Do All Roads Lead to Rome? The Moderating Role of Culture and Age in Predicting Construal Level on Machiavellianism

Bütün Yollar Roma'ya Mı Çıkar? Makyavelizmde Yorumlama Seviyesinin Belirlenmesinde Kültür ve Çağın Aracı Rolü

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Abstract: Christie and Geis (1970) define Machiavellianism as a personality trait that results in extensive manipulative behavior, insincerity and callousness. Previous research focused on how culture and several demographic variables relate to Machiavellianism. However, no research has yet to examine how culture and demographics (age) moderate the relation between Machiavellian tendencies and the mind-set of an action. This study examines the moderating effect of culture and age on individuals' Machiavellian thoughts by the chronic aspect of Construal Level Theory (Liberman and Trope, 1998; Trope and Liberman, 2010) across people from different cultures and from different age groups.
In the first part of the study, culture is used as a moderator. The results indicated that American participants showed more (versus less) Machiavellian thoughts then Turkish participants when a concrete construal is adapted (versus an abstract construal). Second part of the study focused on the age as the moderator. The results showed that younger participants (versus older) are more Machiavellian when they have a concrete construal (versus an abstract construal). Consequently; the results indicate a strong distinction when a detailed mindset is adapted where the events are perceived as subcategorized and concrete. On the other hand, when an abstract mind-set is adapted, events are perceived as more vague therefore differences between cultures and age began to diminish. Implications of the findings to the literature are discussed.
Keywords: Construal Level Theory, Psychological Distance, Machiavellianism, Culture, Age

Öz: Christie ve Geis (1970), Makyavelizm'i samimiyetsizlik, vurdumduymazlık ve aşırı manipulatif davranış içeren bir kişilik durumu olarak tanımlamaktadır. Literatürde kültür ve pek çok demografik özelliğin Makyavelizm üzerindeki etkisi vurgulanmıştır. Ancak literatürde, kültür ve demografik özelliklerin (yaş) bireylerin Makyavel eğilimleri ile eylemsel zihniyetleri arasındaki ilişkiyi analiz etmede moderatör olarak etkisini araştırmamıştır. Bu nedenle bu çalışma kültür ve katılımcıların yaşlarının bireylerin Makyavel algıları ile kronik Kurgu Seviyesi Teorisi[1] (Liberman ve Trope, 1998; Trope ve Liberman, 2010) arasındaki ilişkiyi yönlendirmesini esas almaktadır. Çalışma, katılımcıların Makyavel algıları ile "kurgu seviyeleri" arasındaki ilişkinin kültür ve katılımcı yaşı yönünden etkisini incelemektedir.
Çalışmanın ilk kısmında kültür moderatör olarak kullanılmıştır. Sonuç olarak Amerikan katılımcıların Türk katılımcılara göre daha çok Makyavel eğilimde oldukları gözlemlenmiştir, ve bu gözlem yalnızca katılımcıların "somut zihniyet"e sahip oldukları zaman anlamlandığı ortaya çıkmıştır. Çalışmanın ikinci kısmında katılımcıların yaşı moderatör olarak kullanılmıştır. Buna göre daha genç olan katılımcıların, yaşları daha geçkin olan katılımcılara kıyasla daha çok Makyavel eğilimde oldukları gözlemlenmiştir, ve bu gözlem çalışmanın ilk kısmında olduğu gibi yine daha "somut zihniyet" sahibi katılımcılarda algılanmıştır. Genel olarak çalışmada "soyut zihniyet"e sahip katılımcıların ne kültür ne de yaş farkı bakımından anlamlı ilişki etkisinin bulunmadığı gözlemlenmiştir. Dolayısıyla detaylı düşünme, genel düşünce yapısına göre katılımcıların kültürel farklılıkları ve yaş farklılıkları bakımından farklı Makyavel eğilimlere sebebiyet vermiştir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Construal Level Theory, Psychological Distance, Makyavelizm, Kültür, Yaş

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1. Machiavellianism

To maximize self esteem and to receive positive feedback, individuals often pursue self-enhancement goals (Freitas et al, 2001). Protecting self-confidence, however; causes an individual to navigate between avoiding negative information and reaching to the positive information (Mischel et al, 1973). When pursuing goals such as getting a shirt from the sale or being best friends with someone, we often use some tactics to end our goals. These tactics represent our personality, and is moderated by various factors such as how much we want to reach our goal, how our mind-set is adapted.

