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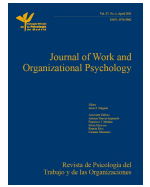
Servant Leadership and Machiavellian Followers: A Moderated Mediation Model

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ABSTRACT

Despite promoting positive employee outcomes, servant leaders may become the victim of manipulation by followers. The current study investigates this underexplored side of servant leadership by examining the employee-related outcomes of the interaction between servant leadership and follower Machiavellianism through mediating mechanism of exploitative manipulative behavior. It is argued that employees high in Machiavellianism engage in exploitative manipulative behavior to achieve subjective career success and social power while working with a servant leader. We used PROCESS macro to analyze our mediation and moderated mediation hypotheses, respectively. We collected data in a time-lagged design (three-time lags) from 320 dyads (self and peer) responses from service sector organizations. The results fully supported our hypotheses. Limitations and future research directions are also presented.

El liderazgo de servicio y los subordinados maquiavélicos: un modelo de mediación moderada

RESUMEN

A pesar de que fomenten resultados positivos en los empleados, los líderes servidores pueden convertirse en víctimas de la manipulación por parte de los subordinados. Este estudio investiga esta faceta poco explorada del liderazgo de servicio por medio del análisis de los resultados de los empleados relativos a la interacción entre el líder servidor y el maquiavelismo de los subordinados a través del mecanismo mediador del comportamiento manipulativo explotador. Se argumenta que los empleados con un maquiavelismo elevado se comportan de un modo manipulativo explotador, con el fin de lograr un éxito subjetivo en su carrera profesional y poder social cuando trabajan con un líder servidor. Empleamos el macro PROCESS para analizar nuestras hipótesis de mediación y mediación moderada, respectivamente. Recogimos datos en un diseño demorado en el tiempo (con tres retrasos temporales) a partir de respuestas de 320 díadas (de uno mismo y de compañeros) de empresas del sector servicios. Los resultados avalan plenamente nuestras hipótesis. Se comentan igualmente las limitaciones y perspectivas de investigación futura.

Leadership research is becoming increasingly focused on the complex nature of the relationship between leaders and followers (Fatima et al., 2019; Lu et al., 2019). Servant leaders promote sustainable performance from subordinates through their positive and empathetic behavior (Hunter et al., 2013; Kashyap & Rangnekar, 2014). The basic premise of servant leadership is the altruistic behavior of the leaders who work for the subordinates' advantage and the people in the surroundings irrespective of their self-interest (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

Servant leadership share some of its characteristics, such as concern for employees, empowering subordinates, helping subordinates grow and succeed, with other positive leadership behaviors like transformational, authentic, and ethical leadership (Hoch et al., 2018).

However, there is a visible difference between servant leadership and other positive leadership styles based on their selflessness and empathetic concerns (Andersen, 2018; Hoch et al., 2018). While transformational leaders focus on the overall transformation of their employees, ethical leader emphasizes on ethics and morality and authentic leaders are concerned about honesty and authenticity, servant leaders are the only ones who prefer employee interest over their personal interest (Ahmad et al., 2017; Hunt, 2017).

Unlike other leadership styles, servant leaders consider themselves servants as their main agenda is to serve their employees without self-interest (Lee et al., 2020). Usually, influence is considered the vital element of leadership; servant leadership changes the focus of this influence by accentuating the idea of service in the leader-follower

relationship (Gandolfi et al., 2017; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Having a "servant heart" is at the core of servant leadership (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Spears, 2010). It underlines the notion of authenticity, humbleness, and authorization with the orientation of helping others (Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017).

Studies have shown that servant leadership promotes positive employee outcomes beyond transformational leadership, authentic leadership, and ethical leadership (Liao et al., 2020). This has encouraged some scholars to say that servant leadership has "more promise as a stand-alone leadership" than other leadership approaches (Hoch et al., 2018, p. 502). Previous research has evidenced that servant leadership manifests into positive behaviors of followers like job performance, innovative performance, organizational citizenship behavior and creativity (Chen et al., 2015; Newman et al., 2017; Sousa & Van Dierendonck, 2017; Yang et al., 2019). However, the research on the self-serving behavior of employees by taking benefit of the softer side of servant leadership is still in its initial stages (Nathan et al., 2018). This school of thought is based on the notion that followers of servant leaders tend to manipulate servant leaders to achieve their gains (Bowie, 2000; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Whetstone, 2002). Surprisingly, despite some hints given on this potential downside of servant leadership from time to time (Nathan et al., 2018; Van Dierendonck, 2011; Whetstone, 2002), there is a scarcity of research on this aspect of servant leadership.

Social psychologists strongly believe that selfishness is rooted in human behavior (Dubois et al., 2015). The strong provokers of this notion suggest that humans are inherently selfish (Force, 2003; Yu, 2011). Multiple studies have also shown that people are more inclined to engage in those behaviors which serve them even if they are morally and ethically inappropriate (Diebels et al., 2018; Pletzer et al., 2018). This study is socially relevant as it highlights people's inner desire to get personal gains through manipulation and exploitation (Deutchman & Sullivan, 2018; Jones & Mueller, 2021; Muris et al., 2017). More than two decades of research has been dedicated to the selfish and unsympathetic behavior of people in general and employees in particular (Deutchman & Sullivan, 2018; Fehr & Samsom, 2013; Force, 2003; Jones & Mueller, 2021; Muris et al., 2017; Rudinow, 1978). The existing research repeatedly claims that people do not hesitate to engage in manipulation and exploitation for achieving their gains (Fehr & Samsom, 2013; Hauser et al., 2020; Jones & Mueller, 2021).

Social power and career success are two of the most desirable employee outcomes (Elias, 2008; Lunenburg, 2012; Ng & Feldman, 2014; Zaharee et al., 2018). Social power is a process of influencing others so that they feel persuaded to do what they are asked (Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006; Jain et al., 2011). There is sufficient literature on the need for power among individuals (Elias, 2008; Lunenburg, 2012). Social power enables actors to achieve their goals by acquiring and controlling resources like information, objects, and actions of other people (Walker & Schiffer, 2006). Many psychologists claimed that humans have a strong need for power to cope with their environment and survive in difficult situations (Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006).

According to one school of thought, the will to power is as strong as the will to freedom. Nietzsche, who gave the concept of will to power, strongly believed that people feel motivated to become powerful (Aydin, 2007). These feelings of motivation are stronger among oppressed people (Ng, 1980, p. 40). Winter (1988), who worked on power motives, believes that an inner desire to control others and maintain a good reputation acts as a strong motive for achieving social power. Individuals attain social power to control their environment and get personal gains (Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006). Power construct is primarily studied in the U.S. context (Treadway et al., 2013) with minimal studies done in other countries (Pierro et al., 2013; Raven et al., 1998). This calls for an empirical investigation of this variable in other countries, particularly the Asian context. The current study aims to fill this gap by exploring the antecedent of

social power in the Pakistani context. Similarly, career success is also something every employee strives for (Zaharee et al., 2018). Subjective career success is gaining more attention lately mainly because the current researchers believe that career success construct can be understood more clearly, when the individual himself is evaluating it (Ng & Feldman, 2014; Spurk et al., 2019). In addition, the subjective means gives a clear picture of the construct in contemporary organizations (De Vos & Soens 2008; Heslin, 2005; Wang et al., 2011). Career success refers to positive job-related results gained by an individual over their working life and has been explained in terms of objective and subjective measures (Greenhaus et al., 1990; Ng et al., 2005). Nowadays, employees are highly concerned about their career success, and they prefer to work in those organizations which provide them with chances of career growth (Blokker et al., 2019; Zaharee et al., 2018).

