




## Machiavellian Leadership in Educational Organizations: Assessment and Analysis<sup>1</sup>

### Eğitim Örgütlerinde Makyavelist Liderlik: Değerlendirme ve İncelenmesi

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Irem DEMİR ARICI , Res. Asst. Doctorate Student, Yıldız Technical University, iarici@yildiz.edu.tr

Ibrahim KOCABAS , Prof. Dr., Fatih Sultan Mehmet Vakıf University, ibrahimkocabas06@gmail.com

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**Abstract.** This study is a traditional (narrative) review of the existing literature on the concept of Machiavellian leadership in educational organizations. The main purpose of the study is to contribute to the literature in this field by analyzing the positive, negative and situational effects of Machiavellian leadership in educational organizations. The literature review included current academic sources published in peer-reviewed journals focusing on the education sector. The findings are presented within the framework of six main sub-objectives: 1. What is Machiavellianism? 2. What is Machiavellian leadership? 3. With what strategies do Machiavellian leaders make management processes more effective in educational organizations? 4. What are the advantages of Machiavellian leadership in terms of organizational efficiency, decision-making processes and crisis management? 5. How can Machiavellian leadership facilitate the achievement of goals in educational organizations? 6. How can the long-term effects and sustainability of Machiavellian leadership in educational organizations be evaluated? The study revealed that Machiavellian leadership provides positive effects such as strategic decision-making, crisis management and goal orientation in the short term, but in the long term, it can have negative consequences such as distrust, lack of cooperation and toxic work environments. This study provides a theoretical framework to understand Machiavellian leadership practices in educational organizations and to make leadership processes more ethical, sustainable and collaborative. Cross-cultural comparisons and longitudinal studies are suggested for future research.

**Keywords:** Leadership, Machiavellian leadership, Leadership in educational organisation.

**Öz.** Bu çalışma, eğitim örgütlerinde Makyavelist liderlik kavramını ele alan mevcut literatürü incelemek amacıyla geleneksel (anlatımsal) derleme yöntemi ile gerçekleştirilmiştir. Çalışmanın temel amacı, Makyavelist liderliğin eğitim örgütlerindeki olumlu, olumsuz ve durumsal etkilerini analiz ederek bu alandaki literatüre katkıda bulunmaktır. Literatür taraması, hakemli dergilerde yayımlanmış, eğitim sektörüne odaklanan güncel akademik kaynakları kapsamaktadır. Bulgular, altı ana alt amaç çerçevesinde sunulmuştur: Makyavelizm nedir? Makyavelist liderlik nedir? Makyavelist liderler eğitim örgütlerinde yönetim süreçlerini hangi stratejilerle daha etkili hale getirirler? Makyavelist liderliğin örgütsel verimlilik, karar alma süreçleri ve kriz yönetimi açısından avantajları nelerdir? Makyavelist liderlik eğitim örgütlerinde hedeflere ulaşmayı nasıl kolaylaştırabilir? Eğitim kurumlarında Makyavelist liderliğin uzun vadeli etkileri ve sürdürülebilirliği nasıl değerlendirilebilir? Çalışma, Makyavelist liderliğin kısa vadede stratejik karar alma, kriz yönetimi ve hedef odaklılık gibi olumlu etkiler sağladığını, ancak uzun vadede güvensizlik, işbirliği eksikliği ve toksik çalışma ortamları gibi olumsuz sonuçlar doğurabileceğini ortaya koymuştur. Bu çalışma, eğitim örgütlerinde Makyavelist liderlik uygulamalarını anlamak ve liderlik süreçlerini daha etik, sürdürülebilir ve işbirliğine dayalı hale getirmek için teorik bir çerçeve sunmaktadır. Gelecekteki araştırmalar için kültürlerarası karşılaştırmalar ve boylamsal çalışmalar önerilmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Liderlik, Makyavelist liderlik, Eğitim örgütlerinde liderlik.



### Genişletilmiş Özet

**Giriş.** Bu derleme çalışması, eğitim örgütlerinde Makyavelist liderlik yaklaşımının uygulanışını ve bu liderlik anlayışının örgütsel kültür üzerindeki etkilerini incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Makyavelist liderlik, Niccolò Machiavelli'nin düşüncelerine dayanan, güç, manipülasyon ve stratejik düşünceyi temel alan bir liderlik yaklaşımıdır. Bu liderlik tarzını benimseyen liderler, hedeflerine ulaşmak için etik normlara esnek bir şekilde yaklaşabilir. Eğitim örgütleri gibi güven ve işbirliği temelli sosyal sistemlerde, bu yaklaşımın olumlu ve olumsuz etkilerinin detaylı olarak ele alınması büyük önem taşır. Makyavelist liderlik, kriz yönetimi, hızlı karar alma ve hedef odaklılık gibi avantajlar sunarken; aşırıya kaçıldığında güven kaybı, işbirliği eksikliği ve çalışan motivasyonunda düşüş gibi olumsuz sonuçlara yol açabilir. Bu çalışma, eğitim örgütlerinde Makyavelist liderlik uygulamalarının dengeli ve etik bir çerçevede yürütülmesinin önemine dikkat çekmektedir.

**Yöntem.** Bu derleme çalışmasında nitel araştırma yaklaşımlarından derleme modeli kullanılmıştır. Çalışma kapsamında, eğitim örgütlerinde liderlik ve Makyavelist yaklaşımı ele alan bilimsel makaleler, tezler ve raporlar incelenmiştir. Literatür taramasında, hem olumlu hem de olumsuz sonuçları analiz edebilmek adına nitel ve nicel çalışmalara yer verilmiştir. Çalışmalar, liderlik uygulamalarının eğitim örgütlerinde kriz yönetimi, motivasyon, işbirliği ve etik değerler üzerindeki etkilerini kapsamaktadır.