On 16th century, writings of Nicollo Machiavelli derived the concept of Machiavellianism. His book The Prince includes his own attitudes, tactics and strategies to gain power and to keep it efficient (Robbins and Coulter, 2012). Machiavellianism is one prominent personality trait that is offensive but non-pathological which basically expresses manipulative tendencies (Paulhus and Williams, 2002; Sinha, 2008) and is based on the acquisition of power (Daft, 2008).

Higher Machiavellians are opportunistic; where they identify the optimal strategy in each situation calmly (Christie and Geis, 1970) with highly rational and materialistic, self-interested way to their advantage (Effler, 1983). Hunt and Chonko (1984; p. 30), argued that "the label Machiavellian [is] becoming a negative epithet, indicating at least an

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[1] "Kurgu Seviyesi Teorisi"; yazarın özgün kendi çevirisidir.
Orj.: Construal Level Theory (Liberman and Trope, 1998; Trope and Liberman, 2010)

amoral (if not immoral) way of manipulating others to accomplish one's objectives". Machiavellianism is an approach where one systematically figures every advantage and every benefit for his/her purpose, considering neither of the rights of overall society nor the rights of the individual (Kolb, 2008). This notion may be true; hence Machiavellians are more upset by inefficiency rather than injustice (Christie and Geis, 1970).

Machiavellianism and other personality traits have been focus of attention in the literature. Lee and Ashton (2005) found that Machiavellianism was negatively correlated with Big Five agreeableness and with HEXACO model of personality; a model which is recently created to overcome lexical differences between the Big Five personality traits (Ashton et al, 2004). Individuals tend to be more Machiavellian (high Machs) and have a detached, 'cool' attitude (Mudrack and Mason, 1995) than others (low Machs). Therefore agreeing and being compatible are not their distinct priorities towards their goal pursuit. High Machs are "darker" than others, having an agenda of reaching to the end via whatever actions necessary.

The Dark Triad (of personality), named by Paulhus and Williams (2002), covers three main personality traits: Narcissism, Machiavellianism and Psychopathy. Psychopathy is a pattern or remorseless manipulation of others (Hare, 1993). Narcissism is considered a normal personality disorder integrated with dominance, feelings of superiority and entitlement (Raskin and Terry, 1988). Machiavellianism is an opinion about the quest to gain competitive advantage in interpersonal competition (Walter et al, 2005) that gives one an immoral reputation to accomplish one's own objectives (McGuire and Hutchings, 2006). These traits are subclinical, socially aversive where there is a positive correlation among them (Paulhus and Williams, 2002) and with other personality constructs such as self-enhancement, Big Five, etc (Lee and Ashton, 2005; Paulhus and Williams, 2002; Veselka et al, 2010).

1.2. Construal Level Theory

Individuals are able to form an action that can be identified by a cognitive hierarchy (Vallacher and Wegner, 1989). High level identities specify *why* a certain action is conducted and low level identities specify *how* a certain action is conducted. The specifications of actions are determined by level of experience within an action. More experience associates with general, abstract identifications (e.g., drive a car to travel). In contrast, as the level of experience diminishes, identifications become local and detailed (e.g., how to drive a car). In spite of the impact of experience, individuals can also construe their world by means of (1) focusing on causes and consequences of events thus operate in a more abstract mindset, or (2) focusing on details of an event thus operate in a more concrete mindset.

Trope and Liberman (2010) developed construal level theory, which has built from Action Identification Theory of Vallacher and Wegner (1989) stating that individuals form higher level or lower level mental construal according to the perceived psychological distance towards an action. Mental representations of psychologically distant events are perceived as higher level and abstract whereas representations of psychologically proximate events are perceived as lower level and concrete (Trope and Liberman, 2010). In this sense, there is a specific distinction between high and low levels of construal where the latter generates detailed, localized, sub-ordinate and contextual information about an event contrary to generalized, global, super-ordinate information (Eyal and Liberman, 2012). Thus; a construal-distance mechanism reveals that as psychological distance in time (now versus sometime in future), space (here versus elsewhere), social relations (first person perspective versus third person perspective) and/or probability of occurrence (less likely versus more likely) affect construal level such that increased (versus decreased) distance results in higher levels (versus lower levels) of construal (Trope and Liberman, 2010). Research on construal level and/or psychological distance is vast covering many topics such as marketing, social psychology, retailing, ethics and morality, etc. For example, recent research has focused on construal level's role on moral issues. Some examples of recent studies of construal level on ethics and morality include construal level affect on vices and virtues (Eyal et. al., 2008), dishonesty (Gino and Galinsky, 2012) and moral emotions (Agerström et. al., 2012).