Servant leaders trust their followers and practice a good relationship with them, providing an ideal opportunity for opportunists and manipulators to gain personal benefits (Van Dierendonck, 2011). We argue that employees may become involved in manipulative and exploitative practices as a strategy to take full advantage of their servant leaders to obtain personal benefits in the form of subjective career success and social power. Although others do not perceive manipulative and exploitative behaviors positively, it is evident in previous studies that people strive to gain social power and use all means to be successful in their careers (Elias, 2008; Lunenburg, 2012; Ng & Feldman, 2014; Zaharee et al., 2018). According to a meta-analysis, manipulative employees are more inclined to show unethical behavior as their primary concern is to achieve their monetary and non-monetary goals (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). Manipulators are motivated by self-interest to the extent that they continue taking devious moves unless they achieve their gains (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). According to research, manipulative and exploitative behavior is not socially desirable but comes from a strong desire for control and status (Dahling et al., 2009).

Despite few studies on servant leadership and subordinates' personality traits (Washington et al., 2006), the literature lacks examination of the boundary conditions to explain the relationship between servant leadership and subordinates' behaviors. Extant research is particularly silent on how followers with different dispositions react to their servant leaders (Newman et al., 2017). Like the other two negative traits of narcissism and psychopathy, Machiavellianism is positively linked to manipulative behavior and dishonesty (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). Machiavellian people are selfish and mean, and they often use exploitative social tactics to influence others (Jonason & Webster, 2010; Liu & Liu, 2018). Individuals who are high in Machiavellianism have been observed better thriving in their careers and are more likely to reach secure positions within their organization (Harms & Spain, 2015). We argue that high-Machs have a stronger tendency to be involved in manipulative and exploitative practices to achieve their career goals and accumulate power. Therefore, they will use servant leaders as an opportunity to progress.

According to a meta-analysis on the dark triad, Machiavellianism along with narcissism and psychopathy are strong determinants of counterproductive and other negative behaviors (O'Boyle et al., 2015). However, Machiavellians are solely concerned with achieving their personal goals rather than organizational goals (Harms et al., 2015). Machiavellians are more indulged into manipulative behaviors and dishonestly as compared to other dark traits like psychopaths and narcissists (Wisse & Sleebos, 2016). In this study, Machiavellianism has been taken rather than other dark traits because individuals high in Machiavellianism are distrustful, cold hearted, power lovers, and exploitative manipulators who use calculative deceitful actions to get what they want (Wisse et al., 2015).

Previous research into servant leadership mainly relied on ethics and virtue philosophy, social exchange theory and social learning theory to describe the positive consequences at individual and

organizational levels (Nathan et al., 2018). However, we have proposed a theory of mind to explain how employees high in Machiavellianism read their servant supervisors' minds and benefit from social interactions by indulging in exploitative and manipulative behaviors to achieve subjective career success and social power. Theory of mind (TOM) (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Premack & Woodruff, 1978) explains the people's capacity to read other people's mental states that allow them to function efficiently during social interactions. The study intends to bridge the critical gaps in servant leadership research by employing TOM (Lyons et al., 2010; Premack & Woodruff, 1978) to explain how followers read their servant leaders' minds, establish their social cognition, and take full benefits by using exploitative and manipulative practices as a strategy to get ahead. Moreover, we also suggest that high-Machs tend to exploit social interactions with servant leaders to gain personal benefits in terms of their social power and career success.

The study contributes to the literature on servant leadership and its employee outcomes in many ways. First, it investigates how followers achieve social power and career success while working under servant leaders. Second, the study investigates the role of exploitative manipulative behavior as a unique underlying mechanism between servant leadership and self-driven employee outcomes. Third, it examines how Mach followers use servant leaders opportunistically and indulge more in manipulative/exploitative behaviors to gain social power and subjective career success. Fourth, unlike majority of the studies, which have relied on conservation of resources theory and Lazarus theory of stress appraisal, the current study has used the theory of mind to explain the proposed theoretical framework (Figure 1).
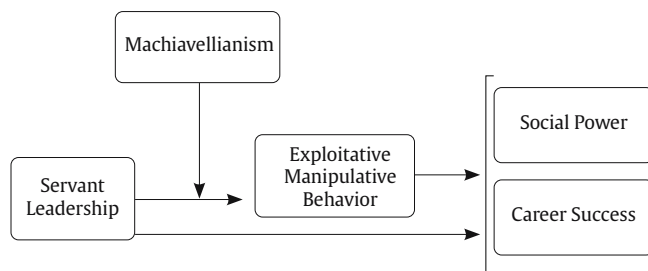

Figure 1. Proposed Moderated Mediation Model.

Theory and Hypotheses

Theory of Mind as a Theoretical Foundation

Human beings engage in different social interactions daily to accomplish an assorted set of social objectives, such as attaining information and persuading the people around them by maintaining emotional intimacy and sharing thoughts and feelings (Premack & Woodruff, 1978). Theory of Mind (TOM) (Lyons et al., 2010; Premack & Woodruff, 1978) explains an individual's ability to read other people's psychological states and use this skill to establish social cognition and function during social interactions efficiently. According to TOM, people are more likely to anticipate others' behavior during social interactions if they can reason and understand others' thoughts and feelings.

TOM is gaining substantial attention from researchers (Carr et al., 2018). TOM's general approach helps to understand the reasoning behind others' psychological states by relying on shared information and social cues and then interpreting the behaviors and developing their social cognitions (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985). Theory of mind has mostly been studied in clinical samples (Astington, 2014; Carr et al., 2018; Murray et al., 2017), but limited studies have tested it in general population and workplace settings.

In this study, we have employed TOM as an overarching theory to explain the proposed moderated mediation. We argue that followers may manipulate their servant leaders by understanding their beliefs and intentions for their benefit. They see the helping and connecting behavior of their leader as an opportunity to manipulate to accomplish their personal goals. They attain subjective career success and gain social power by exploiting the servant leaders' serving behaviors. We also posit that high-Machs are less empathetic and become more involved in manipulative and exploitative practices (Lyons et al., 2010) to succeed in their careers and gain more social power. This is consistent with research work by Lyons et al. (2010), who examined Machiavellian individuals in a preview of the theory of mind and found that they indulge in manipulation strategies as they are successful manipulators and have deficiencies in empathizing ability, which allows them to exploit others (Austin et al., 2007). Therefore, we argue that high Machiavellian followers will take servant leaders an opportunity to manipulate the situations for their career success and attainment of power. Still, low Machiavellians will not indulge in the same manipulation exploitation.

Servant Leadership, Social Power, and Subjective Career Success

Recent studies have proved the notion that servant leadership leads to positive employee outcomes, some of which include followers' job satisfaction, trust between leaders and followers, performance and creativity, loyalty towards the organization, employee engagement, and customer service (Chan & Mak, 2014; Hunter et al., 2013; Liden et al., 2014; Shaw & Newton, 2014). A positive relation was found between servant leadership and followers' career success (Chan & Mak, 2014). In a recent meta-analysis of subjective career success, it was found that top management's support is one of the major determinants of subjective career success as senior management gives access to resources and helps employees improve their skills and abilities (Ng & Feldman, 2014). As servant leaders are extra supportive, so it is highly likely that their followers will achieve career success. Servant leaders adopt solid measures to ensure that their followers progress in their careers (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Greenleaf, 1977/2002). They motivate their followers to take ownership of their responsibilities to succeed in their professional lives (Parris & Peachey, 2013).

The primary goal of servant leaders is to see their followers reach their full potential and do everything they can to make this happen (Greenleaf, 1977/2002). Research is evident that servant leaders fully support and serve their subordinates up to any level (Gandolfi et al., 2017). Servant leaders offer their social network to benefit their subordinates (Parris & Peachey, 2013). In addition to providing career growth opportunities, servant leaders enable employees to broaden their social horizons by sharing their power with them (Xu & Wang, 2020). The distinguishing feature of servant leaders is that they consider themselves servants whose ultimate goal is to serve employees (Karatepe et al., 2019). They share all their resources, including their power, with their employees (Van Winkle et al., 2014). In addition, they encourage employees to engage in activities that can benefit them. We believe that servant leaders' social support may help employees attain social power, as power is something that every individual wants (Fragale et al., 2011). Most importantly, servant leaders prioritize their followers' needs over their own needs (Ehrhart, 2004). As a result, employees feel socially powerful under a servant leader.