**Bulgular.** Makyavelist liderlik yaklaşımının eğitim örgütlerinde hem olumlu hem de olumsuz etkiler yarattığını göstermektedir. Bu liderlik anlayışı, kriz yönetimi ve hedef odaklılık gibi alanlarda kısa vadede etkili sonuçlar sağlarken, uzun vadede güven kaybı ve etik sorunlara yol açabilmektedir. Araştırmalar, manipülasyon ve stratejik düşünceye dayalı liderlik uygulamalarının örgütsel performansı artırabileceğini, ancak öğrenci merkezliliği zayıflatabileceğini ortaya koymaktadır. Eğitim örgütlerinde bu liderlik yaklaşımı, doğru bir şekilde uygulandığında, hızlı karar alma ve etkili yönetim sağlayarak örgütsel hedeflere ulaşmayı kolaylaştırabilir. Ancak, aşırı manipülatif veya etik dışı davranışlar, çalışanlar ve öğrenciler arasında güven kaybına yol açabilir.

**Tartışma ve Sonuç.** Sonuç olarak, Makyavelist liderliğin olumlu yanlarının öne çıkarılması ve etik değerler çerçevesinde uygulanması gerektiği vurgulanmaktadır. Liderlerin manipülasyon gibi unsurlar yerine açık iletişim, adalet ve güvene dayalı stratejiler benimsemeleri, eğitim örgütlerinde daha sürdürülebilir bir kültür yaratacaktır. Ayrıca, liderlerin prososyal stratejilere yönelerek yıkıcı davranışlardan kaçınmaları, hem kısa vadeli başarılar hem de uzun vadeli örgütsel sürdürülebilirlik için kritik öneme sahiptir. Eğitim örgütlerinde bu tür dengeli bir liderlik anlayışının benimsenmesi, hem öğrenci başarısını artıracak hem de okul kültürünü güçlendirecektir. Bu çalışma, eğitim liderlerinin etik değerlerle uyumlu stratejik bir liderlik yaklaşımı geliştirmesi için yol gösterici öneriler sunmaktadır.



## Introduction

Leadership in educational organizations is one of the most critical elements that directly affect the success of the organization. Effective leadership enables the education system to achieve its goals, increase the motivation of teachers, increase student achievement and improve school culture (Leithwood & Riehl, 2003). Educational organizations need strong and strategic leadership approaches due to their complex structure and constantly changing environmental conditions. In this context, the methods and strategies used by leaders are critical for determining the direction of the organization and dealing with the challenges (Calhoon, 1969).

While ethical, transformational and servant leadership approaches have traditionally been prominent in educational administration, some leaders adopt a more pragmatic, strategic and power-oriented management approach. At this point, Machiavellian leadership stands out as a form of leadership that emphasizes strategic thinking, manipulation and goal orientation (Christie & Geis, 1970). Educational organizations often have to adapt to sudden changes while working with limited resources. In this context, Machiavellian leadership can contribute to the effective response of educational organizations to changing conditions by providing advantages especially in crisis management and rapid decision-making processes (Belschak, den Hartog & Kalshoven, 2015).

Machiavellian leaders can make fast and effective decisions in educational organizations thanks to their skills of persuasion, strategic thinking and managing environmental conditions in their favor. Especially in educational systems where competition increases and change is inevitable, such leaders have the potential to manage crises, balance power relations and increase organizational efficiency. In this respect, Machiavellian leadership can provide advantages such as flexibility, power-oriented management and goal-orientation in educational organizations, increase efficiency in decision-making processes and provide managers with greater room for maneuver (Jonason & Webster, 2010).

However, in addition to the advantages that Machiavellian leadership brings to educational organizations, it also brings some risks. This leadership style, which exhibits a flexible approach to ethical norms, may lead to an environment of distrust, decreased cooperation and weakened teacher-student relations in the long run (Wilson et al., 1996). Since creating a culture based on trust in educational organizations is a fundamental priority, the potential risks of Machiavellian leadership style should be recognized and these effects should be minimized. Educational leaders should develop a balanced management approach by consciously using the strategic advantages of Machiavellian leadership while maintaining the ethical boundaries of this approach and promoting a culture of collaboration (Treviño, Weaver & Reynolds, 2006).

Although the negative aspects of Machiavellian leadership have generally been discussed in the educational administration literature, the strategic dimensions of this leadership approach that can contribute to organizational success have not been sufficiently discussed. Examining the strengths of Machiavellian leadership style in educational organizations, evaluating the impact of this leadership style on organizational dynamics, and discussing its applicability in line with ethical principles are seen as an important necessity to contribute to the literature.



The main purpose of this study is to examine the advantages of Machiavellian leadership in educational organizations in areas such as organizational efficiency, strategic management and crisis management. The study aims to reveal how this leadership approach emerges in educational institutions and in which situations it can contribute to organizational success. The following questions will be answered in the research:

1. What is Machiavellianism?
2. What is Machiavellian leadership?
3. With which strategies do Machiavellian leaders make management processes more effective in educational organizations?
4. What are the advantages of Machiavellian leadership in terms of organizational efficiency, decision-making processes and crisis management?
5. How can Machiavellian leadership facilitate the achievement of goals in educational organizations?
6. How can the long-term effects and sustainability of Machiavellian leadership in educational organizations be evaluated?

This study aims to draw attention to the positive as well as negative aspects of Machiavellian leadership in educational organizations, to offer strategic suggestions to managers and to develop a different perspective in the field of educational administration.