1.3. Construal Level and Machiavellianism

A work-around for the situation that (i) there is no study (yet) that examines the affect of construal level theory on Machiavellianism and (ii) several additional factors that may affect the relationship such as culture and age has to be considered. To this end, the aim of the study is to determine how culture and age moderates the relationship between construal level and Machiavellianism.

1.3.1. The role of culture

Oyserman and Lee (2008) argue that examination of culture in cross-national variations is not static but dynamic depending on momentary difference within individualism and collectivism. Liberman and Trope (1998) argues that desirability is prominent with a high level construal that is linked with goals and plans; whereas feasibility is prominent with a low level construal that refers to the means and activities to achieve a goal. Therefore a feasibility approach activated by a lower level construal is more of a pragmatic concern. Kivetz and Tyler (2007, p.201) defines a pragmatic self as "an action oriented mental representation that is primarily guided by practical concerns". Kivetz and Tyler

(2007) examined that temporally proximate (i.e., focusing on here and now) perspective activates a pragmatic self and a temporally distant perspective (i.e., focusing on a distal time) activates an idealistic self. Thus a pragmatic self that is adopted by higher Machiavellian tendencies (Leary and Hoyle, 2009) may lead lower level, concrete construal in general. However; as pragmatism (and in contrast, idealism) may depend on cultural variations among individuals, there may not be one exact explanation for this dynamic relationship.

Cultural variations and Machiavellianism have been a question for interest in the literature, where these variations mostly depend on the notions of collectivism and individualism. Individualism and collectivism are equated as independent versus interdependent self-construals (Kashima et al, 1995). One type of self-construal is often attributed to individuals in Western cultures (Hofstede, 1980; Triandis, 1994) where they are individualist and independent. Other type of self-construal is collectivist and interdependent; viewed in mostly Eastern cultures (Kashima et al, 1995). Individualists give priority to personal goals rather than goals of community, and collectivists sometimes subordinate their personal goals to goals of community (Hofstede, 1980).

The *want/should conflict* (Bazerman et al, 1998) can explain how cultural variations moderate the relationship between construal level and Machiavellianism. A *want* self is driven by the momentary desires and *should* self associates with long-term interests of what ought to be done (Milkman et al, 2008). Therefore *want* self can be explained by an individualistic characteristic whereas *should* self can associate with collectivistic characteristic of culturally diverse individuals. Rogers and Bazerman (2008) examined the *want* versus *should* selves within temporal distance. *Should* self activate a higher level construal than *want* self, indicating that temporal distance enhances implementation of future choices for *should* self. In contrast, immediate implementations relate to *want* self. Simply, when we think we should do something, we think in terms of higher level, abstract notions, however; when we want to do something, we think in terms of lower level, concrete notions. Since high Machs are more manipulative (Cherulnik et al, 1981; Wilson et al, 1998) and more exploitative (Vecchio and Sussmann, 1991) than Lows, this manipulation may be linked with a *want* self. On the one hand, *want* self thus relates to a lower level, detailed construal which incorporates with an individualistic cultural understanding. Therefore individuals from an individualistic culture may show greater Machiavellian tendencies when they have a lower level construal. On the other hand, *should* self relate to a higher level, abstract construal which may be seen more in a sample showing collectivistic characteristics. Thus *should* self covers higher level perspective for collectivistic cultures, leading to more Machiavellianism.

Therefore;

H1. Cultural background of participants moderates the relationship between construal level and Machiavellianism such that an individualistic culture (compared to a collectivistic culture) shows more Machiavellian thoughts when they adapt a detailed mindset rather than an abstract mindset.