These assumptions that servant leaders enhance career success and social power among employees are supported by TOM, which explains that people can read others' minds and function efficiently in social interactions. When followers perceive from the leader's

mind that he/she is ready to serve and help them grow in their careers and indeed willing to go the extra mile to enable them to attain their goals, they take this as an opportunity to maximize their career goal attainment. Due to the closeness of the relationship with their leader, they use the leader's social network to build their social power (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Premack & Woodruff, 1978). Based on TOM, it can be proposed that some employees take advantage of servant leaders by fulfilling their personal goals, which in turn enables them to achieve career success and social power.

*H*1: Servant leadership is positively related to followers' a) subjective career success and b) social power.

Servant Leaders and Exploitative manipulative Behavior

A careful review of existing literature reveals that servant leadership has only been linked with the positive outcomes (Nathan et al., 2018) while neglecting its potential negative side, which is equally important (Nathan et al., 2018; Whetstone, 2002). The negative side of servant leadership promotes the notion that opportunistic followers may manipulate servant leaders to achieve their self-interest (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Some employees use manipulation to get tangible and non-tangible benefits (Li-Ping Tang et al., 2008). Manipulators are motivated by self-interest to the extent that they continue taking devious actions unless they achieve their personal goals (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). They are self-centered and inconsiderate toward others' needs and feelings (Turan, 2015). Due to this unsympathetic attitude, along with their intention to exploit others, they do not hesitate to take advantage of their leader's soft-hearted nature and caring personality.

Manipulative and exploitative behaviors may refer to all those deliberate actions taken by an individual to influence others for self-serving purposes (Hamilton et al., 1986). Manipulative behavior is defined as negative behavior by which a person tries to acquire personal gains by taking control over others against their best interests (Rogers, Seigfried, et al., 2006). Manipulators use charm, guilt induction, deceit, and various other tactics to obtain personal gains by controlling others' behavior and attitude (Li-Ping Tang et al., 2008).

Servant leadership is all about serving followers and enabling employees to receive an unlimited amount of benefits from this service, specifically by having their needs met (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Spears, 2010; Ton, 2014). Followers know that the helping behavior of the servant leader can be exploited to achieve their personal goals (Bowie, 2000). People usually indulge in manipulative and exploitative behaviors because they have a strong desire for control and status (Dahling et al., 2009). To fulfill this desire, they exploit the helping and empathetic behavior of the servant leader (Whetstone, 2002). These people do not learn empathy from the servant leader and therefore focus on their self-interest and needs while working in an organization (Newman et al., 2017).

According to TOM (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Premack & Woodruff, 1978), people evaluate their leader's mindset to serve others see this as an opportunity to manipulate the things around them with their emotions, interactions, and actions. They may show charm. They may lie or represent false impressions to extract full empathy from the servant leader who is always available to help followers develop and well-being. Bearing in mind the above arguments, we propose:

*H*2: Servant leadership is positively related to the manipulative and exploitative behaviors of followers.

Exploitative Manipulative Behavior, Subjective Career Success, and Social Power

It is the common desire of any employee to achieve career success and social power (Smale et al., 2018). Although these constructs gained attention in organizational research, there is still a scarcity of research into how employees achieve career success and social power in their working lives (Anderson & Brion, 2014). According to a recent meta-analysis of objective and subjective career success predictors, individual differences and employees' attitudinal and behavioral tactics play a vital role in their career success (Ng et al., 2005; Ng & Feldman, 2014). Opportunistic employees who know how to manipulate others, especially those in power, are more likely to achieve objective and subjective career success. Others (peers and leaders) may report less career success due to manipulative behaviors, but in self-evaluations employees perceive success in their careers using exploitative/manipulative behaviors (Karkoulian et al., 2010; Spurk et al., 2016). Subjective career success has been interpreted as career satisfaction that can be better evaluated by the employee himself/herself (Ng & Feldman, 2014; Spurk et al., 2019).

Manipulative, exploitative behaviors are used as a strategy to gain more control over resources (Ruiz-Palomino & Bañón-Gomis, 2017). Individuals manipulate others to get the information they want and to increase their chances of moving up the ladder (Li-Ping Tang et al., 2008). This opportunistic behavior, along with their access to resources, allows them to achieve career success much faster than others (Ng & Feldman, 2014; Spurk et al., 2019). Manipulative behaviors are utilized to influence others' actions for self-serving motives (Turan, 2015). The extant research available on exploitative manipulative behavior indicates that these behaviors are very subtle and less visible, making it difficult for them to find out that they are being manipulated and exploited (Kelly, 2013; Majeed & Fatima, 2020). Unlike other negative behaviors, exploitative manipulative behavior is not visibly negative (Bereczkei, 2018; Tang & Chen, 2008). In some cases, people hide their manipulative and exploitative behavior by remaining friendly to the target and keeping a smile on their face (Schmid et al., 2019).

The existing literature on manipulative, exploitative behavior indicates that it is associated with a love of power (Wisse et al., 2015) that is considered a source of one's career satisfaction as well. Manipulative employees are more likely to obtain power by gaining access to resources through manipulating and exploiting others (Bereczkei, 2018). Various studies have proved that individuals displaying manipulative, exploitative behavior gather information from others against their will and then use it to their advantage (Ruiz-Palomino & Banon-Gomis, 2017; Turan, 2015). Manipulative individuals are also good at falsely representing themselves (Bereczkei, 2018; Kelly, 2013). They create a positive image in others' eyes such that others automatically believe them to be influential figures (Schmid et al., 2019; Majeed & Fatima, 2020). Employees engage in exploitative manipulative behavior to get personal gains, and social power is an important personal gain as it helps employees climb the corporate ladder (Fragale et al., 2011). Exploitative manipulative behavior is a key to gaining social power as it helps people obtain control over other people (Lammer et al., 2009).

The existing literature on power revolves around the notion that power involves the potential to control others. Emerson (1962) and Dahl (1957), supporters of this school of thought, believe that social power is not an attribute of an individual but rather embedded in relationships. The current study also supports this notion that power can influence others' behavior rather than personal characteristics or attributes. Individuals attain social power to control their environment and acquire personal gains (Van Dijke & Poppe, 2006).

It has been found that employees' behavior and attitude also act as antecedents of social power (Anderson & Brion, 2014). Individuals with strong social networks are more likely to attain social power. According to TOM (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Premack & Woodruff, 1978), people evaluate others' minds, assess situations, and use social interactions for their self-interest. They try to represent themselves to project a better image in others' eyes and get the support of their group. They play games to influence other people and achieve a better place among their peers by having better social interactions.

*H*3: Exploitative manipulative behavior is positively related to a) subjective career success and b) social power.

Mediating Role of Exploitative Manipulative Behavior

The concept of servant leadership refers to the idea that extraordinary leadership starts with a person's aim and interest in helping followers. In other words, the servant leader is a servant first (Greenleaf, 1970). Robert Greenleaf (1970) is the founder of the current servant leadership approach. He believes that a servant leader is an individual whose priority is to serve others and prioritize followers' requirements over their own needs. Servant leadership researchers believe that empowerment is at the core of servant leadership, and such leaders delegate their power to their followers (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Welty Peachey et al., 2018). The followers consider the soft and serving nature of their leader as an opportunity to gain personal goals (Greenleaf, 1977/2002; Spears, 2010; Ton, 2014) by engaging in exploitative manipulative behaviors. Those people who engage in exploitative manipulative behavior do not think about right and wrong; they use their strong verbal and nonverbal skills to persuade others without risking their credibility and repute (Ruiz-Palomino & Bañón-Gomis, 2017). Manipulation and exploitation are the artful skills of influencing others for the sole purpose of making personal gains. People with manipulative tendencies do not think about what is right or wrong; they use their strong verbal and non-verbal skills to persuade others without risking their credibility and repute (Ruiz-Palomino & Bañón-Gomis, 2017). Exploitative manipulative behavior helps employees achieve their personal goals in the form of career success and social power. Exploitative manipulative behavior is a negative behavior that encourages people to put personal interests before other's interests. This biased attitude and a strong desire for achievement, power, and money decrease the ability to behave ethically and honestly, because they use every mean to achieve their personal goals (Piff et al., 2012; Tang & Chen, 2008; Turan, 2015).

