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Investigating the Relationship between Machiavellian Personality of Managers and Perceived Stress and Burnout of Staff of the General Department of Youth and Sports in Dhil al-Qar Province of Iraq

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Abstract

The present research was conducted with the aim of investigating the relationship between the Machiavellian personality of managers and the perceived stress and burnout of the staff of the general department of Youth and Sports in Dhil al-Qar province of Iraq.

The current research is of the correlation type and the statistical population includes 240 managers and staff of the general department of Youth and Sports in Dhil al-Qar province of Iraq in 2022, and using the existing method and based on Cochran's formula, 154 people were selected as a statistical sample. The data collection tools included Machiavellianism questionnaires (Christie & Geis, 2013), perceived stress scale (Cohen et al., 1983) and job burnout questionnaires (Maslach et al., 1997). Data were analyzed using multiple regression tests and Pearson's correlation coefficient by SPSS 23 software.

The results showed that there is a significant relationship between the Machiavellian personality of managers with perceived stress and burnout of staff of the general department of Youth and Sports in Dhil al-Qar province of Iraq ($P \leq 0.05$). Also, the results showed that there is no significant difference between Machiavellian personality with job burnout and perceived stress in terms of gender, level of education and work experience ($P \geq 0.05$).

The findings indicate that there is a relationship between the Machiavellian personality of managers and the stress and burnout of staff. It is suggested to prevent the development of Machiavellian personality among managers in order to avoid the negative effects of Machiavellianism along with organizational progress.

Keywords:

Burnout, Machiavellian Personality, Perceived Stress, Sport Managers, Sport Organizations

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Introduction

An organization is a social institution that has a purpose and a system that, due to having a conscious structure, performs certain activities and has known boundaries. To achieve the goals of any organization, the human resources of that organization play an important role. Accomplishing the tasks of the organization is the responsibility of its human resources and the performance of these people is the same as the performance of the organization. The performance of employees within the organization is a reflection of their knowledge, skills, values and other components. For this reason, identifying and prioritizing the factors affecting the performance of employees is one of the main goals of the organization, in order to measure the knowledge, ability, motivation, job behavior and performance of employees (DeShong et al., 2017). Among the factors that increase organizational performance is the personality of people. Compromise and harmony between the type of personality and the type of work environment causes more compatibility with the job and profession, which in turn leads to positive organizational performance. Investigating personality traits and its relationship with performance is one of the basic and important issues in the organization, and paying attention to it can have special effects on the efficiency and effectiveness of employees. What is particularly important in this regard is that a person's job should provide a suitable environment for that person's emotional, personal and social needs. Due to the fact that different jobs and even specializations in the same job have different emotional backgrounds and the role of individual differences in the way of choosing a job and the types of jobs chosen is unavoidable, therefore paying attention to personality traits in choosing a job and also It is of particular importance in the efficiency and performance of the job in people's lives (Smith & Webster, 2017). Mental and mental disorders are one of the three dark components of behavioral traits, and the other two are narcissism and Machiavellianism (power seeking). People who have some characteristics of intellectual and psychological disorders (anti-social) usually show more dishonesty, self-righteousness and cruelty than the average people in the society. Machiavellianism, which is also called opportunism, is the degree of influence and dominance of one person over another person, by which that person convinces another person to do something. With the increase of a person's influence on the other party, others get hold of that person and do what that person wants and it becomes what that person expected. People with high opportunism tend to win and their main focus is on the task and what they have to do and nothing else. In this regard, they use the people under their control as a tool to achieve their goals (DeShong et al., 2017).

Machiavelli's leadership is one of the effective factors on destructive organizational behavior. Such leaders are less willing to persuasive ways or adhere to moral and spiritual standards (Younus et al., 2020). Leaders described as Machiavellian are true politicians, analysts, and strategists in their own minds. They can lead the power dynamics in the organization by trying to abuse power without guilt or shame. People with high Machiavellian characteristics may use aggressive, profitable and deviant behaviors to achieve personal and organizational goals. Less concern for the well-being of others Furthermore, Machiavellians do not consider common morality and are generally known as immoral people (Mohammadi & Sorani, 2019). However, in communication, Machiavellians have a great ability to influence other people, especially those under their hands, and they rely on lies, deception, fraud, slander, and sabotage to achieve their goals (Mohammadi & Sorani, 2019).