1.3.2. The role of age

The answer to the question of which mind-set relates to higher Machiavellian tendencies may depend on the notion that Machiavellian tendencies can vary as a function of age and cultural background. Emotion is a less concerned issue among Machiavellians that they do not be affected by emotion-elicited situations. Hence, trait emotional intelligence which represents people's self-perceptions of their emotional abilities correlated negatively with Machiavellianism (Petrides et al, 2011; Ali et al., 2009; Austin et al., 2007). Higher Machiavellians tend to lie more and have an ability to easily convince the others (Exline et al, 1970; Geis and Moon, 1981). That is, higher Machiavellians use interpersonal strategies to support the use of deception, manipulation and exploitation (Ali, et al, 2009) to gain and to maintain power in interpersonal relationships (Vigoda-Gadot and Drory, 2006). Since highly Machiavellian individuals detach themselves from certain emotions that may have an influence on judgments, a higher level, general view of events (versus lower level, specific view of events) may cause higher Machiavellianism. However, this relationship can vary according to individuals' age since younger individuals are tend to be moved by their emotions more than older participants; therefore the relationship is highly dependent on other factors such as age.

Previous research found that younger individuals show more Machiavellian tendencies (Muncy and Vitell, 1992; Vitell and Muncy, 1992). Younger individuals are also likely to adapt an abstract mind-set than older individuals. Because of their age, younger people may involve in more future aspirations, where they operate in abstract, goal-oriented terms as they are "at the beginning" of their life. In contrast, older participants have more experience, thus this extended experience may teach them of "how" to reach their goals therefore create more concrete, detailed, lower level construal adaptation. In terms of Machiavellianism, younger participants with higher aspirations of events that are likely to be higher level can be less excited to manipulate their ways to end their goals where these goals are still very much abstract. However with a more concrete mind-set, younger participants are more likely to be Machiavellian than older participants.

Therefore;

H1. Age moderates the relationship between construal level and Machiavellianism such that younger participants (compared to older participants) with a low level construal (versus high level construal) tend to score higher (versus lower) on Machiavellianism.

2. Study

The aim of the study is to examine the relationship between construal level and Machiavellianism. The moderators of culture and age are examined together in one single methodology for easy interpretation.

3. General Methodology

Eighty-eight American respondents (M_{age} =22.9, SDage =11.7; 45.5% women), and 54 Turkish respondents (M_{age} =25.4, SD_{age} =12.2; 57.4 % women) participated in the study. The sample is selected randomly by using the Mechanical Turk platform on Crowdflower and the Turkish sample was recruited by means of distributing a survey link to a convenience sample. For the Turkish sample, the back-translation technique is used (Bhawuk and Brislin, 2000) for both the Consumer Ethics Scale and the Behavior Identification Form. Respondents' construal level is measured via the Behavior Identification form (BIF; Vallacher, Wegner, 1989), for both the American ($M_{totalBIF}$ = 40.6; $SD_{totalBIF}$ = 5.2) and the Turkish respondents ($M_{totalBIF}$ = 42.9, $SD_{totalBIF}$ = 12.2). The two samples are then combined in one database to conduct our research thoroughly. The higher scores on BIF results in more abstract mind-set and vice versa. Overall, when two samples are combined together, the sample is relatively young (M_{age}= 23.8; SD_{age}= 11.9) with which 50% are female. In addition, the mean scores on BIF indicate that respondents have somewhat higher level perspective in general ($M_{totalBIF}$ = 41.5; $SD_{totalBIF}$ = 4.9).

Machiavellianism is measured by using the Mach IV scale developed by Christie and Geis (1970). The Mach scale has been used in more than 500 psychological studies (Gunnthorsdottir et al, 2002). Respondents are asked to indicate the agreeableness of each 20 items using a 5-point Likert scale (1= definitely disagree; 5= definitely agree). For this study, Machiavellianism items are recoded in a way that higher scores (versos lower) determine more (versus less) Machiavellian thoughts. An example item is 'The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear'. The items are then summed into one single numeric value. The Cronbach's alpha coefficient of MACH IV scale for the combined sample is 0.83, indicating a highly reliable scale (Jones & Paulhus, 2009;).

