PSYCHOLOGICAL DETERMINANTS OF STUDENTS’ MANIPULATIVE BEHAVIOUR: GENDER ASPECT

Abstract. The article provides a brief analysis of the issue that is becoming increasingly relevant in the modern world such as the processes of manipulative individual behaviour. Scientists, in particular psychologists, are very interested in issues that are closely related to the determinants of occurrence, signs, goals, and means of manipulation. However, a thorough study of the manipulation processes has not been carried out yet. Because of this, it seems relevant to study the processes of human manipulation influence and the level of expression of the Machiavellian personality or, according to the tradition established in foreign psychology, the level of Machiavellianism. Today, there is an urgent need to study the concept of “Machiavellianism” and the psychological characteristics of a Machiavellian personality in connection with the social demand and approval of manipulative behaviour, the growth of aggressive tendencies in society, fierce competition in the professional environment, and radicalisation of personal behaviour at different stages of professional development. According to the authors, the study of gender specifics of manipulative behaviour in student youth is particularly interesting. In the process of obtaining education, higher education students come into contact with new people: on the one hand, teachers, on whom the success and level of mastery of professional knowledge, skills, and abilities will largely depend. On the other hand, students themselves, communication with whom contributes to professional and personal development, and meets the basic urgent needs of this life period. Young people need to quickly adapt and develop following the new requirements imposed on them by their environment and higher education institution. The article presents the results of a study conducted among first-year students, which showed that representatives of both sexes are prone to manipulation, and the difference between women and men is not in the quantitative parameter of manipulation, but in the qualitative one: women and men use different manipulative techniques. The study
confirmed that men and women differ in the average level of the dark triad personality constructs, such as Machiavellianism. With an increase in the level of Machiavellianism, masculine personality traits will increase, and vice versa, with a decrease in the level of Machiavellianism, feminine traits will increase.

**Keywords:** manipulation, personality, Machiavellianism, manipulative behaviour, gender.

Oверчук Вікторія Анатоліївна доктор економічних наук, кандидат психологічних наук, професор, завідувач кафедри психології, Донецький національний університет імені Василя Стуса, вул. Янгеля, 4, м. Вінниця, 21050, тел.: (067) 850-11-80, https://orcid.org/0000-0002-7744-9346

Суханова Олена Олександрівна студентка 4 курсу ОП «Психологія» кафедри психології, Донецький національний університет імені Василя Стуса, вул. Янгелія, 4, м. Вінниця, 21050, тел.: (067) 850-11-80, https://orcid.org/0009-0004-2591-8413

**ПСИХОЛОГІЧНІ ДЕТЕРМІНАНТИ МАНІПУЛЯТИВНОЇ ПОВЕДІНКИ СТУДЕНТСЬКОЇ МОЛОДІ: ГЕНДЕРНИЙ АСПЕКТ**

Анотація. В статті здійснений стислий аналіз із питання, яке набуває все більшої актуальності в сучасному світі – процесам маніпулятивної поведінки особистості. Велика цікавість науковців, зокрема психологів, щодо питань, які знаходяться у тісному взаємозв’язку детермінант виникнення, ознак, цілей та засобів здійснення маніпулювання. Проте грунтовне дослідження процесів маніпулювання до сьогодні не здійснено. З огляду на це вбачається актуальним є дослідження процесів впливу маніпулювання людиною та рівень виразності макіавеллістичної особистості або, за традицією, рівня макіавеллізму. Сьогодні виникає гостра необхідність у вивченні поняття “макіавеллізму” та психологічних особливостей макіавеллістичної особистості у зв’язку з соціальним запитом та схваленням маніпулятивної поведінки, зростанням агресивних тенденцій у суспільстві, жорсткій конкуренції в професійному середовищі, радикалізацією поведінки особистості на різних етапах її професійного становлення. Особливо цікавим на думку авторів є дослідження гендерної специфіки до маніпулятивної поведінки у студентській молоді. У процесі здобуття освіти здобувачі впливають на взаємодію з новими для себе людьми: з одного боку – це викладачі, від яких багато в чому залежатиме успішність та рівень засвоєння професійних знань, навичок та умінь. З іншого боку, такі самі здобувачі, спілкування з якими сприяє професійному та особистісному розвитку, а також задовольняє основні актуальні потреби цього життєвого періоду. Молодим людям необхідно
швидко адаптуватися та розвиватися відповідно до нових вимог, що пред’являє до них оточення та вищий заклад освіти. В статті наведені результати дослідження, яке проводилося серед здобувачів першого курсу, яке засвідчило, що представники обох статей схильні до маніпулювання, і відмінність між жінками та чоловіками не у кількісному параметрі маніпулювання, а у якісному: жінки і чоловіки застосовують різні маніпулятивні прийоми. Проведене дослідження підтвердило, що чоловіки та жінки відрізняються за середнім рівнем особистісних конструктів темної триади, таких як макіавеллізм. Зі зростанням рівня макіавеллізму будуть зростати маскулінні риси особистості і навпаки, зі зменшенням рівня макіавеллізму будуть підвищуватись фемінні риси.