On the other hand, in front of the managers, there are staff who, according to some studies, Machiavellian characteristics have many negative effects and consequences on staff and organizational goals (Mostafavi & Sadat, 2019). One of the most important negative consequences of Machiavellian characteristics is stress and burnout (Jalalzadeh & Nasirian, 2020). Organizational managers who use Machiavelli's leadership style cause deviant behaviors such as; Wasting time, delay in entering the workplace, early completion of assignments, excessive absenteeism, disobedience to rules, arbitrary behavior with other colleagues, biased evaluation, lack of cooperation and coordination with colleagues and organization agents, lack of seriousness and carelessness in performing tasks, aggression and inappropriate giving are reported (Shojaii et al., 2019). The consequences of such behaviors in the work environment have become the reason that many staff do not have enough motivation to work and are pushed to the sidelines and instead of devoting themselves to work more, they are constantly facing this behavior, be stressed and eventually suffer burnout (Matthews et al., 2022). In general, stress is defined according to the changes and special reactions that stressful stimuli create in emotion, cognition and behavior (Kokka et al., 2023). Based on cognitive approaches, stressful stimuli are not directly the cause of problems or diseases, but the way people react in dealing with them and how to evaluate the situation is the determining factor (Graves et al., 2021). Therefore, in the field of stress studies, the concept of perceived stress has been proposed. Perceived stress indicates how threatening or challenging people evaluate stressful events. According to cognitive approaches, a

person experiences stress when the assessed tension exceeds his capabilities and puts his health at risk (Gargiulo et al., 2021). Personality psychology specifically looks at how people perceive stress differently.

Kajonius and Björkman (2020) conducted a research on the effects of the Machiavellian personality of managers in organizations and concluded that this behavior has an effect on the burnout of the organization's employees and, of course, has other negative consequences.

Manteghian et al. (2019) and Belschak et al. (2018) conducted a research on the issue of Machiavellian personality and concluded that the Machiavellian personality of managers has a negative effect on their performance in the organization in various aspects.

In a research, Bell (2017) investigated the effect of leadership style based on Machiavelli's behavior on the effectiveness of employees and showed that the presence of this leadership and its components in the organization hinders the creation of optimal effectiveness for employees and has a negative effect on it.

Shiri et al. (2015) investigated the relationship between managers' narcissism and hypocritical behaviors with the mediating role of Machiavellian behavior of managers in government organizations in Kermanshah. The results indicated that managers' narcissism has a direct and significant effect on Machiavellian behavior. Narcissism also has a significant direct effect on hypocritical behavior. Machiavellian behavior also has a direct and meaningful effect on hypocritical behavior; so the mediation of Machiavellian behavior in the relationship between managers' narcissism and managers' hypocritical behavior is also confirmed.

In a research, Dobbs (2014) examined the relationship between leadership style based on Machiavellian behavior, leader effectiveness and organizational cynicism and showed that the use of these behaviors at the organizational level reduces the effectiveness of leaders and increases employee cynicism towards the organization.

Much research focuses on traits in particular (the five-factor model of extraversion, agreeableness, conscientiousness, neuroticism, and openness), while other traits, such as dark malevolence and Machiavellian traits, are still poorly understood (Götz et al., 2020) and limited studies have been done in this field, therefore, due to the fact that until now the topic of the present research has not been addressed much and the need for research in this field is strongly felt, in the present research, the relationship between the Machiavellian personality of managers and the perceived stress and burnout of the staff of the general department of Youth and Sports in Dhil al-Qar province of Iraq has been discussed. Also, after many reviews, Iraq was chosen for this research due to the need for research in the field of this research and also because it is a good example for other countries. It should be noted that the topic of the current research is very important for sports and the development of sports in various aspects, especially macro and managerial issues in sports, and it will bring very important and useful results, the effects of which can be seen in the society.

