Vocation
  - Students’ questionnaires were coded for vocational choice using their university major.
  - Using Holland’s (1973) vocational classification index, university majors were categorized as belonging to one of the vocational categories/personality types (realistic, investigative, artistic, social, enterprising) described by Holland (1973).

- For example, if a student indicated that their university major was sociology their vocational category was sociology, they were categorized as belonging to the “social” vocational category.

Conclusions

- The present study indicated that Holland’s (1973) conceptualization of vocational categories is only moderately related to students’ Machiavellianism scores.
- Specifically, results indicated that the realistic, investigative, and enterprising vocational categories were positive associated with Machiavellianism.
- By contrast, the artistic and social vocational categories were negatively associated with Machiavellianism.
- Future research can strengthen these findings by revisiting Holland’s theory to update and classify some of the vocations that are significant in today’s society (e.g., software development, internet).
- In addition, future research may examine how individuals’ careers change and grow longitudinally and in relation to aspects of personality and motivation.

References