**Ключові слова:** маніпуляція, особистість, макіавеллізм, маніпулятивна поведінка, стать.

**Statement of the problem.** The established mechanisms of modern public memory and the information environment built on their basis create conditions for manipulating all forms, levels of public consciousness, using various types, ways, and methods of influencing human feelings, and will control the psyche and social behaviour. Mind manipulation is becoming a systemic phenomenon that covers all spheres of life and manifests itself in various forms.

In the process of obtaining education, higher education students interact with new people: on the one hand, there are teachers, on whom the success and level of mastering professional knowledge, skills, and abilities will largely depend. On the other hand, there are the applicants themselves, whose communication contributes to their professional and personal development, and meets the basic urgent needs of this life stage. Young people need to quickly adapt and develop following the new requirements imposed on them by their environment and higher education institution.

**Analysis of the latest research and publications.** Many foreign researchers have studied the problem of psychological manipulation, as a hidden type of psychological influence on a person, such as H. Beitson, E. Bern, D. Brahinski, R. Hudin, R. Dreikurs, F. S. Perls, G. Rudinov, St. Satyr, Ehe. Fromm, Ehe. Shostrom, P. Ekman, A. Ellis and others., and domestic scholars and practitioners, such as S. L. Bratchenko, A. B. Dobrovych, O. L. Dotsenko, V. V. Znakiv, V. M. Pankratov, Ye. V. Sydorenko and other researchers. Several works describe the characteristics of manipulative influence programs and techniques of psychological manipulation used in politics, advertising, trade, and the media (A. V. Kovalenko, P. Lainbardzer, D. Maiers and others). One of the research areas on the problem of manipulating consciousness is the study of personality Machiavellianism - the tendency to manipulate other people (D. Brahinski, F. Heis, R. Kraut, R. Kristi, J. Prais and others). In psychotherapy, F. S. Perls, A. Freud, S. Freud and some other researchers described the mechanisms of psychological
defence of the individual, which reflect the manipulation of one’s ideas and other people to justify oneself, and maintain a level of self-esteem and a certain reputation. In our opinion, the study of psychological determinants of students’ manipulative behaviour in higher education institutions is interesting but insufficiently studied.

**Purpose of the article.** The article presents the results of a study conducted among first-year students, which showed that representatives of both sexes are prone to manipulation, and the difference between women and men is not in the quantitative parameter of manipulation, but in the qualitative one: women and men use different manipulative techniques. The study confirmed that men and women differ in the average level of the dark triad personality constructs, such as Machiavellianism. With an increase in the level of Machiavellianism, masculine personality traits will increase, and vice versa, with a decrease in the level of Machiavellianism, feminine traits will increase.

**Presentation of the main material.** Manipulation belongs to the class of phenomena that contain contradictions: on the one hand, everyone knows manipulation, on the other hand, manipulation is not yet sufficiently studied by psychologists. Manipulation is a type of psychological influence, the skilful execution of which leads to the hidden arousal of intentions in another person that do not coincide with their actual desires.

As the review of theoretical sources shows, most researchers believe that manipulation is formed from the subject's desire to dominate and control himself and the world around him and is characterised not by the importance but by the usefulness of the communication partner. A manipulator is characterised by ignoring moral, social, and legal relations. Manipulation destroys relationships, causes internal tension and anxiety in the manipulator, and dissatisfaction with the relationship of his partners.

Let’s look at the main reasons for manipulation described by researchers of this phenomenon [1].

The main reason for manipulation, according to Frederick Perls [2], is the eternal conflict with oneself, so a person never fully trusts himself, but he distrusts others even more. "Therefore, she embarks on the path of manipulation, so that the 'others' are always on a leash, so that she can control them and thus trust them more."

Erich Fromm put forward another reason for manipulation: to gain recognition, the manipulator seeks to gain complete power over the other person: power that makes the other person do what he wants; think what he wants; feel what he wants.

The third reason for manipulation is that since risk and uncertainty surround a person from all sides, a person often feels helpless, so a passive manipulator achieves his goals by using his external helplessness. An active manipulator actively takes advantage of the powerlessness of other people and enjoys dominating people, trying to make them as dependent as possible.