This study aims to provide a different perspective on leadership in educational organizations and to evaluate the strategic advantages and potential risks of Machiavellian leadership in a balanced way. It provides an important contribution to the literature on how pragmatic and power-oriented management styles beyond traditional leadership approaches can contribute to educational organizations. It offers a strategic leadership model for educational administrators that can accelerate decision-making processes and provide effectiveness in crisis management, while at the same time emphasizing the need to preserve ethical values and a culture of collaboration. This study will shed light on the development of more conscious and sustainable management strategies by increasing the diversity of leadership approaches in the field of educational administration.

## Method

This study was conducted using the traditional (narrative) review method to examine the existing literature on the concept of Machiavellian leadership in educational organizations. The traditional review method is an approach that aims to synthesize previous studies on a specific topic from a broader and interpretive perspective rather than examining them within the framework of strict rules such as systematic meta-analysis or systematic review (Baumeister & Leary, 1997). This method provides an opportunity to summarize existing knowledge on the topic, identify the theoretical framework, and assess trends in the research (Snyder, 2019).

### Research process and literature review approach

Within the scope of the study, the nature, causes, advantages and organizational consequences of Machiavellian leadership in educational organizations were examined. The literature review was Demir Arici, I. and Kocabas, I. (2025). Machiavellian leadership in educational organizations: Assessment and analysis. *Western Anatolia Journal of Educational Sciences*, 16(1), 519-539.  
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conducted through scientific articles, books, review studies and related research in academic databases (such as Web of Science, Scopus, Google Scholar and ProQuest). Keywords such as “Machiavellian leadership”, “leadership in educational organizations”, “Machiavellianism and organizational commitment”, “leadership and ethics”, “leadership and crisis management” were used to access the studies.

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### Scope and selection criteria

The literature reviewed in this study was selected from academic studies focusing directly on the concept of Machiavellian leadership and research on leadership processes in educational organizations. The following criteria were taken into consideration in the selection of the studies:

*Academic and Peer-Reviewed Sources:* Only studies published in peer-reviewed journals and with academic validity were preferred.

*Relevance:* In order to better analyze the effects of Machiavellian leadership in educational organizations, articles published within the last 20 years were prioritized. However, classic studies that contribute to the conceptual framework were also considered (e.g. Christie & Geis, 1970).

*Context Relevance:* The selected studies were aimed to be directly related to the education sector. However, general leadership research in organizational leadership and psychology that supports the theoretical framework was also included (Judge, Piccolo & Ilies, 2004).

*Various Research Methods:* Both qualitative and quantitative research on Machiavellian leadership was examined and theoretical and empirical studies were utilized to understand different aspects of the topic.

### Data analysis and synthesis process

The studies were analyzed by content analysis method and a thematic classification was made. The studies were grouped and evaluated within the scope of sub-purposes. This categorization was used to better understand how Machiavellian leadership creates a dynamic in the field of education (Belschak, Muhammad & Den Hartog, 2018).

Furthermore, the commonalities and differences between the studies were highlighted to analyze how Machiavellian leadership is addressed in the context of the education sector. The theoretical frameworks of the studies were compared and the main trends in the literature were identified by synthesizing different perspectives (Snyder, 2019).

## Results, Discussion and Conclusion

### Machiavellianism

Machiavellianism originates from the works of Niccolò Machiavelli, particularly his seminal text *The Prince* (1513), written as a guide for rulers on how to gain and maintain power. In this text, Machiavelli emphasized the importance of pragmatism, political cunning and the willingness to use morally ambiguous strategies to achieve desired outcomes. He argued that leaders should focus on ends rather than means, and that it is better to be feared than loved if one cannot be both. This Demir Arici, I. and Kocabas, I. (2025). Machiavellian leadership in educational organizations: Assessment and analysis. *Western Anatolia Journal of Educational Sciences*, 16(1), 519-539. DOI. 10.51460/baebd.1595660





perspective formed the basis of the concept of Machiavellianism, which over time became associated with a broader set of behaviors and personality traits beyond the political sphere.

Machiavellianism as a psychological construct was first formalized by Christie and Geis (1970) in their study of social behavior. They defined it as a personality trait characterized by manipulation, strategic thinking, and disregard for conventional morality in the pursuit of personal gain. High-Machi individuals, as they are often called, are skilled at exploiting social situations and influencing others to achieve their goals. This manipulative behavior is often combined with a cynical view of human nature and a utilitarian approach to interpersonal relationships.

Machiavellianism is often studied in the context of the “Dark Triad”, a cluster of three socially abhorrent personality traits: Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). While these traits share some overlap, such as manipulative tendencies and lack of empathy, Machiavellianism is distinguished by its emphasis on long-term strategic planning and calculated interpersonal behavior. Unlike psychopaths who may act impulsively or recklessly, highly Machiavellian individuals carefully consider the consequences of their actions and adapt their strategies to maximize their utility.

The concept has been further refined by research examining its evolutionary, social and organizational dimensions. For example, Wilson, Near, and Miller (1996) argued that Machiavellian traits may have evolved as adaptive strategies in complex social settings where deception and manipulation can provide an advantage in competition for resources or status. At the organizational level, Machiavellianism is often examined in leadership and workplace behaviors, where it is associated with both positive outcomes such as strategic decision making and negative outcomes such as unethical practices and reduced team cohesion (Kessler et al., 2010; O'Boyle et al., 2012).

In sum, Machiavellianism represents a multifaceted construct rooted in Machiavelli's political philosophy, but its effects extend far beyond politics. Manipulation is a psychological trait that blends strategic thinking and moral flexibility, allowing individuals to effectively navigate complex social environments. However, the long-term effects of such behavior, especially in interpersonal and institutional settings, remain a critical area of study.

Machiavellianism is characterized by manipulative behavior, a cynical view of human nature, and an intense focus on achieving one's goals, often regardless of the ethical consequences. High-Machi individuals are particularly skilled at influencing and controlling others, using tactics such as deception, charm, and strategic alliances to advance their own agenda (Wilson et al., 1996). This manipulative tendency is often paired with a utilitarian mindset, where relationships are valued primarily for their instrumental benefits rather than emotional or moral connections.