Organizational behavior research is full of studies that have proved a strong positive relation between manipulative behavior and unethical decision-making (Beu et al., 2003). A meta-analysis also reveals that manipulative individuals are more likely to involve in unethical behavior due to their primary concern for getting financial and non-financial rewards (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). The self-interested behavior of manipulators motivates them to take deceitful actions for the attainment of their personal goals (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010). Opportunistic employees abuse the delegated power of a servant leader for personal gains (Van Dierendonck, 2011) by indulging in emotional and behavioral exploitation in social interactions to take full advantage of the situation. They portray themselves as trustworthy and sincere, obtain the leader's trust, and then enjoy the empowerment to use it for personal career success and exert influence over the social group. It is further posited that followers who display manipulative behavior are more likely to achieve career success and social power under servant leadership.

We employ the theory of mind to explain the negative side of servant leadership followers by suggesting that the followers read the servant leader's mind and use their empathetic and helping behaviors to take advantage to serve their selfish self. Servant leaders prioritize the needs of their followers over their own needs (Spears, 2010). Followers take advantage of this behavior by ensuring that all their needs are fulfilled (Grant, 2013; Ton, 2014). They know how to use the leader's serving behavior to fulfill their interests by manipulating and exploiting the empowerment and trust that the leader renders toward his/her followers (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Servant leaders maintain a healthy and friendly relationship with employees in which they are given the freedom to raise their voices (Sipe & Frick, 2015). Servant leaders also empower their employees (Ehrhart, 2004) by allowing them to handle the tasks in their way (Welty Peachey et al., 2018). Empowerment allows them to manipulate things to serve their self-interest. When employees can manipulate the tasks, they feel higher satisfaction with their careers.

Moreover, servant leaders are more subordinate-oriented and trust them even more than others (Lyons et al., 2010). This trust of servant leaders may be exploited and manipulated by subordinates for personal gains, which might lead to high satisfaction in their careers (Wu et al., 2020). This trust also allows them to influence others to build their social power, which is considered strength for their existence in the organization.

Based on the above arguments, we hypothesize a mediating role of the exploitative manipulative behavior of followers between servant leadership and career success and social power.

*H*4a: Exploitative manipulative behaviors mediate the relationship between servant leadership and subjective career success.

*H*4b: Exploitative manipulative behaviors mediate the relationship between servant leadership and social power.

Moderating Role of Machiavellianism

Due to its significance, the research on personality is growing, with many studies conducted on its different aspects (Allemand & Martin, 2017). Industrial/organizational psychology scholars have recently started to emphasize the role of Machiavellianism in organizational settings, probably due to the recent scandals exposing corporate greed (Harms & Spain, 2015; Smith & Webster, 2017). Machiavellianism is part of a dark triad personality framework (O'Boyle et al., 2015), and it is vital to explore it in different scenarios (Harms & Spain, 2015). According to a recent meta-analysis, the moderating role of Machiavellianism between servant leadership and employee outcomes has not been studied (Newman et al., 2017). Considering these gaps in the existing literature on the interactive effect of servant leaders and Machiavellianism followers on self-serving employee outcomes, the current study examines the moderating role of Machiavellianism between servant leadership and exploitative manipulative behavior and the underlying mechanism leading to career success and social power.

A Machiavellian individual (Calhoun, 1969) characterizes hostile, devious, exploitative, and deceitful actions to accomplish personal goals (Machiavelli, 2014). Machiavellianism is a behavioral or social approach that uses manipulative and exploitative tactics to obtain personal gains (Zhu et al., 2019). A Machiavellian is someone whose disposition includes self-interest, power hunger, and cynicism (Jones & Paulhus, 2010), all of which may motivate him/her to engage in exploitative manipulative behavior for achieving personal gains. Since servant leaders are always willing to serve, it is highly likely for those followers of servant leaders who are high in Machiavellianism to display exploitative manipulative behavior, which helps them gain career success and social power (Bowie, 2000; Van Dierendonck, 2011). Their love of power and money motivates them to use other people to accomplish their own goals (Pilch & Turska, 2015). We believe that people high in Machiavellianism use servant leaders to achieve their gains. Machiavellians are of the view that manipulation is the best way to fulfill personal goals. They are not ashamed of their actions; instead, they consider manipulation a useful way of achieving success (O'Boyle et al., 2015). Moreover, they feel proud of themselves for having the ability to exploit others (O'Boyle et al., 2015). Machs are self-centered and selfish; they manipulate and exploit others for their benefit (Tang & Chen, 2008). We argue that Machiavellian employees who display manipulative behavior may use servant leaders to achieve personal gains because they believe in serving others under all circumstances.

Machiavellians find it challenging to trust others. Therefore, they have a continuous desire for control and status (Dahling et

al., 2009), so they engage in exploiting and manipulating servant leaders to get social power and career success. Machiavellians are smart enough to employ exploitation maneuvers to make others to surrender their resources (Bereczkei, 2018; Smith & Webster, 2017) because of this side, they are more likely to abuse the softer side of servant leaders and engage in exploitative manipulative behavior. Thus, its argued that servant leader and Mach followers make a perilous combination as employees high in Machiavellianism are looking for opportunities to achieve their personal gains and serving behavior of servant leaders give them this opportunity (Wu et al., 2020). This interaction between a servant leader and Mach followers increases the exploitative manipulative behavior of followers. Machiavellianism has also been linked to maladaptive, unethical, and antisocial behavior as they are always looking for ways to exploit and manipulate others (Greenbaum et al., 2017; Jones & Paulhus, 2010; Zagenczyk et al., 2014). On the other hand, servant leaders are known for their keen interest in serving employees, which makes them an easy target for Mach employees who are likely to show an increase in exploitative manipulative behavior under a servant leader (Wu et al., 2020) to achieve personal goals in the form of social power and career success. Other studies have also shown that employees high in Machiavellianism use various manipulation strategies to reach a higher organizational hierarchy (Smith & Webster, 2017).

People high in Machiavellianism do not hesitate to exploit and manipulate others so they can satisfy their interests (Jones & Paulhus, 2010). A servant leader is an easy target for employees high in Machiavellianism as he/she is always willing to serve employees, which makes them vulnerable for manipulation. Van Dierendonck (2011) also highlighted that servant leaders are more prone to manipulation and exploitation by followers due to their serving nature. Whetstone (2002) also criticized servant leadership by suggesting that their willingness to serve and utmost concern for employees makes them victims of manipulation. According to Bowie (2000), the altruistic and serving nature of servant leaders is deemed a weakness by employees who taken advantage of it by using manipulation. Newman et al. (2017) also highlighted the possibility of manipulation and exploitation directed towards servant leaders by employees to gain personal benefits. Organizational behavior researchers strongly agree that individuals high in Machiavellianism are distrustful, insensitive, power lovers, and exploitative manipulators who use calculative deceitful measures to get what they want (Wisse et al., 2015). It implies that they indulge in manipulating tasks, emotions and behaviors for their self-interest to ultimately gain career success and more influence on social groups (Bereczkei, 2018).