The fourth reason for manipulation is that a manipulator is a person who seeks to avoid intimacy in relationships and difficulties, so he treats people ritually.
The fifth reason for manipulation is that a person seeks to get the approval of everyone, so he or she is forced to pretend, and hide his or her feelings, thoughts and desires; he cannot be truthful and honest with his environment, but, by all means, he wants to please everyone.

Manipulation has been most fully studied as a technique and technology, and the tendency to manipulate is a personality characteristic. Consideration of manipulation in the context of interpersonal relations implies focusing on the participants (manipulator and addressee), as well as on the process and result of the interaction that connects them.

We have summarized the personal characteristics of a manipulator, based on theoretical and practical data published recently in the scientific literature. Manipulators are characterised by:
1. high level of mental development - flexibility, excellent adaptability;
2. low level of empathy, emotional detachment from the interlocutor, suspicion;
3. inattention to ethical and cultural values and norms, deceitfulness;
4. emotional discomfort, low self-esteem;
5. achievement-oriented, risk-averse.

The main task of manipulation is for the manipulator to achieve the goal, which directly links the category of manipulation to the category of relationship satisfaction. Mutual satisfaction with the relationship in a manipulator-partner pair allows us to determine the subjective assessment of the effect produced by manipulation, as well as the balance of emotional gain and loss of participants in manipulative influence.

The term "Machiavellianism" is widespread in Western and, more recently, in domestic psychology, meaning a person's tendency to manipulate other people in interpersonal relationships [3].

The Machiavellian strategy of behaviour, according to researchers, involves flattery, deception, bribery, and intimidation. Western psychologists, as noted by V. V. Znakiv [3], distinguish two types of Machiavellian personality: strongly expressed and weakly expressed.

A strongly expressed type is characterised by such personal qualities as intelligence, courage, ambition, a tendency to dominate, perseverance, selfishness, and a desire to appear unselfish in communication situations.

The weakly expressed type is characterised by such manifestations as cowardice, indecision, being influenced, honesty, sentimentality, and reliability.

A Machiavellian, unlike a manipulator, always acts consciously and is aware that he is acting unethically, inhumanely, and dishonestly. Machiavellian manipulation, as noted, is not intended to influence someone to get what he or she wants or to change the object of manipulation in any way. Her main goal is to achieve her goals. Another person can be a means to an end or an obstacle. An important feature of Machiavellians is that in their communication they are subject-oriented,
competitive and aimed primarily at achieving their goal, rather than interacting with interlocutors [15].

Modern experts in the field of Machiavellianism have conducted many different studies of the relationship between this phenomenon and other psychological phenomena. For example, Wrightsman found a positive correlation between Machiavellianism and anxiety, while other researchers note a negative correlation between Machiavellianism and emotional intelligence, and a natural correlation between Machiavellianism and low self-esteem [4].

Numerous studies confirm that Machiavellians generally have a negative attitude towards people around them, considering them dishonest and suspicious, while at the same time, it is interesting to note that they are more tolerant of unethical behaviour on the part of others. The author also describes the connection between Machiavellianism and such forms of psychopathology as depression, paranoia, and alexithymia [4].

Jones D. N. and Paulhus D. L. believe that it is advisable to consider Machiavellianism in conjunction with such psychological traits as narcissism and psychopathy, which form a syndrome called the "Dark Triad" by Paulhus D., Williams K. [4].

It has been proved that when one of the features of the triad is significantly pronounced, high values of the other two are observed [5]. Subjects with a high level of Machiavellianism, high indicators of rigidity, and manipulative, indifferent personality orientation in communication are characterised by a low level of formation of meaningful life orientations and understanding the situation by the type of understanding - acceptance. Subjects with low indicators of rigidity, low scores of alterocentric and conformity orientation, and a high level of formation of meaningful life orientations have a low level of Machiavellianism and understanding - rejection of manipulation [6].

We share the opinion of many researchers that the tendency to manipulate the characteristic is dynamic. First, in youth, it changes over time, for example, during higher education. Higher education students often have a high level of expectations, which is combined with a lack of independence and willingness to dedicate themselves to achieving their goals. Thus, we assume that diagnosing the level of Machiavellianism with different gender identities in the process of studying in higher education institutions will help to build an effective programme of psychological support for students to identify and correct tendencies and tendencies towards Machiavellianism.

Historically, gender role stereotypes characterise men as dominant and aggressive, and women as dependent and subordinate. The question of gender differences has often been posed as a question of the ratio of direct and indirect influence in men and women's behaviour. O. Weininger credits men with greater honesty and, consequently, less tendency to manipulate [7]. The idea that women are more open, altruistic, and ethical in their communication is not supported by the
results of foreign studies. Ellis Egle proves that the very manifestations of empathy, the expression of emotions by a person, as well as the way they are carried out, depend on gender norms [8].