One of the hallmarks of Machiavellianism is a calculating approach to social interactions. Highly Machiavellian individuals tend to approach relationships and conflicts from a strategic perspective and often weigh the costs and benefits of their actions. They are less likely to be influenced by emotions or moral considerations, which keeps them focused on their goals even in high-pressure situations



(Jonason & Webster, 2010). For example, they may pretend to empathize or cooperate to gain trust, but exploit these relationships when it serves their purposes.

Another important characteristic is their cynical view of human nature. High-Machi individuals often assume that others are equally manipulative and manipulative, justifying their actions as a necessary defense or competitive strategy (Christie & Geis, 1970). This cynicism not only shapes their behavior but also influences how they interpret the intentions of others, often leading to a genuine lack of trust in interpersonal and institutional contexts.

While these traits can lead to short-term successes such as quick decision-making and effective crisis management, they often come at a significant cost. High levels of Machiavellianism have been associated with reduced interpersonal trust, reduced team cohesion and, in the long run, a toxic organizational culture (O'Boyle et al., 2012). For example, in workplace settings, Machiavellian leaders may put their own goals ahead of team well-being, resulting in high turnover rates, low employee morale, and reduced organizational commitment (Kessler et al., 2010).

Moreover, the effectiveness of Machiavellian traits is highly context-dependent. In competitive or high-risk environments, these traits may be advantageous as they enable individuals to outwit competitors and secure resources. However, in collaborative or value-oriented contexts, such as education or healthcare, Machiavellian tendencies often conflict with ethical and collaborative principles that are essential for long-term success (Arar & Oplatka, 2016).

In sum, Machiavellianism encompasses a complex set of traits that blend manipulation, strategic thinking, and a focus on personal gain. While these traits can be advantageous in certain contexts, their overuse or misapplication often undermines trust and cooperation, highlighting the importance of ethical boundaries and situational awareness in effectively managing such behaviors.

### **Machiavellian leadership**

Niccolò Machiavelli's *The Prince*, written in the 16th century, revolutionized leadership, governance and power dynamics and laid the foundations of political science and leadership theories. Machiavelli's understanding of leadership diverges from the traditional value judgments of the period and argues that leaders should bend ethical norms and act pragmatically when necessary to achieve success (Machiavelli, 1988). This understanding also coincides with his realist view of human nature. According to Machiavelli, people are manipulative, changeable and unreliable; therefore, leaders need to develop strategic methods appropriate to the situation in order to maintain power and management effectiveness (Skinner, 1981).

In Machiavelli's perspective, the concept of leadership is not limited to virtue or moral values. According to him, the ideal leader should be both strong like a "lion" and cunning like a "fox". The symbol of power and authority, the "lion" represents the leader's resilience against external threats, while the "fox" represents the leader's internal manipulation ability and strategic intelligence (Machiavelli, 1988). This balance allows the leader to inspire both respect and fear, thus maintaining





stability in governance. However, Machiavelli pointed out that inspiring fear is a more effective management tool than inspiring respect and suggested that leaders should act accordingly.

Machiavelli's statement that "the end justifies the means" forms the basis of his understanding of leadership. This approach legitimizes leaders' use of pragmatic and, when necessary, manipulative means to gain and maintain power. However, this principle aims not only at individual leadership achievements but also at the sustainability of organizations and states. According to Machiavelli, a rigid application of ethical values can jeopardize the leader's success. Therefore, the leader's commitment to ethical values should be balanced with the flexibility required by the current circumstances (Burns, 1978).

Modern leadership theories have been heavily influenced by Machiavelli's views. Leadership skills such as strategic decision-making and rapid adaptation to change, especially in crisis situations, reflect the leadership approach proposed by Machiavelli (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Today, approaches such as transformational leadership and autocratic leadership reinterpret Machiavelli's principles in different contexts. For example, transformational leaders follow a strategic path to realize their vision, while autocratic leaders often prioritize power and authority and dominate decision-making processes (Northouse, 2018). Machiavelli's emphasis on manipulation and strategic thinking has been one of the cornerstones of these theories.

While Machiavelli's leadership principles contribute to contemporary leadership understandings, they also bring debates. While contemporary leadership theories emphasize concepts such as ethics, sustainability and cooperation, Machiavelli's approach goes beyond these values and offers a more realistic and goal-oriented perspective. However, the applicability of these principles depends on the context and challenges faced by the leader. It can be argued that modern leaders should adopt Machiavelli's strategic approach in developing a sustainable leadership style without ignoring ethical boundaries.

Machiavelli's leadership principles have had a profound resonance in modern leadership theories and have influenced the foundations of transformational leadership, autocratic leadership and charismatic leadership. Machiavelli's idea that leaders should act pragmatically to achieve goals is evident in transformational leadership. Transformational leaders create a strong vision to achieve big goals, motivate their followers and prioritize strategic thinking in this process (Burns, 1978). While empathy and inspirational communication skills of the leader are important in this leadership style, strategic planning and result-oriented approach overlap with Machiavelli's views (Mayer & Salovey, 1997).

On the other hand, Machiavelli's suggestions on manipulation and the use of power are more prominent in autocratic and charismatic leadership styles. Autocratic leadership is a leadership style in which the leader has absolute authority and usually makes decisions alone. In this style, leaders display strong authority and maintain strict control when managing crisis situations (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Machiavelli's idea that leaders must win either the love or the fear of the people in times of crisis is very much in line with the autocratic leadership approach (Machiavelli, 1988). Similarly, in charismatic leadership, the leader's ability to influence followers by combining personal charm and authority is similar to Machiavelli's idea that leaders should increase their influence over the public (House, 1977).