We have proposed using TOM to explain how high-Machs read their servant supervisors' minds and benefit from social interactions by indulging in manipulative and exploitative behaviors to obtain career success and social power. TOM (Lyons et al., 2010; Premack & Woodruff, 1978) refers to the capacity to read other people's mental states. Theoretically speaking, understanding others' feelings, beliefs, and aims gives people the capability to be accomplished in their social interactions (Lyons et al., 2010). It has been proposed that the intense competition between and within social clusters molded the cognitive and behavioral facets of people (Georgiev et al., 2013), selecting capacities that are related to manipulation and deceitfulness. Thus, it is possible that, in human beings, manipulative tendencies have co-evolved with the ability to read minds (Lyons et al., 2010). We argue that people who can better understand others' intentions and emotions are better at successfully employing manipulative and exploitative strategies (McIlwain, 2003).

High-Machs are deficient in empathy but have a better understanding of situations to take maximum advantage of their manipulative behaviors. They see their servant leader as an opportunity to manipulate their empowerment, trust, and helping behavior (Lyons et al., 2010) to gain more success in their careers and social power in their workplace. Hence, the current study proposes

a moderating role of Machiavellianism between servant leadership and manipulative behaviors and then the underlying mechanism leading to subjective career success and social power.

*H*5: Machiavellianism moderates the relationship between servant leadership and exploitative manipulative behavior such that the relationship will be stronger when Machiavellianism is high and vice versa.

*H*6: Machiavellianism moderates the indirect relationship between servant leadership and social power and subjective career success through manipulative/exploitative behavior.

Method

To test the proposed hypotheses, we collected data for the variables under study from a sample of 320 employees working in the service sector – specifically universities, banks, and telecom organizations situated in Rawalpindi and Islamabad, Pakistan – by utilizing the convenience sampling technique. Data were collected through a self-administered questionnaire in a time-lagged design to avoid reverse causality and common method biases. Each time lag was separated by at least 15 days. The respondents were informed that their participation was voluntary and confidential and that they could withdraw at any time.

Data for wave 1 (also referred to as T1) were collected to measure servant leadership and Machiavellianism, which were self-reported. Exploitative manipulative behavior was taken at time two on the self-reports. At time 3, we tapped perceived career success on the self-reports, while the peer report response was taken for social power. We asked the employees to nominate any 3 of their peers, out of whom we selected one peer randomly for gathering responses on the respondent's social power. We also made sure that the peer had been working with the employee for the last six months. A total of 553 employees who participated at time one were requested to join at wave 2 (15 days apart) to gather a response for exploitative manipulative behavior. We received 423 responses at the end of wave 2 and 339 at the end of wave 3. We obtain a final sample of (N = 320) after deleting 19 incomplete responses. This time gap was chosen to ensure that changes in variables were captured without losing the major proportion of employees.

To check non-response bias, we investigated the difference in demographics between respondents for final analysis at T3 (n = 320) and respondents who only submitted responses at T1 and both at T1 and T2. For this purpose, chi-square difference tests were used to compare T1, T2, and T3 respondents based on the following variables: gender, age, organization type, designation, education, experience with current supervisor, experience with current organization, and total working experience. Table 1 contains the results of chi-square difference tests for demographic variables across T1, T2, and T3. Only designation (i.e., line manager, middle manager and top manager) was found different for T1, T2, and T3. However, respondents at T1, T2, and T3 did not differ on gender, age, organization type, education, experience with current supervisor, experience with current organization, and total working experience. Furthermore, ANOVA was performed to check the difference of perceptions about servant leadership of respondents at T1 (provides data for 1st-time lag only), T2 (provides data for 1st and 2nd-time lags) and T3 (provides data for 1st, 2nd and 3rd-time lags). However, no significant difference was found across T1, T2, and T3 among respondents in their perceptions about servant leadership (Mt1 = 3.06, SDt1 = 0.93; Mt1-2 = 2.90, SDt1-2 = 0.75; Mt1-3 = 3.06, SDt1-3 = 0.85), F(550, 2) = 1.22, p = .29). Based on chi-square difference tests and ANOVA results, it can be concluded that the current study has no major issue of non-response bias.

Average age of 42.9% of respondents was 31-40 years, 64% were male, 36% worked in semi-government organizations, and

39.9% were from middle-level management positions; 33.1% of the respondents had a bachelor's degree, while 28.2% had a master's degree or above; 44.2% of the respondents reported that they had been working under their current leader/supervisor for at least the last two years, while 11.7% had a total working experience of 9 years.

Table 1. Results of the Chi-square Tests to Compare T1-T2-T3 Respondents at T1

Variable	Value	df	p-value
Gender	2.07	2	.35
Age	5.07	6	.53
Organization type	3.01	4	.55
Designation	20.50	4	.00
Education	5.10	4	.27
Experience with current supervisor	13.78	10	.18
Experience with current organization	13.11	14	.51
Total working experience	16.72	20	.67

Measures

The details of all the measures taken for this study are given below. All the items were tapped on a scale from ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 5 (*strongly agree*). The Appendix contains all the items used in each scale. Some items were reverse coded. They were treated before starting the data analysis.

Servant leadership. A 14-item scale, developed and psychometrically validated by Ehrhart (2004), was used to measure servant leadership. This scale consisted of seven dimensions: forming relationships with subordinates, empowering subordinates, helping subordinates grow and succeed, behaving ethically, having conceptual skills, putting subordinates first, and creating value for those outsides of the organization (Ehrhart, 2004). All these seven dimensions collectively capture the true essence of servant leadership, which revolves around the notion that servant leaders entirely focus on employee betterment by serving them in the best way possible. The major rationale for choosing this scale is that it has been considered one of the most commonly used and effective scales for measuring servant leadership (Lee et al., 2020). The majority of the studies have used this scale to measure servant leadership (Erkutlu & Chafra, 2015; Hunter et al., 2013; Jang & Kandampully, 2018; Schneider & George 2011; Walumbwa et al., 2010; Ye et al., 2019). A sample item includes "My leader spends the time to form quality relationships with employees." In the current study, the alpha coefficient for this scale was .93.

Subjective career success. Subjective career success was measured using a 5-item scale developed by Greenhaus et al. (1990). Researchers believe that the scale proposed by Greenhaus et al. (1990) offers reliability and validity, making it one of the most suitable scales for capturing the subjective career success of employees (Spurk et al., 2019; Wiernik & Kostal, 2019). Many studies conducted worldwide have used this scale to measure the subjective career success of employees working in different organizations (Al-Hussami et al., 2018; Joo & Lee, 2017; Peng et al., 2019). A sample item includes "I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career." The alpha coefficient for this scale was .77.

Social power. Social power was measured using an 11-item scale developed by Brill (1992). A sample item includes "He knows how to talk a good game." Data for social power of employees were collected from their peers. The inclusion criterion was minimum six months of working with the employee. We asked the employee to nominate any three peers who had been working with him/her for minimum of six months. We then selected one out of the three peers randomly. The peers were asked to give responses keeping in view the main respondent. In the current study, the alpha coefficient for

this scale was .88. After reviewing several well-established existing scales that measure different aspects of power like referent power, expert power, legitimate power, coercive power, reward power, and global power or ability to influence (Nesler et al., 1999), we found this scale to be most suitable for our study. It is mainly because, unlike other scales, this scale explicitly measures the social power of the individual. Power has mostly been studied as a resource with its fair share of limitations, one being the realization that considering power a resource makes it an independent construct. Still, in reality, it "arises as to the consequence of dependency" (Brill, 1992). Since the current study has taken social power as an outcome variable rather than an employee personal resource, the measure developed by Brill (1992) seems a better fit for our study. The current study proposed that employees working under a servant leader develop exploitative manipulative behavior due to which they attain social power. The content of the measure (see Appendix) also revolves around the social power of an individual, which also establishes content validity. For instance, one-item states "People usually comply with his wishes when he makes requests of them," this depicts that he/she has social power. This scale has already been used to measure consumers' social power (for reference, see Chang et al., 2015).