Research by scientists on the types of relationships with other people shows that for subjects who implement a masculine type of relationship with other people, behaviour is characterised by a high level of manipulation, suspicion, aggression, hostility and low acceptance. The feminine type of relationship is revealed through the expression of subordination, emotional closeness, acceptance and almost complete absence of suspicion and hostility in relationships. For example, N. V. Hrebin notes that in most studies on the differences in the level and manifestations of Machiavellianism in women and men, it was found that the quantitative indicator of men's Machiavellianism is higher than that of women [9, 10].

There are scientific facts that indicate that gender is not a factor in the propensity to manipulate, as reflected in the studies by J. Reibum and L. Reibum and S. O. Wilgrube.

At the same time, there are statements by M. Amez and A. H. Hidd that indicate that the level of Machiavellianism in women and men is related to gender characteristics of the personality [11].

To study the psychological determinants of students' manipulative behaviour during their studies at higher education institutions, we conducted a study based on the educational and research laboratory "Centre for Social and Psychological Adaptation of Personality" of the Department of Psychology of Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University. The study was based on the results of a survey of 60 1st-4th year students of Vasyl' Stus Donetsk National University, different specialities, aged 18-21. There were 30 men and 30 women. The average age of the study participants was 22 years. The following methods were chosen for the study: the Makeviallism Scale, the Boyko Test, and the Sandra Bem Method.

Based on the results of Sandra Bem's methodology, the number of respondents by masculinity-feminism level is shown in Fig.1.

![Fig. 1 Distribution of the subjects according to S. Bem’s methodology](image-url)
We can see that 78% of the respondents demonstrated androgyny, characterized by flexible behaviour that allows them to be kind person, sensitive, as well as courageous, decisive, and able to stand up for themselves, support others, and lead them. Only 15% demonstrated masculinity; such individuals can withstand adversity, unite others, and inspire them to achieve goals; they are focused on achieving success, overcoming obstacles, self-assertion, and doing what they do without any sentiment. Only 7% demonstrated femininity; in situations requiring the ability to take charge of affairs, to show perseverance, to insist on unconditional submission, such individuals do not stand out for their strength of character, they shirk responsibility, and delegate the solution of their problems to other people.

Thus, the vast majority of respondents have a harmonious integration of masculine and feminine traits, which increases the adaptive capabilities of the androgynous type. At the same time, great gentleness, stability in social contacts, and the absence of pronounced dominant-aggressive tendencies in communication are in no way associated with a decrease in self-confidence but rather manifest themselves against the background of maintaining high self-respect, self-confidence, and self-acceptance. People with this type are not inferior to the masculine type in terms of self-esteem either in general or in terms of self-assessment of academic achievements and their appearance (physical self).

After determining the level of Machiavellianism using the Machiavellianism Questionnaire (adapted version of the MAK-Scale by V.V. Znakov), the researchers were divided into three groups: high level of manipulation tendency, medium level of manipulation tendency, and low level of manipulation tendency.

According to the level of Machiavellianism in the respondents (n=60), 23 respondents had a high level of Machiavellianism. At the same time, the average level of Machiavellianism was determined in 30 subjects, and four people were found to have a low level (Fig. 2).

![Fig. 2 Results of the survey on the Machiavellianism scale](image)
In general, 53% of respondents have an average level of Machiavellianism (Fig. 2). Instead, one in three respondents had a high level of Machiavellianism - 23%. At the same time, only 7% of respondents had a low level of Machiavellianism. Therefore, comparing the results, (Fig. 3) between the levels of Machiavellianism and gender, it should be noted that all respondents showed a predominance of medium Machiavellianism.

Using Spearman’s correlation coefficient, we performed a correlation analysis to find out the specifics of the relationship between gender characteristics and the level of Machiavellianism. The Spearman’s correlation coefficient of the obtained scores at p≤0.01 is -0.9995, which showed a high level of dependence of the level of Machiavellianism on masculinity and a high gender correlation.

**Conclusions.** Thus, we conclude that representatives of both sexes are prone to manipulation, and the difference between women and men is not in the quantitative parameter of manipulation, but in the qualitative one; women and men use different manipulative techniques. The study confirmed that men and women differ in the average level of the dark triad personality constructs, such as Machiavellianism. With an increase in the level of Machiavellianism, masculine personality traits will increase, and vice versa, with a decrease in the level of Machiavellianism, feminine traits will increase.

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