Another area where strategic thinking and manipulation are prominent in leadership theories is political leadership. As Machiavelli noted, political leaders can use manipulative techniques to both gain support and maintain their power (Wilson et al., 1996). While modern leadership theories emphasize that these techniques should not cross ethical boundaries, Machiavelli's approach is more realistic and result-oriented. For example, the idea that a leader should be both trustworthy and ruthless when necessary sheds light on the strategies used by leaders, especially in crisis management and change processes (Belschak, den Hartog, & Kalshoven, 2015).

Machiavelli's strategic and manipulative approach to leadership has also been associated with Machiavellianism, narcissism and psychopathy, now known as the "dark triad" personality traits (Paulhus & Williams, 2002). However, while these traits can have negative consequences in leadership, they can also help a leader to overcome challenging circumstances in certain situations. In this context, a leader's ability to use manipulative skills without crossing ethical boundaries is seen as a critical element for sustainable success in modern leadership theories (Furnham, Richards, & Paulhus, 2013).

Machiavelli's leadership principles have been an important reference point in modern leadership theories to understand the pragmatic and strategic behavior of leaders. Machiavelli argued that a leader should not only gain the trust of his followers but also have the ability to guide them towards strategic goals (Machiavelli, 1988). This approach is reflected in modern leadership theories, especially in approaches such as strategic leadership and transformational leadership (Northouse, 2018). While Machiavelli's understanding of leadership suggests that the leader should act pragmatically according to the needs of the situation, modern leadership theories have adapted this understanding to the present day by expanding it with elements such as ethics, empathy and cooperation (Pilch & Turska, 2015).

Machiavelli's views raise the question of how ethics and power should be balanced in leadership. While Machiavelli believed that it is important for a leader to have a virtuous image, he also considered it legitimate to resort to unethical methods when necessary (Skinner, 1981). This perspective has become a subject of critical debate in modern leadership theories. In particular, the ethical leadership approach argues that leaders should exhibit fair, honest and moral behaviors while achieving strategic goals (Brown & Treviño, 2006). This has led to the need to reinterpret Machiavelli's balance between ethics and pragmatism in the context of modern leadership theories.

Transformational leadership theory overlaps with Machiavelli's understanding of strategic thinking and directing followers towards goals. In this leadership style, leaders create an inspiring vision to achieve big goals and increase the motivation of their followers (Burns, 1978). However, transformational leadership adds a different dimension to Machiavelli's understanding of leadership by considering ethics and empathy as an integral part of leadership (Bass & Steidlmeier, 1999). Empathy and ethics enable transformational leaders to build a strong bond with their followers, thereby enhancing the leader's credibility and creating a foundation for long-term success.

Modern leadership theories emphasize that the leader is responsible not only for achieving goals, but also for understanding the needs of followers and supporting their development. For example, servant leadership theory, in contrast to Machiavelli's conception of leadership, argues that



leaders should serve their followers (Greenleaf, 1977). However, strategic leadership theory is closer to Machiavelli's leadership principles and focuses on the leader's responsibility to achieve organizational goals (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001).

The influence of Machiavelli's leadership principles on modern leadership theories has initiated a debate about the importance of the balance between ethics and pragmatism in leadership. The questions of how to use power in leadership and under what circumstances unethical behavior can be justified remain an important topic of debate both in Machiavelli's time and today. In addressing such questions, today's understanding of leadership seeks to develop a more sustainable leadership model by balancing Machiavelli's strategic approach with modern ethical values.

Machiavelli's leadership principles find their place in modern theories such as transformational leadership and strategic leadership. While transformational leadership adopts Machiavelli's strategic thinking and goal orientation, it also includes ethically oriented elements such as increasing the motivation of followers and contributing to their development (Burns, 1978). Strategic leadership theory emphasizes the leader's ability to make strategic decisions to achieve long-term goals and reflects Machiavelli's pragmatic approach (Boal & Hooijberg, 2001). However, these modern approaches try to balance Machiavelli's manipulation and power-oriented approach to leadership with ethics, empathy and collaboration (Brown & Treviño, 2006).

Today, the importance of ethics, sustainability and audience orientation has increased in leadership theories. In particular, ethical leadership theory argues that leaders should bear responsibility not only for achieving strategic goals but also for gaining followers' trust and enhancing their well-being (Brown & Treviño, 2006). This is a significant departure from Machiavelli's manipulation-oriented leadership style. However, the idea that leaders need to make quick decisions and show flexibility in times of crisis establishes a link between Machiavelli's leadership principles and modern leadership theories (Boin, Kuipers, & Overdijk, 2013).

The reinterpretation of Machiavelli's leadership principles in modern theories provides an important framework for understanding the delicate balance between ethics and pragmatism in leadership. By achieving this balance, the modern understanding of leadership aims to ensure that leaders are both effective and fair. This approach supports not only the enhancement of organizational success but also the creation of a long-term culture of trust and cooperation. Thus, Machiavelli's ideas on strategic thinking and the use of power continue to contribute to the complexity of modern leadership theories.

In conclusion, Machiavelli's leadership principles play a critical role in understanding leadership and management from both a historical and theoretical perspective. Machiavelli argued that a leader should both retain power and be successful in the management process by effectively using elements such as strategic thinking, manipulation and the use of power (Machiavelli, 1988). These principles have found wide resonance in modern leadership theories, especially in terms of crisis management, strategic planning and the role of the leader in decision-making processes. However, Machiavelli's understanding of leadership represents an approach in which ethical concerns are often left in the background. Today's understanding of leadership, on the other hand, reinterprets these principles in



a more humane and sustainable framework and emphasizes the importance of ethical values in leadership processes (Northouse, 2018).