Research Methods

The current research was of the correlation type and the statistical population included 240 managers and staff of the general department of Youth and Sports in Dhil al-Qar province of Iraq in 2022, and 154 people were selected as a statistical sample using the available method and based on Cochran's formula. Questionnaires were distributed among the subjects in most of one form and collected after completion. Finally, 5 questionnaires were found to be distorted and data analysis was done on 149 (22 women and 127 men) questionnaires. The criteria for entering the research were; Completing the consent form of the voluntary company, manager or staff of the general department of Youth and Sports in Dhil al-Qar province of Iraq and exit criteria including; Lack of willingness and necessary cooperation to participate in the study, lack of consent to complete the consent form and refusal to continue participating in the study. The research tools are:

1. The standard questionnaire for measuring Machiavellianism (Christie & Geis, 2013). This questionnaire contains 20 five-choice questions on a Likert scale (Strongly agree, agree, have no opinion, disagree and strongly disagree). To check the validity of the questionnaire, content and construct validity have been used. Twelve experts and expert professors in the studied field checked the content validity of the questionnaire and after receiving their opinions, necessary amendments were made in the questionnaire. To check the validity of the construct, confirmatory factor analysis was used, and the factor loadings had appropriate values. Also, the reliability of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha is 0.70.
2. Perceived stress questionnaire (PSS-14) (Cohen et al., 1983). This questionnaire has 3 versions; 4, 10 and 14 are items that are used to measure perceived general stress in the last 1-2 months and measure thoughts and feelings about stressful events, control, overcoming, coping with mental pressure and experienced

stress. Also, this scale examines risk factors in behavioral disorders and shows the process of stressful relationships. A higher score indicates more perceived stress. To check the validity of the questionnaire, content and construct validity have been used. Twelve experts and expert professors in the studied field checked the content validity of the questionnaire and after receiving their opinions, necessary amendments were made in the questionnaire. To check the validity of the construct, confirmatory factor analysis was used, and the factor loadings had appropriate values. Also, the reliability of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha is 0.79.

3. Job burnout questionnaire (Maslach et al, 1997). This tool is a questionnaire that provides a new estimate of the phenomenon of stress or burnout. This questionnaire has 22 questions that measure emotional burnout, depersonalization phenomena and lack of personal fulfillment in the context of professional activity, and especially to measure the follow-up of the burnout phenomenon in professional groups, such as nurses, teachers, staff, etc. are closed to work. To check the validity of the questionnaire, content and construct validity have been used. Twelve experts and expert professors in the studied field checked the content validity of the questionnaire and after receiving their opinions, necessary amendments were made in the questionnaire. To check the validity of the construct, confirmatory factor analysis was used, and the factor loadings had appropriate values. Also, the reliability of this questionnaire using Cronbach's alpha is 0.83.

Finally, the collected data were analyzed by SPSS software and the averages, standard deviations and regression coefficients were determined.

Findings

Table 1 shows the descriptive mean scores of the study variables.

Table 1- Mean and standard deviation of Machiavellian personality scores, perceived stress and job burnout

Variable	Average	Standard deviation
Machiavellian character	2.98	0.59
Perceived Stress	3.10	0.54
Job burnout	3.01	0.60

Table 2- Regression coefficient between Machiavellian personality and perceived stress

Statistical index of regression model	Regression coefficients	Standard error	β	t	Level of significance	R	R ²	F	Level of significance
Fixed coefficient	1.873	0.202	-	9.275	0.001	0.437	0.191	34.687	0.001
Machiavellian character	0.388	0.066	0.437	5.890	0.001				
	P<0.01								

The findings of table 2 show that there is a significant relationship between the Machiavellian personality of managers and the perceived stress of staff of the general department of Youth and Sports in Dhil al-Qar province of Iraq (B=0.437). Based on Table 2, the following regression equation can be set to predict perceived stress:

Machiavellian personality (0.388) + 1.873 = perceived stress

Table 3- Regression coefficient between Machiavellian personality and job burnout

Statistical index of regression model	Regression coefficients	Standard error	β	t	Level of significance	R	R ²	F	Level of significance
Fixed coefficient	3.910	0.187	-	20.855	0.001	0.362	0.131	22.169	0.001
Machiavellian character	-0.290	0.062	0.362	5.062	0.290				
	P<0.01								

The findings of table 3 show that there is a significant relationship between the Machiavellian personality of managers and the burnout of staff of the general department of Youth and Sports in Dhil al-Qar province of Iraq (B=0.437). Based on Table 3, the following regression equation can be set to predict job burnout:

Machiavellian personality (-0.290) + 3.910 = job burnout

Table 4- Multi-way variance analysis of managers' Machiavellian personality scores on staff' perceived stress according to demographic variables (gender, level of education and work experience)

Source	Variable	Sum of squares	Mean square	F	Significance level
sex	Machiavellian character	0.004	0.004	0.027	0.870
	Burnout	0.009	0.009	0.051	0.822
	Perceived stress	0.008	0.310	0.021	0.781
Education	Machiavellian character	0.753	0.188	1.156	0.334
	Burnout	0.805	0.201	1.141	0.341
	Perceived stress	0.812	0.034		
Work experience	Machiavellian character	3.052	0.610	3.748	0.181
	Burnout	1.357	0.271	1.539	0.184
	Perceived stress	0.351	0.270	2.216	0.214

The results of Table 4 show that there is no significant difference between Machiavellian personality scores and job burnout and perceived stress according to gender, level of education, and work experience.

