

Machiavellianism and coping styles

Y. RIM

*Faculty of Industrial Engineering and Management, Technion-Israel Institute of Technology,
Technion City, Haifa 32000, Israel*

(Received 4 January 1991)

Summary—This is a report of an investigation of the relationship between Machiavellianism (Mach) and styles of coping. 52 men and 48 women students of Engineering and Management, half of whom were graduate students, served as subjects. Results showed that men high on Mach reported using Suppression significantly more, while those low on Mach reported using significantly more Seeking Succorance, Blame and Mapping as coping styles. Among women, those high on Mach reported using significantly more Seeking Succorance, Replacement and Substitution, while those low on Mach reported using significantly more Minimization, Suppression and Blame as coping styles. Only on Blame, the results of men and women are in the same direction. Otherwise they are either in opposite directions (Suppression, Seeking Succorance) or sex-specific. The different results for men and women were found in almost all previous studies.

INTRODUCTION

Machiavellianism (Mach) is defined as a disposition to manipulate interpersonal relationships (Christie & Geis, 1970). Subjects classified as “high” or “low” in agreement with Machiavellian attitudes as measured by the Mach-IV scale, a paper-and-pencil personality test, were observed in a standardized interaction situation with a confederate. As reported by Geis, Christie and Nelson (1970), subjects classified as “high” attempted significantly more “manipulation” of the supposed partner than did “low’s”.

According to Plutchik’s Theory of Emotions (1980), eight basic emotions—Fear, Anger, Joy, Sadness, Acceptance, Disgust, Expectation and Surprise—account singly or in combinations for all the mixed emotions with which we deal in everyday life. In addition, there are several other domains, such as Interpersonal Traits, which may be conceptualized as derivatives of emotions.

Lately, also scales for the measurement of ego defenses have been developed, assuming that each ego defense evolved for dealing with one of the basic emotions. An individual may adopt certain ways of defending as a conscious attempt to deal with problems and difficulties and these ways may be referred to as coping styles. Thus, the eight sequences of Emotion–Defense Mechanism–Coping Style are as follows: Fear–Repression–Suppression; Anger–Displacement–Substitution; Joy–Reaction–Formation–Reversal; Sadness–Sublimation–Compensation (or Replacement); Acceptance–Denial–Minimization; Disgust–Projection–Fault–Finding (or Blame); Expectation–Intellectualization–Mapping; and Surprise–Regression–Seeking Succorance.

A factor analysis of Plutchik’s scales (Rim, 1987) yielded three separate factors for men and women, with little overlap. The first factor for men was one of Substitution, with loadings on Seeking Succorance, Blame and Suppression. The first factor for women had the highest loading on Substitution too, but the other styles were Reversal, Replication and Mapping. The second factor for men was one of Minimization–Reversal, and for women Suppression–Minimization–Blame. The third factor for men was Mapping–Replacement, and for women Seeking Succorance.

It was thought of interest to investigate the relationships between Machiavellianism, the disposition to manipulate interpersonal relationships and styles of coping, supposedly derived from one’s emotional repertoire, some of which are typically intrapersonal, such as Suppression, Minimization or Blame.

METHOD

Subjects

Fifty-two men and forty-eight women, half of which were undergraduates, between the ages of 24 and 52, served as subjects. All graduate students were employed in managerial jobs.

Instruments used

(1) The Mach IV scale (Christie & Geis, 1970) consists of statements, paraphrases and reversals of statements from *The Prince* and *The Discourses* of Machiavelli. The scale consists of 20 items, half of them worded in the positive direction. Sample items follow:

Anyone who completely trusts anyone else is asking for trouble.
Never tell anyone the real reason you did something unless it is useful to do so.
It is wise to flatter important people.

(2) Plutchik’s scale for the measurement of the following eight coping styles (Plutchik, 1981):

- (a) Minimization, e.g. I look on the bright side of things.
- (b) Suppression, e.g. I avoid thinking about unpleasant things.
- (c) Seeking Succorance, e.g. when I have a problem, I try to let others help me.

Table 1. Mean scores of coping styles according to level of Machiavellianism (above or below the mean) for men and women separately

Mach-IV	Minimization	Suppression	Seeking succorance	Replacement	Blame	Substitution	Mapping	Reversal
Men								
High	8.9	7.0	7.6	10.0	7.4	6.5	12.4	8.0
Low	8.5	5.2	8.7	10.2	8.5	6.4	13.4	8.0
Significant	n.s.	0.01	0.05	n.s.	0.05	n.s.	0.05	n.s.
Women								
High	8.0	4.7	10.7	9.9	7.9	7.6	14.1	8.3
Low	10.0	7.3	8.8	8.7	9.1	5.6	14.0	8.5
Significant	0.01	0.01	0.01	0.05	0.05	0.01	n.s.	n.s.

- (d) Replacement, e.g. if an illness or accident prevented me from doing my usual work, I would still find useful things to do.
 (e) Fault-finding or Blame, e.g. the arguments I get into are started by other people.
 (f) Substitution, e.g. when I get upset, I look for something to eat.
 (g) Mapping, e.g. I get as much information as I can before I make a decision.
 (h) Reversal, e.g. I try to see the funny side of upsetting situations.