### **Strategies utilized by Machiavellian leaders to enhance management processes in educational organizations**

Machiavellian leaders apply various strategies to make management processes more effective in educational organizations. These strategies usually include goal orientation, strategic decision-making, crisis management and tight control of organizational processes. Educational institutions are organizations that are open to change and in constant transformation due to their dynamic structure. Therefore, leaders need to adopt a fast, flexible and strategic approach in decision-making and management processes. Machiavellian leaders make management processes more effective by setting clear goals for the success of educational institutions and following a systematic way to achieve these goals. They develop strategic plans to achieve the set goals and apply methods to increase the performance of educational organizations. The sustainability of success in educational organizations is directly related to the ability of leaders to adapt to changing conditions. In this context, Machiavellian leaders can quickly update the organizational structure by analyzing environmental changes and direct decision-making mechanisms accordingly (Davis, 2023).

Machiavellian leaders can use manipulation techniques to strengthen management processes. They can direct the thoughts and attitudes of employees through effective communication strategies and ensure that they act in line with organizational goals. In order to keep organizational dynamics under control, leaders determine the balance of power among employees and shape the distribution of authority in accordance with their own strategies. They can use psychological factors to motivate employees and influence the emotional aspects of individuals to increase organizational commitment (Kellett, Humphrey, & Sleeth, 2002). However, when the manipulative strategies of Machiavellian leaders are not applied within ethical boundaries, they can create distrust among employees and weaken cooperation. Therefore, for a successful management process, leaders need to use manipulation within an ethical framework and in a way to increase employee commitment (Wilson, Near, & Miller, 1996).

Educational organizations may face crises from time to time. Leaders need to make strategic decisions in crisis situations such as financial problems, changes in educational policies, pressures on employee motivation or student achievement. Machiavellian leaders come to the forefront with their quick and precise decision-making skills in crisis management. By acting in a cool-headed manner in times of crisis, they can control organizational processes and prevent damage to the educational institution by setting a clear direction in an uncertain environment (Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004). Moreover, they can prepare educational institutions for the future through their ability to adapt quickly to change. For example, with the rapid spread of digitalization in educational systems, Machiavellian leaders can manage this transformation and accelerate the integration of technological innovations into educational processes. In this way, educational institutions can gain competitive advantage and increase their productivity.



Machiavellian leaders can use effective psychological methods to increase the motivation of employees and students in educational institutions. In this context, they can increase the performance of employees by strategically managing reward systems. At the same time, leaders can increase organizational commitment by analyzing the emotional aspects of employees and using specific psychological techniques to motivate them (Bar-On, 2006). However, an overly oppressive and controlling management approach may cause employees to experience burnout syndrome and weaken organizational commitment in the long run. Therefore, Machiavellian leaders need to take into account their job satisfaction and psychological well-being while increasing employee motivation.

One of the cornerstones of effective management in educational organizations is knowledge management. Machiavellian leaders can control the flow of information between employees and managers by handling information management strategically. However, unilateral manipulation of knowledge can undermine the trust of employees in their leaders. Therefore, it is of great importance to manage knowledge in a balanced way and to create a transparent communication environment in educational institutions (Whitener et al., 1998).

In conclusion, Machiavellian leaders use various methods such as strategic decision-making, manipulative techniques, crisis management and increasing employee motivation to make management processes more effective in educational organizations. However, this leadership style needs to be balanced with ethical principles to be sustainable in the long term. Maintaining trust between employees and managers, increasing organizational commitment and transparent information management can make Machiavellian leadership more effective in educational organizations.

### **Advantages of Machiavellian leadership in terms of organizational productivity, decision making processes and crisis management**

Machiavellian leadership offers various advantages in terms of organizational efficiency, decision-making processes and crisis management. Due to their complex and dynamic nature, educational organizations are often faced with situations that require rapid decision-making and crisis management. Machiavellian leaders can be effective in dealing with such challenges thanks to their strategic thinking skills and goal-oriented approach. The effectiveness of decision-making processes in educational organizations depends on the ability of leaders to make quick and precise decisions under uncertainty. Machiavellian leaders manage decision-making mechanisms with a goal-oriented perspective, minimizing unnecessary discussion processes and developing strategies for direct results (Davis, 2023). In educational institutions, rapid decision-making, especially in critical areas such as changing educational policies, student performance and teacher management, can directly affect the success of the organization.

In addition, since these leaders control organizational processes with a centralized approach, decisions can be implemented quickly and a strong control mechanism can be provided over the processes. However, unilateral decision-making may negatively affect employee engagement in the long run. Therefore, Machiavellian leaders need to balance this advantage with an ethical and participative management approach (Li, Huang, & Feng, 2024). Educational organizations may face





various crisis situations such as economic crises, student failure, teacher motivation, budget constraints or policy changes. Machiavellian leaders can ensure the survival of the organization by adopting pragmatic and strategic approaches to crisis management.

In times of crisis, rapid and decisive interventions are of great importance as uncertainty and chaos increase. Machiavellian leaders show competence in using the available resources in the most efficient way by approaching the events from a strategic perspective rather than an emotional one. As a result, the organization becomes more resilient in times of crisis (Judge, Piccolo, & Ilies, 2004). In addition, they can prevent chaos within the organization by using knowledge management strategies effectively to ensure the trust of employees in times of crisis. In order to avoid uncertainty in times of crisis, motivating and directing employees by keeping the flow of information under control is a method frequently used by Machiavellian leaders.

Efficient use of financial and human resources in educational organizations is a critical element for organizational success. Machiavellian leaders can ensure that educational organizations reach the highest efficiency by strategically managing the resources necessary to achieve their goals. For example, by strictly controlling teachers' performance evaluations, they can develop policies such as rewarding the most productive employees and retraining low performers (Colquitt et al., 2001).