Machiavellianism. A psychometrically tested 10-item scale was used to measure the personality traits of Machiavellianism. This scale was developed by Allsopp et al. (1991). Other studies have also used this scale to measure trait Machiavellianism (Ruiz-Palomino & Linuesa-Langreo, 2018; Ruiz-Palomino et al., 2019; Stradovnik & Stare, 2018). A sample item includes "Would you be prepared to deceive someone completely if it was to your advantage to do so?". In the current study, the alpha coefficient for this scale was .93.

Exploitative manipulative behavior. This behavior was measured using a 20-item Amoral Dishonesty (EMAD) scale developed by Altemeyer (1998), although there are other scales available to measure exploitative behavior and manipulative behavior separately. However, according to the best of researcher knowledge, Altemayer's (1998) scale is the only available scale to measure manipulative and exploitative behavior simultaneously. Other researchers have also used this scale to measure exploitative manipulative behavior (Rogers, Seigfried, et al., 2006; Rogers, Smoak, et al., 2006; Seigfried et al., 2008). A sample item includes "You know that most people are out to 'screw' you, so you have to get them first when you get the chance." In the current study, the alpha coefficient for this scale was .93.

Control Variables

In addition to study variables, the current study collected data for eight demographic variables, namely gender, age, organization type, designation, education, experience with current supervisor, experience with the current organization, and total working experience, keeping in view the recommendations of Becker (2005). The major rationale for choosing only these variables as control variables was mainly because the majority of the existing leadership studies have taken these variables as control variables (for reference, see De Clercq et al., 2020; Fatima et al., 2020; Majeed & Fatima, 2020). A few studies have also reported that these variables must be controlled as they are more likely to impact employee attitudes and behaviors (Jahanzeb & Fatima, 2018; Majeed et al., 2020; Riordan et al., 2003). For instance, studies showed that the age and education of employees affect their motivation and level of satisfaction (Fatima et al., 2018; Paul, 2012; Zhao et al., 2021). Further, several studies have shown that gender plays an important role in employees' career success (Mayrhofer et al., 2008; Orser & Leck, 2010). We analyzed the variance test (ANOVA) to identify those variables out of the eight demographic variables that were not a direct part of the study but showed a significant relation

with the variables under study. The results indicated a significant relation for age (F = 4.89, p = .002) and present experience with supervisor (F = 2.54, p = .02) with social power. Both these variables were included in the subsequent analysis as control variables. Past studies have shown that age and experience with supervisors shape employee attitudes and behaviors (Paul, 2012; Zhao et al., 2021). The possible justification for the significant relation between age and social power is that employees' perceived power enhances over time (Eaton et al., 2009; Li & Tsang, 2016). Studies have shown that tenure also predicts employees' outcomes (Boğan & Dedeoğlu, 2017; Karatepe et al., 2019; Riordan et al., 2003).

Data Analysis

To establish measures' convergent and discriminant validity, we applied the confirmatory factor analysis using AMOS. For this purpose, we compared one-factor models with multi-factor models and paired variables to address common method biases. The results indicated that two-factor and multi-factor models provided better fit indices results than forced one-factor models. Finally, we compared a full measurement model, i.e., a five-factor model, with a one-factor combined model, including all the study variables suggested by Anderson and Gerbing (1988). We obtained better model fit indices results for the full measurement model with CFI = .94, NFI = .90, GFI = .90, TLI = .93, RMR = .08, and RMSEA = .03. Additionally, the value for χ^2/df was 1.45 which falls within the acceptable range ($1 < \chi^2/df < 3.0$).

Descriptive Statistics. Table 2 shows descriptive statistics, correlation, reliability, and average variance extracted for all the study variables. The results reveal that all study variables are significantly correlated.

Table 2. Descriptive Statistics, Correlation and Reliabilities

		Mean	SD	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	SL	3.06	0.84	(.93)							
2	ManExp	3.60	0.80	.33**	(.94)						
3	CS	3.67	0.84	.23**	.20**	(.77)					
4	SP	3.62	0.62	.35**	.31**	.25**	(.88)				
5	Mach	3.19	0.80	.21**	.22**	.07	.11*	(.91)			
6	Age	-	-	.12*	.04	.03	.16**	.04	1		
7	ExpWSup	-	-	-.05	-.04	.06	-.12*	-.06	.00	1	
8	Total Exp	-	-	.14**	.09	.07	.07	.07	.45**	.18**	1

Note. N = 320; SL = servant leadership; SP = social power; CS = career success; Manexp = exploitative manipulative behavior; Mach = Machiavellianism; ExpWSup = experience with supervisor; Total Exp = total experience.
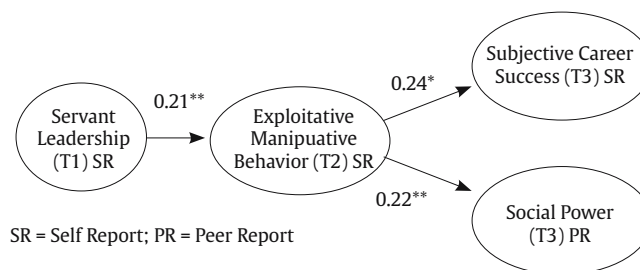*p < .05 (2-tailed), **p < .01 (2-tailed).

To assess the mediation, moderation and moderated mediation effect, we relied on the procedure suggested by Little et al.'s (2007) and Hayes and Preacher's (2013) PROCESS macro. The results showed that servant leadership is significantly related to career success (β = .23, p < .001) and social power (β = .24, p < .001) as given in Table 3. Hence, the direct hypothesis *H*1 (a, b) is supported.

The results revealed that servant leadership is positively related to exploitative manipulative behavior (β = .31, p < .001), and exploitative manipulative behavior is positively related to career success (β = .14, p < .01) and social power (β = .16, p < .001), as shown in Table 3 and Figure 2. Therefore, Hypotheses 2 and 3 were supported. *H*4, the mediation hypothesis, proposed that exploitative manipulative behavior acts as a mediator between servant leadership and outcomes (career success and social power). We employed a bootstrap confidence interval method at 95% to examine the mediation hypothesis. According to the bootstrap results given in Table 3, exploitative manipulative behavior significantly mediates the relationship between servant leadership and social power (β = .05), CI [.02, .09] as well as between servant leadership and career success (β = .05), [.01, .09].

Table 3. Relationship between Servant Leadership and Outcomes

Model Test for *H*1: Main Effect models				
Path	Estimate	*SE*	*LL*CI	*UL*CI
*H*1a SL → CS	.23***	0.05	.12	.33
*H*1b SL → SP	.24***	0.03	.16	.31
Age → SP	.09*	0.03	.01	.16
ExpWSup → SP	-.07*	0.03	-.14	-.00
Path Coefficients of The Hypothesized Mediation Model				
	Estimate			
*H*2 SL → Manexp	.31***	.05	.21	.41
*H*3a Manexp → CS	.14**	.05	.03	.26
*H*3b Manexp → SP	.16***	.04	.08	.25
Results of Mediation Hypotheses				
Bootstrap Results for Indirect Effects (Bias Corrected Confidence Interval Method)				
	Indirect Effect	*SE*	*LL*95%C1	*UL*95% CI
*H*4 SL → Manexp → CS	.05	.02	.01	.09
*H*5 SL→Manexp → SP	.05	.01	.02	.09

Note. N = 320; Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported; SL= servant leadership; SP = social power; CS = career success; Manexp = exploitative manipulative behavior; ExpWSup = experience with supervisor. Bootstrap sample size = 5000. *LL* = lower limit; *CI* = confidence interval; *UL* = upper limit.

Figure 2. Structure Equation Modeling Results for Proposed Mediation Model. *p < .05, **p < .01, ***p < .001.