4. Results

Before conducting the moderation analyses, a general perspective of the relation between construal level and Machiavellian thoughts is searched. To this end, correlation analyses are used to analyze the data. Separate regression results for each country with Machiavellianism as the dependent variable and construal level as the independent variable show that for the American sample, there is a negative relationship between participants' construal level and Machiavellianism (ß= -0.321; t= -3.14; p=0.02). In contrast, for the Turkish sample, there is a positive relationship between construal level and Machiavellianism (ß= 0.492; t= 4.07; p=0.00). These results suggest that American respondents are more Machiavellian when they have a chronic, detailed mind-set. In contrast, Turkish respondents have more Machiavellian thoughts when they have an abstract, generalized mind-set. These results raise a question of why these two samples showed diametrically opposite relations to one another. To test the expectations concerning culture as a moderator (H1) and age as a moderator (H2), moderated regression analyses are conducted for the combined sample.

4.1. The Role of Culture

For dependent and independent variables, MACH IV and BIF scales are used respectively. For the cultural moderator, a nominal variable is created indicating to which cultural background participants possess (0: US participants, 1: Turkish participants) and manage to create another new interaction term of the moderation analysis (BIF*Nation). The overall BIF scores were standardized to avoid multicollinearity problems (Aiken and West, 1991). Variation inflation factors were 1.46, which is well below the cutoff point of 10 determined by Neter et al. (1985) therefore multicollinearity is not a problem.

There is a main effect of construal level on Machiavellianism scores on the combined sample (ß= -0.35; t=-3.27; p=0.01), indicating that overall, construal level is negatively related to Machiavellianism. That is, the more Machiavellian the participants, the less abstract their mind-set are. The association between nation and Machiavellianism did not show a significant main effect (ß= -0.15; t= -1.79; p=0.75) meaning that Machiavellianism does not appear to change across American and Turkish respondents. The moderated regression analysis revealed a marginally significant BIF*Nation interaction on MACHIV ($\beta_{BIFxNation}$= 4.6, t= 4.91, p=0.00). To further understand the meaning of the significant interaction term, simple slopes analyses were conducted following Aiken and West (1991) to examine how the nation moderated the relation between construal level and Machiavellian thoughts. The plotted relationship can be observed in Figure 1. Results suggest that Americans ($M_{predicted}$= 55.15; F()= , p=) are higher Machiavellians than Turkish respondents ($M_{predicted}$= 53.93), when a concrete (lower level) mind-set is adapted. In addition, Turkish respondents ($M_{predicted}$= 54.24) are mode Machiavellian than American respondents ($M_{predicted}$= 53.61;) when an abstract (higher level) mind-set is adapted. However, this difference is not significant.

The results indicate that the nation of the respondents indeed moderate the relationship between construal level and Machiavellianism. Respondents who construe events in more detailed, lower level mind-set creates a distinction between respondents from two cultures such that Americans show more Machiavellian thoughts than Turkish. However, respondents who usually construe events in an abstract, high level manner do not seem to differ according to their Machiavellian thoughts, regardless of their cultural difference.