Moreover, by keeping organizational processes under strict control, they can minimize waste and prevent unnecessary expenditures. This helps educational organizations to use their budget more efficiently and ensure sustainability. However, excessive control mechanisms can undermine employees' self-confidence and reduce job satisfaction. Therefore, Machiavellian leaders need to balance their authoritarian management approach. Competition in the field of education is increasing. Educational institutions are in competition to increase student achievement, improve academic quality and attract more students. Machiavellian leaders can help their organizations gain competitive advantage by strategic planning and competitor analysis (Xiu, Lv, & van Dierendonck, 2024).

These leaders can create a competitive work environment to motivate employees within the organization. By developing performance-based reward systems, they can encourage higher achievement of teachers and academic staff. They can also take measures to ensure the sustainability of organizational success by developing innovative educational strategies to increase student satisfaction. Machiavellian leaders can increase organizational efficiency by managing all processes in educational institutions with a central control mechanism. By closely monitoring the performance of the employees, they can identify the flaws in the system and improve organizational processes by making revisions when necessary (Belschak, Muhammad, & Den Hartog, 2018).

However, it is important that leaders do not turn these control mechanisms into an oppressive management approach. Otherwise, there may be a lack of organizational commitment and motivation among employees. Therefore, Machiavellian leaders need to develop methods to strengthen employees' commitment to the organization while establishing an effective control mechanism. Machiavellian leadership is a leadership style that provides advantages in increasing organizational efficiency, fast and precise decision making and crisis management. However, this leadership approach needs to be balanced with ethical values in order to be sustainable in the long term. In educational





organizations, increasing the motivation of employees and maintaining trust is a critical factor for institutional stability in the long term.

Therefore, Machiavellian leaders need to balance their authoritarian management approach with an ethical framework and develop strategies to increase the organizational commitment of employees. Such a management approach will provide a great advantage in terms of both short-term success and long-term sustainability in educational institutions.

### **Facilitation of goal achievement in educational organizations through Machiavellian leadership**

Achieving goals in educational organizations is directly related to the strategic orientations set by leaders. Machiavellian leaders can be effective in setting clear goals, providing strategic direction, and motivating employees in line with these goals. These leaders use their goal orientation to accelerate organizational processes and increase organizational success. However, this approach needs to be balanced with ethical principles to be sustainable (Li, Huang, & Feng, 2024). Machiavellian leaders can make it easier for employees and students to achieve these goals by setting clear and concrete goals in educational organizations. While setting clear and concrete goals increases the efficiency of educational organizations, it also plays a critical role in directing the performance of employees. For educational administrators, goals set with a visionary perspective can be effective in increasing organizational success (Davis, 2023).

Leaders organize specific processes and clearly define the role of each employee to ensure that organizational goals are achieved. The clarity of employees' roles enables individuals to focus more on their work and accelerates the process of achieving goals. However, if these processes become overly controlling, it can undermine employees' self-confidence and ability to take initiative. Therefore, Machiavellian leaders need to allow employees a certain degree of freedom and create space for creative thinking (Xiu, Lv, & van Dierendonck, 2024).

Machiavellian leaders can use strategic motivational techniques to increase employees' performance. In this context, by carefully designing reward systems, they can encourage high-performing employees and accelerate the process of achieving organizational goals. Reward mechanisms increase the productivity of employees in educational organizations and ensure the realization of strategic goals set by leaders (Colquitt et al., 2001).

In addition, through performance appraisal systems, the strengths and weaknesses of employees can be identified and a more effective structure can be created to achieve goals. By identifying the deficiencies of their employees, leaders can improve their performance through training and development programs. However, overly oppressive performance management systems can create stress among employees and negatively affect job satisfaction. Therefore, leaders need to balance rewarding and performance evaluation processes. One of the most important factors in achieving goals in educational institutions is the effective management of available resources. Machiavellian leaders can facilitate the achievement of organizational goals by using financial resources, human resources and technological tools strategically. For example, they can minimize unnecessary expenditures by being meticulous about budget management and direct financial



resources in line with organizational priorities. Likewise, by placing human resources in the right positions, they can ensure that each individual works with maximum efficiency (Belschak, Muhammad, & Den Hartog, 2018).

In addition, managing technological transformation in educational institutions can accelerate the achievement of goals. Strategies such as using digital educational materials, adopting teaching methods based on data analysis, and enabling online educational platforms can help Machiavellian leaders realize the goals of educational organizations. One of the most important goals in educational organizations is to increase student achievement. Machiavellian leaders can enable teachers to improve the quality of education by developing systems to increase student performance. They can closely monitor teachers' performance to increase students' academic achievement and direct low-performing teachers to development programs. They can also create goal-oriented academic support programs for students to improve their achievement. However, an overly performance-oriented approach may cause students and teachers to feel under psychological pressure. Therefore, leaders need to follow a balanced policy that also considers the welfare of students and teachers (Harms, Spain, & Hannah, 2011).

Machiavellian leaders can increase organizational commitment by using effective communication techniques to direct employees towards goals. They can make persuasive speeches for employees to adapt to organizational goals and increase motivation by strategically directing the flow of information (Whitener et al., 1998). Persuasive communication can increase employees' trust in their leaders and strengthen organizational commitment. However, it is of great importance to maintain the principles of transparency and accuracy in this communication process. Otherwise, there may be a lack of trust among employees and organizational productivity may be negatively affected. Machiavellian leaders can increase organizational success in educational organizations by determining clear strategies to facilitate the achievement of goals, developing mechanisms that motivate employees and implementing resource management effectively. However, this process needs to be balanced with ethical principles.