Similar to the aforementioned bootstrapping method to test for mediation, the procedure in this case also generates CIs rather than point estimates for the conditional direct and indirect effects (MacKinnon et al., 2004). Moreover, servant leadership and Machiavellianism were centered on mean, as suggested by Aiken et al. (1991). Table 4 shows the results of the conditional direct and conditional indirect effects with slope test findings. The conditional effect of servant leadership on exploitative manipulative behavior was significant, with an incremental variance of 2.4% in manipulative behavior due to the interaction term of servant leadership and Machiavellianism. According to the results of the slope test at, ±1 standard deviation from the mean, the relationship between servant leadership and manipulative, exploitative behavior becomes stronger (β = .40, CI [.28, .53]) at high value of Machiavellianism and becomes weaker and insignificant (β = .09, CI [-.06, .25] at a low value of Machiavellianism. The interaction is plotted on the graph, as shown in Figure 3.

The moderated mediation hypothesis proposed that the conditional indirect effect of servant leadership on social power and career success through manipulative, exploitative behavior would be more substantial in the case of high Machiavellianism and weaker in low Machiavellianism. We tested the moderated mediation hypothesis at ± 1 standard deviation from the mean. The indirect effect of servant leadership on social power through exploitative manipulative behavior was strong in the case of high Machiavellianism (β = .06), CI [.02, .11] and weaker and insignificant (β = .01), CI [-.01, .05] in the case of low Machiavellianism.

Similarly, the indirect effect of servant leadership on career success through exploitative manipulative behavior was stronger in the case of high Machiavellianism (β = .06), CI [.02, .01] and weaker (β = .01), CI [-.01, .05] in the case of low Machiavellianism. Hence, the moderated mediation hypothesis was supported. Moderated mediation index values for both outcomes were found significant as given in Table 4.

Table 4. Moderation Analysis

Conditional Effects of Mach between Servant Leadership and Man-exp Behavior				
	β	*SE*	*LL*CI	*UL*CI
Constant	3.57***	.04	3.49	3.66
Mach	.19**	.05	.08	.29
SL	.24***	.05	.14	.35
Mach x SL	.19**	.06	.06	.31
ΔR^2 due to Interaction	.024**			
F	9.39			
(Slope Test)				
Moderator: Mach				
-.806	.09	.08	-.06	.25
.00	.24***	.05	.14	.35
+.806	.40***	.06	.28	.53

Moderated Mediation Results across Levels of Machiavellianism							
Conditional Indirect Effect of Mach on Social Power through Man-exp				Conditional Indirect Effects of Mach on Career Success through Man-exp			
Moderator: Mach	Mediator: Man-exp						
	Boot Indirect Effect	*SE*	*LL*CI	*UL*CI	Boot Indirect Effect	*SE*	*LL*CI	*LL*CI
-1 *SD* (0.80)	.01	.01	-.01	.05	.01	.01	-.01	.05
M (0.00)	.04	.01	.01	.07	.03	.01	.01	.07
+1 *SD* (0.80)	.06	.02	.02	.11	.06	.02	.01	.12
Index of Moderated Mediation							
Mach	INDEX .03	.01	.01	.06	INDEX .02	.01	.01	.06

Note. N = 320; Unstandardized regression coefficients are reported. SL = servant leadership; Man-exp = exploitative manipulative behavior; Mach= Machiavellianism; Bootstrap sample size = 5,000. 99% confidence interval; *LL* = lower limit; CI = confidence interval; *UL* = upper limit.
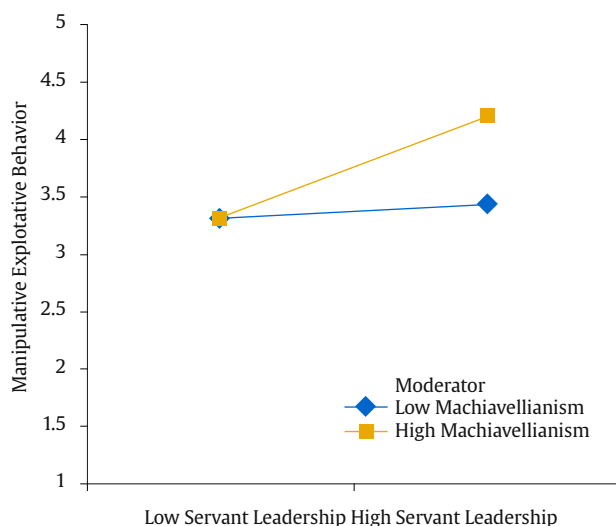

Figure 3. Moderating Role of Machiavellianism between Servant Leadership and Exploitative Manipulative Behavior.
Note. Employee Machiavellianism strengthens the positive relationship between servant leadership and exploitative manipulative behavior.

Discussion

Servant leadership as a positive form of leadership has been studied by several researchers who have managed to convince readers that this leadership style is all about positivity, which is also true (Hunter et al., 2013; Lu et al., 2019; Shaw & Newton, 2014; Yang et al., 2019). However, there is another side to it that needs immediate attention. The current study has brought into light a potential drawback of servant leadership by suggesting that servant leaders are more likely to be used by followers high in Machiavellianism for achieving personal gains. Using the theory of mind (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Premack & Woodruff, 1978), we proposed that employees with manipulative tendencies see servant leadership as an ideal opportunity to achieve their personal goals in the form of social power and career success. When they come across a leader who acts more like a servant than a manager, they start to look for ways to get maximum monetary and non-monetary benefits from him or her. Interestingly, our results also proved the same.

Our study shows that high-Mach employees gain social power and subjective career success under a servant leader. These results are consistent with previous studies, which proved that servant leadership leads to positive employee outcomes (Chiniara & Bentein, 2016; Grant, 2013; Sipe & Frick, 2015). This study is unique as it examines a new mechanism using exploitative manipulative behaviors by followers. Previous studies have also revealed that individuals high in Machiavellianism are more likely to show manipulative and exploitative behavior (Pilch & Turska, 2015; Wisse et al., 2015). Moreover, this study also validates the idea that employees who use manipulative and exploitative strategies are more likely to obtain personal gains (Kish-Gephart et al., 2010; Turan, 2015; Zagenczyk et al., 2014).

Keeping in view TOM as an overarching mechanism and the existing literature on negative personality, we proposed that those employees who are high in Machiavellianism are more likely to show manipulative behavior under servant leadership. This is because it is in their disposition to lie and manipulate (O'Boyle et al., 2012). These individuals have this strong desire for power and status, which motivates them to put everything aside and just focus on their gains (Wisse et al., 2015). When they come across a person as humble and down to earth as a servant leader, their natural desire for power and status becomes stronger as they find it relatively easy to manipulate them. This is mainly because they know they have strong social cognitions about their servant leaders who are always ready and available to help them in their career growth and task accomplishment. They indulge in manipulative and exploitative tactics in their social interactions. TOM (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Premack & Woodruff, 1978) also states that people who read the minds of others act accordingly to achieve their personal goals. Our data also support this hypothesis. The results are in accordance with the previous research into Machiavellianism, which confirmed that people high in Machiavellianism have a natural tendency to seek opportunities whenever possible and to work for their benefit (Ruiz-Palomino & Bañón-Gomis, 2017).

Going further, we proposed that employees high in Machiavellianism are more likely to obtain social power and career success under a servant leader by using their manipulative and exploitative behavior. They do so by manipulating their servant leader after reading their mind because the servant leader's soft and caring personality acts as an ideal opportunity for them to quench their thirst for career success and power. The results supported the moderated mediation hypothesis providing support for the theory of mind. These results are in line with trait activation theory (Tett et al., 2013) as well, which posits few personality traits become more functional in a specific situation. The study results also indicated that low Machiavellianism followers do not engage in manipulative/ exploitative behaviors under a servant leader and hence do not

intend on achieving career success and social power through these opportunistic tactics.