Figure 1 – Culture as the Moderator of the Construal Level and Machiavellianism Relationship
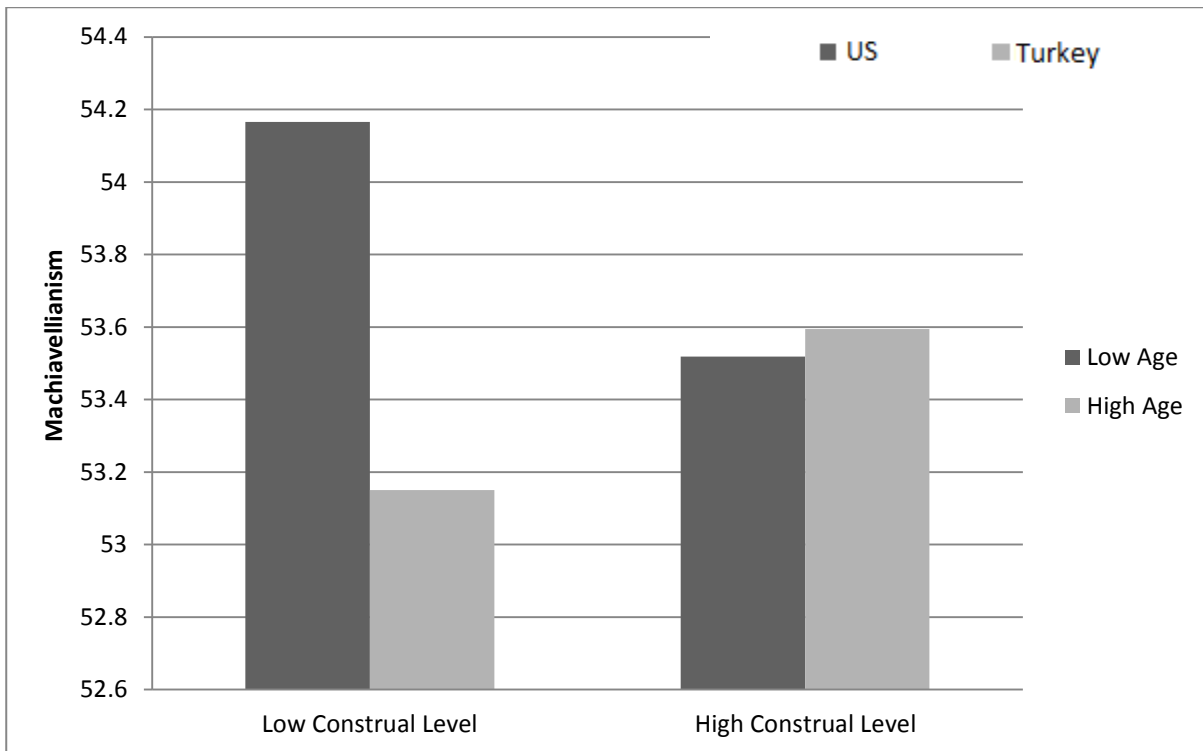
4.2. The Role of Age

There is a main effect of age on Machiavellianism (ß= -0.23; t= 2.84; p= 0.00) showing that younger participants are more Machiavellian than older participants. However; the main effect of construal level on Machiavellianism did not show significant results (ß= -0.05; t= -0.61; p= 0.54) indicating that Machiavellianism does not change across higher versus lower mind-sets for the combined sample. The moderated regression analysis revealed a marginally significant BIF*age interaction on MACHIV ($\beta_{BIFxNation}$= 0.27; t= 3.39; p= 0.01). Following Aiken and West (1991), simple slopes analyses were conducted to further understand this relationship (see Figure 2). Results suggest that as predicted, for the combined sample, younger participants ($M_{predicted}$= 54.16) are higher Machiavellians than older participants ($M_{predicted}$ = 53.15;   ), when participants have a concrete (lower level) mindset. In addition, older participants ($M_{predicted}$ = 53.59) are more Machiavellian than younger participants ($M_{predicted}$= 53.51;   ) when participants have an abstract (higher level) mindset, but this difference is rather not distinctive thus not significant.

The results reveal that in general, younger participants are more Machiavellian and age moderates the relationship between age and Machiavellianism. When respondents have a rather concrete, lower level mind-set Machiavellianism increases with younger age. That is, younger participants (versus older participants), who are more goal-driven tend to use more (versus less) manipulative techniques to reach their goal. However; when respondents have an abstract, higher level mind-set they do not seem to differ in terms of their Machiavellian thoughts.