The first 40 items of the 95-item questionnaire were used, 5 items per scale.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1 shows the mean scores of the eight coping styles of men and women scoring above or below the mean on the Mach-IV scale. We see that men with high Mach-IV scores are significantly higher in Suppression, whereas those below the mean are higher in Seeking Succorance, Blame and Mapping.

Women scoring above the mean on Machiavellianism are significantly higher in Seeking Succorance, Replacement, and Substitution. Those below the mean on Machiavellianism are significantly higher on Minimization, Suppression and Blame.

It is of interest to note that only one result is common to both men and women: those low on Machiavellianism are higher on Blame. With regard to two coping styles, the results of men and women are in opposite directions. High Mach men but low Mach women have higher Suppression scores and high Mach women but low Mach men have higher Seeking Succorance scores. One result is significant for men only: Mapping, whereas three results are found among women only: Minimization, Replacement and Substitution.

It should be pointed out that in previous studies too, the results for women and men were found to be different, and sometimes in opposite directions. Thus, the first study (Rim, 1986) found that "due to the fact that the eight coping styles intercorrelated in part differently according to sex, different relationships were generally found between the reported use of coping styles and personality, age and sex. Nevertheless, some relationships are common to both men and women".

Rim (1987), in a comparative study of two taxonomies of coping styles, personality and sex, showed that sex was a major moderating variable. The Lazarus, Averill and Upton (1974) data yielded three separate factors for men and women, while the Plutchik (1981) data yielded four factors, of which only one was common for both men and women.

An investigation comparing coping styles while awake or asleep (Rim, 1988a) found that men and women's data were in the same direction with regard to the relations of Reversal and Substitution with the Eroticism factor, of Substitution with frequency, and Replacement with duration of dreaming. However, men and women's data are in opposite directions with regard to the relationships of Blame and Personal Avoidance, Eroticism and Adventurousness, and Seeking Succorance with Adventurousness, and frequency, and Blame and Reversal with intensity of dreaming.

Similarly, the investigation of sense of humour and coping styles (Rim, 1988b), found a relationship for both men and women with regard to Minimization and Suppression, and to a lesser extent for Blame, Mapping and Reversal. The Relationship was in opposite directions for men and women with regard to Suppression and Replacement.

In an investigation of the relationships between eight coping styles and the use of five means of influence in marriage (Rim, 1989a), four relationships were found for both men and women: Replacement with the use of accommodative means; Blame and Substitution with authoritative means, and Substitution with the use of last resort means. Additional relationships between coping styles and means of influence were sex-specific.

A study of self-confrontation and coping styles (Rim, 1989b) found sex to be a moderating variable. An investigation on optimism and coping styles (Rim, 1990a) found six coping styles correlating with optimism: Minimization, Suppression, Seeking Succorance, Blame, Substitution and Reversal. Only Seeking Succorance was in the same direction for men and women, the other five coping styles being in opposite directions.

Finally, the investigation of styles of attribution and of coping (Rim, 1990b) reports that for the most part, different results for men and women were found. The coping styles most related to attribution among men were: Suppression, Replacement and Reversal, while the four most related styles among women were: Blame, Seeking Succorance, Replacement and Reversal.

In conclusion: among men, high Machs report using significantly more Suppression, while low Machs use more Seeking Succorance, Blame and Mapping as coping styles. Among women, high Machs report using significantly more Seeking Succorance, Replacement and Substitution, while low Machs use more Minimization, Suppression and Blame. Similar to the results of most investigations so far, many results are in opposite directions for men and women.

REFERENCES

- Christie, R. & Geis, F. L. (1970). *Studies in Machiavellianism*. New York: Academic Press.
 Geis, F., Christie, R. & Nelson, C. (1970). In Search of the Machiavel. In Christie & Geiss (Eds), *Studies in Machiavellianism*. New York: Academic Press.

- Lazarus, R. S., Averill, V. R. & Upton, E. M. (1974). The psychology of coping. In Coelho, Hamburg & Adams (Eds), *Coping and adaptation*. New York: Basic.
- Plutchik, R. (1980). *Emotion, a psychoevolutionary synthesis*, New York: Harper & Row.
- Plutchik, R. (1981). Development of a scale for the measurement of coping styles: a preliminary report. New York: Einstein College of Medicine.
- Rim, Y. (1986). Ways of coping, personality, age, sex and family structural variables. *Personality and Individual Differences* 7, 113–116.
- Rim, Y. (1987). A comparative study of two taxonomies of coping styles, personality and sex. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 8, 521–526.
- Rim, Y. (1988a). Comparing coping styles: awake and asleep. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 9, 165–170.
- Rim, Y. (1988b). Sense of humour and coping styles. *Personality and Individual Differences* 9, 559–564.
- Rim, Y. (1989a). Coping styles and use of means of influence in marriage. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 10, 87–91.
- Rim, Y. (1989b). Self-confrontation and coping styles. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 10, 1011–1014.
- Rim, Y. (1990a). Optimism and coping styles. *Personality and Individual Differences*, 11, 89–90.
- Rim, Y. (1990b). Styles of attribution and of coping. *Personality Individual Differences*, 11, 973–976.