In this study, we offer the novel insight that although servant leadership is a positive leadership style, it has its drawbacks, as there is always a chance of manipulation by employees, as identified by Van Dierendonck (2011). TOM also supports this behavior in that it suggests that employees read the minds of their leaders mainly to discover when to seek benefits from them. Our findings also indicate that it is not always the case that followers learn empathy from the servant leaders and behave positively; they may also exploit servant leaders' helping behavior. It is also evident that high-Machs are low in empathy but have a stronger tendency to manipulate (Lyons et al., 2010); therefore, they successfully manipulate the opportunities under the servant leaders and gain social power and career success.

Theoretical and Methodological Strengths

Unlike previous research, this study provides a more comprehensive understanding of the important factors in predicting the career success and social power that employees gain working under servant leaders. We extend the extant research by revealing how employees indulge in exploitative manipulative behaviors as critical mechanisms that link a vital leadership style with enhanced career success and social power, how employees high in Machiavellianism see their servant leaders as an opportunity and use manipulative, exploitative behaviors to get ahead. The tested model's scope aimed to achieve depth in theorizing various unexplored mechanisms in terms of how and when followers benefit from their servant leaders through a strategy of exploitative manipulative behaviors to achieve their career goals.

The study has identified a unique mechanism based on the theory of mind (Baron-Cohen et al., 1985; Premack & Woodruff, 1978) to explain the servant leadership/manipulative, exploitative behavior relationship. In our belief, this is the first time that this theory has been linked to servant leadership literature. The study also has its methodological contributions. TOM has primarily been used in clinical populations. However, we have tested it in an organizational setting. Secondly, we collected data in three waves to limit the drawbacks of common method bias (Podsakoff et al., 2003). Additionally, data regarding social power were taken from peers to avoid biases as employees may report biased results when sharing their level of social power.

Practical Implications

This study portrays the misuse of servant leaders in an organizational context. Leaders need to identify their high-Mach followers and be proactive to evaluate and differentiate selfish employees. Other than all the positive outcomes of a servant leadership style, there is always a danger that followers misuse these leaders to make personal gains (Van Dierendonck, 2011). Therefore, servant leaders should also be more vigilant in understanding followers' self-interest and manipulative tactics. Those organizations that practice servant leadership must prepare the leaders for situations where employees may manipulate and exploit them. This can be done by providing them training on how to manage manipulative employees. It is essential to publically take a strong stance against exploitative manipulative behavior by clearly mentioning that those who are found guilty of engaging in these behaviors will have to face serious consequences. Going further, the organization may expose employees who are engaged in this behavior to teach others that this behavior will not be tolerated. It will be fruitful to create strict policies against exploitative manipulative behavior. These policies should be communicated

to all the employees to be aware that the organization strongly discourages these behaviors. Being a practitioner, if you feel that exploitative manipulative behavior has infiltrated the workplace, then it is better to take help from those mental health professionals who are experts in identifying these behaviors. These professionals can identify those employees who are displaying exploitative manipulative behavior and provide training and counseling for long-term prevention of this behavior at the workplace. It is also advised to add a Machiavellianism personality test in the recruitment process to identify those candidates who score high in Machiavellianism traits not to be selected or closely observed to make sure their personality disposition does not cause any harm to the organization and its members.

Limitations and Future Research

As with all other studies, this study has some limitations. Firstly, it only targeted the service sector in Pakistan. Future researchers may replicate this study in other sectors. The culture of Pakistan is relatively different from European culture. Hence, it would be fruitful to conduct this study in a European context. The current study used time-lagged data that addressed reverse causality problems. However, this method is not as effective as a longitudinal method as the latter is a good predictor of change in the association between different variables over time. This calls for longitudinal research in the future. The current study has taken manipulative, exploitative behavior as a mediator; future researchers may examine a few other underlying mechanisms.

Conclusion

Servant leadership has received its fair share of attention from organizational behavior researchers who have identified it as one of the positive leadership styles that promises a wide range of positive employee outcomes. The current study offers an unorthodox approach to servant leadership by highlighting the lesser-studied negative side of servant leadership. The current study got empirical support for the notion that servant leadership style gives an ideal environment to high Machiavellianism employees who misuse the softer side of servant leaders by engaging in exploitative manipulative behavior, which helps them attain career success social power.

Conflict of Interest

The authors of this article declare no conflict of interest.

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Appendix

Details of Scales

Servant Leadership (Employee Reported)

My leader spends the time to form quality relationships with employees.

My leader creates a sense of community among employees.

My leader's decisions are influenced by employees' input.

My leader tries to reach consensus among employees on important decisions.

My leader is sensitive to employees' responsibilities outside the workplace.

My leader makes the personal development of employees a priority.

My leader holds employees to high ethical standards.

My leader does what she or he promises to do.

My leader balances concern for day-to-day details with projections for the future.

My leader displays wide-ranging knowledge and interests in finding solutions to work problems.

My leader makes me feel like I work with him/her, not for him/her.

My leader works hard at finding ways to help others be the best they can be.

My leader encourages employees to be involved in community service and volunteer activities outside of work.

My leader emphasizes the importance of giving back to the community

Machiavellianism (Employee Reported)

I will be prepared to deceive someone completely if it was to my advantage to do so.

I would be prepared to do a bad turn to someone in order to get something I particularly wanted for yourself.

I often act in a cunning way in order to get what I want.

I would be prepared to 'walk all over people' to get what I want.

I enjoy manipulating people.

I tend to do most things with an eye to my own advantage.

I agree that the most important thing in life is winning.

I would be prepared to be quite ruthless in order to get ahead in my job.

I would prefer to be humble and honest rather than important and dishonest.

I would like to be very powerful.

Exploitative manipulative behavior (Employee Reported)

1. You know that most people are out to "screw" you, so you have to get them first when you get the chance.
2. All in all, it is better to be humble and honest than important and dishonest. (R)
3. There really is no such thing as "right" and "wrong." It all boils down to what you can get away with.
4. Do unto others as you would have them do unto you, and never do anything unfair to someone else. (R)
5. One of the most useful skills a person should develop is how to look someone straight in the eye and lie convincingly.
6. It gains a person nothing if he uses deceit and treachery to get power and riches. (R)
7. Basically, people are objects to be quietly and coolly manipulated for your own benefit.

8. Deceit and cheating are justified when they get you what you really want.
9. One should give others the benefit of the doubt. Most people are trustworthy if you have faith in them. (R)
10. The best skill one can have is knowing the "right move at the right time:" when to "soft-sell" someone, when to be tough, when to flatter, when to threaten, when to bribe, etc.
11. Honesty is the best policy in all cases. (R)
12. The best reason for belonging to a mosque is to project a good image and have contact with some of the important people in your community.
13. No one should do evil acts, even when they can "get away with them" and make lots of money. (R)
14. There's a loser born every minute, and smart people learn how to take advantage of them.
15. The end does NOT justify the means. If you can only get something by unfairness, lying, or hurting others, then give up trying. (R)
16. Our lives should be governed by high ethical principles and religious morals, not by power and greed. (R)
17. It is more important to create a good image of yourself in the minds of others than to actually be the person others think you are.
18. There's no excuse for lying to someone else. (R)
19. One of the best ways to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear.
20. The truly smart person knows that honestly is the best policy, not manipulation and deceit. (R)

Social Power (Peer Reported)

1. He knows how to talk a good game.
2. Because of his way with people, he has been to accomplish things that many others cannot.
3. It just seems like he is a natural leader.
4. When in a group, he frequently finds that he assumes a leadership role.
5. He almost always makes a good impression on people he meets.
6. People usually comply with his wishes when he makes requests of them
7. He can usually convince people to see things his way.
8. He rarely seems to be able to influence the behavior of others (R).
9. When with others, he generally prefers to assume a leadership role.
10. Quite often, he finds he is able to convince others to do something that he knows they would rather not do.
11. People often look to him for leadership.

Subjective Career Success (Employee Reported)

1. I am satisfied with the success I have achieved in my career.
2. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my overall career goals.
3. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for income.
4. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for advancement.
5. I am satisfied with the progress I have made toward meeting my goals for the development of new skills.