Figure 2 - Age as the Moderator of Construal Level and Machiavellianism Relationship.
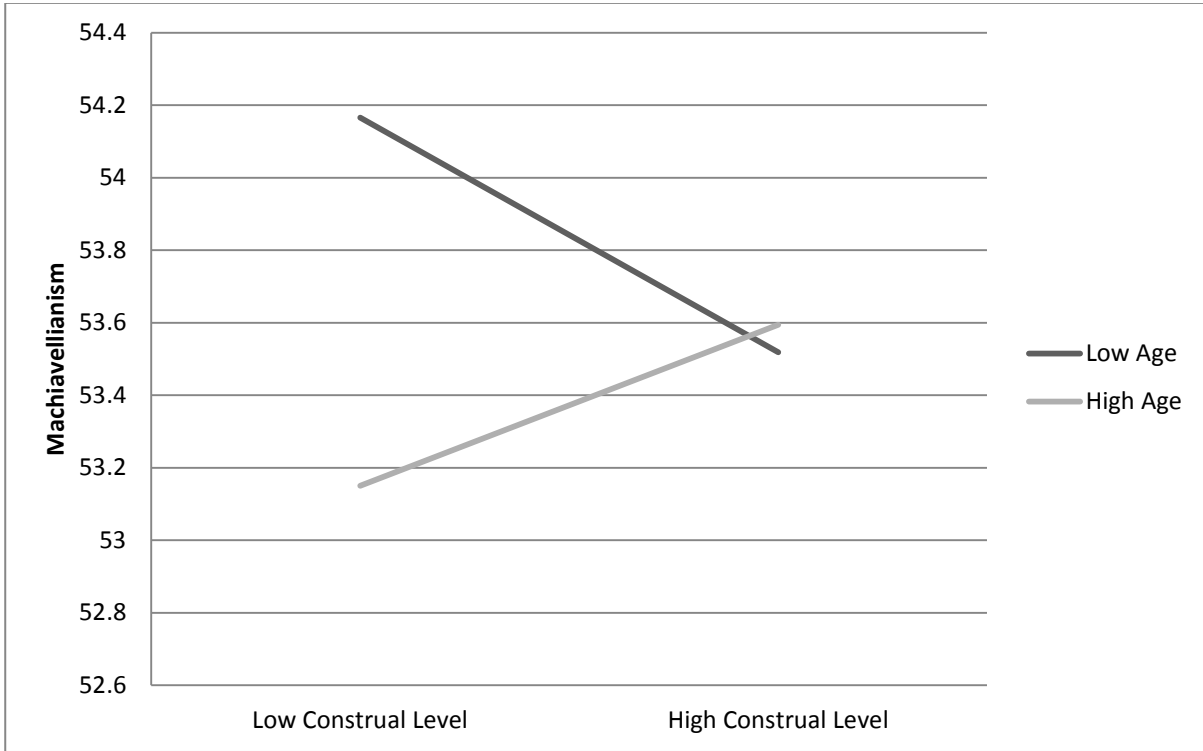
5. Conclusions

Machiavellianism is a social behavior strategy where the one manipulates others to fulfill the ultimate personal objectives (Cameron and Spreitzer, 2012). Although treated as a personality default by almost every research, everyone may use manipulation to some extent (Wilson et al, 1996), some may show significantly stronger signs of manipulation that we name as high Machiavellians. Machiavellianism simply defines personality where higher tendency of Machiavellian thoughts may relate to paranoia, narcissism, psychopathy, locus of control and depression accordingly (Corral and Calvete, 2000). In order to understand Machiavellian tendencies among psychological mind-sets, this study focused on the relation between Machiavellianism and chronic Construal Level. As chronic construal level theory defines how an individual defines an action as higher level and global or lower level and local, this study also emphasized on how cultural variations and age may moderate the relationship. To this end, two samples from Turkey and from the US are gathered.

The first conclusion is the relation of chronic construal level on Machiavellianism for both samples separately. American respondents showed that as they adapt a higher level, abstract mind-set where they perceive events and actions as in global terms (i.e., seeing the forest instead of trees) they were less manipulative (lower scores on Machiavellianism) than a lower level, concrete mind-set. In contrast, Turkish respondents showed that as they adapt a lower level, chronic mindset of seeing events and actions around them as local and in details (i.e., seeing the trees instead of the forest), they show less Machiavellian tendencies. This variation in construal level mindsets on Machiavellianism may have been based on cultural variations thus two samples have merged and examined as nation is the moderator. Indeed, as expected, it is found that nation of respondents moderate the relationship such that as individuals from both samples think of events in detailed manner (lower level construal), an individualistic culture (US) show more Machiavellianism than a collectivistic culture (TR). That is; individualism which is linked with separate thinking of individuals and favoring individual gains rather than gain of a community, show closer tendencies of

manipulating others to end the ultimate goal. After all, these individualistic respondents may not care that much about others' gains as their own. However, a collectivistic culture favors gains of community more than his own; therefore as they start to perceive detailed, concrete aspects of an event (lower level construal) they show less Machiavellianism because manipulative behavior shows no favor to gains of community. When an abstract mind-set is achieved by respondents from both national background, the differences between collectivism and individualism diminished such that now both participants can see the bigger aspects of an event in global, abstract terms where they may not need manipulative behavior as they reach towards their goal because they are not focused on the way towards the goal, but the goal itself.