Discussion

The present research was conducted with the aim of investigating the relationship between the Machiavellian personality of managers and the perceived stress and burnout of the staff of the general department of Youth and Sports in Dhil al-Qar province of Iraq. The results of the study showed that there is a significant relationship between the Machiavellian personality of managers and the perceived stress and burnout of staff.

The results of the present research are in line with the results of Kajonius and Björkman (2020), Belschak et al. (2018) and Manteghian et al. (2019). The findings of these studies indicate that there is a relationship between the Machiavellian personality of managers and the stress and burnout of employees, which is in line with the results of the present study.

Also, the results of Bell (2017), Shiri et al. (2015) and Dobbs (2014)'s researches are in line with the results of the current research in terms of the negative effects of the Machiavellian personality of managers on the performance of employees in the organization and the negative consequences that will follow.

In this regard, Hammali and Nastiezaie (2022) in a study by examining the effect of Machiavellian leadership on destructive organizational behaviors through the mediation of job stress, showed that Machiavellian leadership has a direct and significant effect on destructive organizational behaviors and job stress. Therefore, it can be concluded that managers with high Machiavellianism increase the job stress of staff, and job stress, in turn, increases destructive organizational behaviors. Kajonius and Björkman (2020) also investigated Machiavellian personality traits and perceived daily stress. The results of this study showed that there is a strong positive relationship between vulnerable narcissism and perceived stress. Also, psychopathy and Machiavellianism overlap in relation to the experience of stress in everyday life. In another study, Belschak et al. (2018) presented a model to evaluate the Machiavellian behavior of managers and staff. These researchers reported that when Machiavellian staff had Machiavellian leaders, their trust in their leader decreased significantly and their stress levels increased significantly. In addition, Eidi Pour et al. (2020) determined the relationship between dark personality traits (narcissism-psychopath-Machiavellian) and job burnout based on the mediating role of perceived stress and reported that psychopathic personality directly and positively, and Machiavellian personality directly and Negatively, they predict job burnout. Therefore, taking into account perceived stress and dark personality traits can play an effective role in staff productivity and reduce job burnout. The issue that should be considered is that the ethical aspects of managers and employees can affect the ethical aspects of the players and the ethical aspects of

the players can also affect the society, which means the importance of the positive ethical aspects of the players is very important and should be taken into account (Salimi & Labbaf, 2022).

In the current research, it was also stated that there is no significant difference between Machiavellian personality and job burnout and perceived stress based on gender, education level and work experience. Therefore, it is very important to consider the negative effects of Machiavellian personality and take basic measures to eliminate them. This means that each of these variables (gender, education and work experience) has no effect on the relationship between managers' Machiavellian personality and perceived stress and job burnout, and gender, education and work experience cannot influence the relationship between managers' Machiavellian personality and affect perceived stress and burnout. In a way, it can be said that Machiavellian personality can exist in any person with any gender, education and work experience.

Considering the review of the previous studies that were mentioned and also the new and important results that were obtained in this research, the importance of the subject of the current research was well defined. Therefore, paying attention to the topic of the present research, especially from the side of sports managers, can bring important benefits and achievements for sports organizations.

Conclusion

Overall, the results of this study showed that there is a significant relationship between the Machiavellian personality of managers with perceived stress and staff burnout. Therefore, the presence of people with Machiavellian personality in any organization has harmful and irreparable consequences such as stress and burnout. Therefore, it is suggested to adopt adjusted and preventive methods and use coping strategies such as paying attention to the mental and personality conditions of people in the recruitment process, job promotion, job rotation and other such things to reduce and control occupational stressors and through performance evaluation systems, identified people with Machiavellian characteristics and avoided giving them management positions.

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Conflicts of Interest

There is no conflict of interest.

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