It is important that leaders apply these techniques consciously and strategically, as overly manipulative approaches can have a negative impact on employees and students. Keeping the methods used to achieve goals within an ethical framework will make educational organizations more sustainable and successful in the long run.

### **Evaluating the long-term effects and sustainability of Machiavellian leadership in educational organizations**

While Machiavellian leadership provides certain advantages in educational organizations in the short term, it poses some risks in terms of its long-term effects and sustainability. Educational organizations are social systems that support the development of individuals and require a collaborative structure. Therefore, leaders' adoption of a sustainable management approach in the long term is a critical factor for organizational success. When Machiavellian leaders' strengths such as strategic thinking and goal orientation are not balanced with ethical values, they may negatively affect organizational commitment and collaboration (Li, Huang, & Feng, 2024). Machiavellian leaders usually



adopt authoritarian and manipulative management approaches and try to direct employees towards organizational goals. However, such a management style may cause distrust among employees in the long run. Organizational trust is directly related to the trust employees have in their leaders, and lack of trust can negatively affect employee engagement (Cai, Wang, & Jin, 2024).

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Sustainability in educational institutions is achieved not only through the efficient use of financial resources and educational materials, but also through employee motivation and commitment to the organization. Machiavellian leaders' adoption of a control-oriented management approach may weaken employees' ability to take initiative and organizational commitment. Instead, adopting a management approach that involves employees in the process and strengthens the environment of trust will be more effective in terms of long-term success (Belschak, Muhammad, & Den Hartog, 2018). The oppressive and controlling management approach of Machiavellian leaders can negatively affect employees' job satisfaction and organizational commitment. A management style that constantly increases competition within the organization and directs employees with manipulative methods can create a toxic working environment over time. Employees' feeling under constant pressure can lead to burnout syndrome and loss of motivation (Li et al., 2024).

In this context, protecting employee well-being is of great importance for long-term success in educational organizations. The sustainability of educational organizations can be enhanced if leaders take decisions by considering employees' psychological well-being and job satisfaction. Especially since teachers' job satisfaction has a direct impact on students' academic achievement, educational leaders should develop policies that motivate and support teachers (Harms, Spain, & Hannah, 2011).

The long-term sustainability of Machiavellian leadership is directly related to ethical leadership principles. In an education-based organization, leaders' adoption of manipulative and authoritarian strategies by focusing only on short-term goals may jeopardize the long-term sustainability of institutions. Therefore, Machiavellian leaders should give importance to ethical decision-making processes and adopt a transparent and fair management approach to gain the trust of employees and students (Xiu, Lv, & van Dierendonck, 2024). Ethical leadership approach can strengthen employees' commitment to the organization and create a healthier working environment in educational institutions. Transparent communication, fair decision-making processes and a management approach that values the opinions of employees can increase organizational sustainability. Accordingly, it is of great importance for Machiavellian leaders to adopt ethical leadership principles in order to be successful in the long term (Davis, 2023).

For long-term success in educational organizations, collaboration and participatory decision-making processes should be encouraged. Machiavellian leaders may tend to manage decision-making processes unilaterally because they have a centralized management approach. However, involving employees in decision-making processes can both increase employee engagement and support organizational sustainability (Colquitt et al., 2001). Involving teachers, administrators and other educational employees in decision-making mechanisms increases trust within the organization and enables employees to contribute more to organizational goals. Adopting a democratic management approach in educational organizations can support long-term success by reducing the negative effects of Machiavellian leadership.



While Machiavellian leadership provides short-term advantages such as crisis management, quick decision-making and increased productivity in educational organizations, it also brings some risks in the long term. Some of these risks are as follows: An Environment of Mistrust: Lack of trust among employees can lead to a decrease in organizational commitment. Toxic Work Culture: Excessive pressure and manipulation can negatively affect employees' job satisfaction. Weakening of Student-Centered Approach: Instead of a student-centered management approach, educational institutions may adopt a management approach focused solely on institutional success. Ethical Problems: In the long run, unethical management approach may damage the reputation of educational organizations.

While Machiavellian leadership provides certain advantages in educational organizations, it needs to be balanced with ethical values to ensure long-term sustainability. Increasing employee engagement, maintaining job satisfaction and promoting transparent communication processes in educational organizations can reduce the negative effects of this leadership style. Machiavellian leaders need to balance their manipulation and authoritarian management approach with ethical leadership principles for long-term success. Ethical awareness, collaboration and participatory decision-making processes can support the long-term sustainability of educational institutions.

In order for research on Machiavellian leadership to be more comprehensive and generalizable, it is necessary to develop scales that are valid in different cultural contexts and to analyze in detail the effects of leadership on teacher motivation, student achievement and organizational commitment. Moreover, comparing this leadership style with other approaches such as transformational and ethical leadership will contribute to identifying its strengths and weaknesses. Longitudinal studies are critical for understanding how leadership behaviors change over time and their impact on organizational processes. For practitioners, ethical leadership training programs, management strategies that focus on trust and cooperation, and transparent communication policies should be a priority. Moreover, leaders' adoption of social and emotional learning strategies instead of manipulation in crisis management processes will increase both employee motivation and organizational sustainability. Finally, developing evaluation mechanisms that also measure the ethical and social impact of leaders can contribute to a healthier management approach in educational organizations.

### **Limitations of the study**

Since this study was conducted with the traditional review method, it does not include a systematic meta-analysis or statistical inferences based on quantitative data. In addition, only certain keywords and accessible academic sources were used in the literature review, and gray literature or unpublished theses were not included in the evaluation.

However, the vast majority of studies on Machiavellian leadership have been conducted in the context of organizational behavior and business management. Research on educational organizations is more limited, which limits the scope of this review to some extent. Future research with more empirical studies focusing on the education sector could strengthen the body of knowledge in this area (Xiu, Lv & van Dierendonck, 2024).



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