Secondly, as nation of respondents played a major role in using manipulative techniques to end an individual goal, it was also essential to look for demographic moderators such as participants' age. The literature show that older participants, compared to younger ones, show less Machiavellian tendencies, possibly because their experience in life may show them not just rely on deceitful techniques to reach their goals. Second part of the methodology involved age as the moderator of the relationship between Machiavellianism and Construal Level. It is found that for a combined sample, as individuals develop a lower level, detailed mindset, they show more (versus less) Machiavellianism when they are younger (versus older). However, this relationship diminishes as people develop an abstract mind-set where they perceive events globally. Younger participants may use more Machiavellian acts than older participants when they adapt a detailed, lower level construal mind-set because a detailed mind-set allows an individual to follow on the "how" aspects of an event. In this case, individuals with a lower level construal think how to reach their goals; therefore they are more apt to use manipulative techniques when they have a younger age, which relates to more ambition to reach a certain goal therefore may cause deceitful behavior such as Machiavellianism. In contrast, older participants with a lower level mindset may show less Machiavellianism to reach a goal possibly because (i) they have more experience not just to rely on manipulative behavior; (ii) they are less ambitious about a certain goal because they have already achieved many goals in their lives.

Results of this study contribute to the (i) construal level literature such that no study has ever been discussed with Machiavellianism, (ii) personality literature where Machiavellianism is examined with a psychological aspect of how individuals perceive their acts chronically, and (iii) literature on cultural studies that nation of respondents can help examine the relationships deeper and in a more effective way.

6. Limitations and Directions for the Future Research

There are a number of limitations of the study. First of all, in this study, Behavior Identification Form (BIF; Vallacher and Wegner, 1989) is used to determine participants' chronic construal levels. Future research can focus on construal level by using several other techniques such as categorization task (Rosch, 1975), manipulations of why versus how statements to explain certain situations (Freitas et al., 2001) and generating categories (Fujita et al, 2006). Secondly, the non-determination of psychological distance of construal level theory is another limitation to the study. Although the aim of the study is to focus on chronic construal level on Machiavellian tendencies, future research can support this theory with predicting for instance time-dependent changes in value of Machiavellian thoughts by using temporal construal (Trope, Liberman, 2000; Liberman et al., 2002; Förster et al., 2004). In this study, as another limitation, the Dark Triad; comprising narcissism, Machiavellianism and psychopathy, is not examined together. Future research can focus on the relation between construal level and the Dark Triad for a better insight of these three socially aversive traits. Lastly, as a cultural variation, participants from Turkey and the US are examined. Future studies can examine an Asian versus European versus American samples to see if an Asian perception differs in Machiavellian thoughts from the other samples.

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Appendix

MACH IV Scale (Christie and Geis, 1970)

1. Never tell anyone the real reason why you did something unless it is useful to do so
2. The best way to handle people is to tell them what they want to hear.
3. One should take action only when sure it is morally right. *
4. Most people are basically good and kind. *
5. It is safest to assume that all people have a vicious streak and it will come out when they are given a chance.
6. Honesty is the best policy in all cases. *
7. There is no excuse for lying to someone else. *
8. It is hard to get ahead without cutting corners here and there.
9. All in all, it is better to be humble and honest than important and dishonest. *
10. When you ask someone to do something for you, it is best to give the real reasons for wanting it rather than giving reasons that carry more weight. *
11. Most people who get ahead in the world lead clean, moral lives. *
12. Anyone who completely trusts anyone else is asking for trouble.
13. The biggest difference between most criminals and other people is that criminals are stupid enough to get caught.

14. Most men are brave. *
15. It is wise to flatter important people.
16. It is possible to be good in all respects. *
17. Barnum was very wrong when he said that there's a sucker born every minute. *
18. Generally speaking, men won't work hard unless they're forced to do so.
19. People suffering from incurable diseases should have the choice of being put painlessly to death.
20. Most men forget more easily the death of their father than the loss of their property.

*Items that are marked with * are reverse-coded*