

20 August, 2013

Dr. J. O. Ekore  
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Dear Dr Ekore,

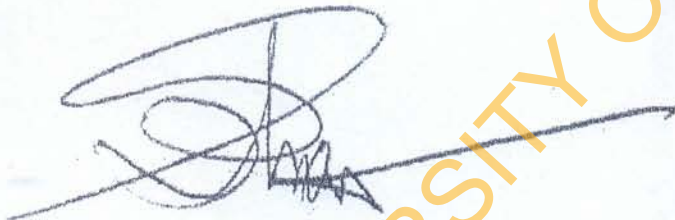
## LETTER OF ACCEPTANCE

On behalf of the Editorial Committee for the Nigerian Journal of Applied Psychology, we are pleased to inform you that your article titled:

**MACHIEVALLIAN PERSONALITY DIMENSIONS AND WORK ETHICS AMONG BANK EMPLOYEES IN NIGERIA** was accepted following the assessors' remark for publication in the up-coming edition of the journal.

We also write to acknowledge that your editorial fee has been duly received while we await the publication of the journal soonest.

It is therefore our great pleasure to congratulate you.



**Dr. T Ayo Hammed**  
Editor in Chief

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**Machievallian Personality Dimensions and Work Ethics among Bank Employees in Nigeria**

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# Machievallian Personality Dimensions and Work Ethics among Bank Employees in Nigeria

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## ABSTRACT

Work ethics which has been a major concern in Nigerian public and private financial institutions is not known to be given much research attention on contemporary workplace issues that impact employee productivity. This necessitated the survey which involved a sample size of 230. Participants that include male and females were drawn from employees of different branches of a commercial bank in Lagos. Using standardised scales for data collection, results of multiple regression analysis confirmed the first hypothesis which predicted that Machievallian personality would influence work ethics ( $R^2 = .33$ ;  $F [7, 221] = 13.58$ ;  $p < .001$ ). The second hypothesis was rejected based on the t-test result which showed no significant difference between male and females on work ethics. It was concluded that the dimensions in Machievallian personality among dispositional characteristics are important factors that influence work ethics among bank workers, whereas being male or female is not a necessary factor. It implied that the personality dimensions are important characteristics to consider in behavior modification to achieve higher work ethics among employees. A major recommendation is the need to consider the assessment of employees during selection in order to incorporate their modification in induction training programmes.

## **Machievallian Personality Dimensions and Work Ethics among Bank Employees in Nigeria**

### INTRODUCTION

Work ethics as workplace issue has been defined variously by different authors. In an earlier definition, it was seen as an index of job satisfaction (Pietrofesa & Splete, 1975). Later, it was taken to imply religious obligation to work hard as commanded by God (Grenhom, 1993). More recently, it has been viewed as work-related activities that are morally taken as good and right (Wood, Zeffane, Fromholtz & Fitzgerald, 2006). In this study however, it is presented as a reflection of the extent to which an individual values work, which can be regarded as an important factor in work outcomes. Thus, in following Kreitner, Kinicki and Buelens (2002) a strong work ethics involve the belief that hard work is the key to success and happiness.

According to Arslan (2001), work ethics is perceived as a cultural input into an organisational structure that can affect the values, norms and effectiveness of the organisation. For example, individuals who are higher on work ethics tend to work very hard (Tang & Baumeister, 1984) and seek to be as diligent as possible in all aspects of their careers. However, literature has consistently revealed that people (both male and females) differ in terms of how much they believe in work ethics, which can influence a variety of behavioural outcomes (e.g; Kreitner, Kinicki & Buelens, 2002). Apart from being male or female as an employee, one source of difference lies at the heart of human personality (Fox, Spector & Miles, 2001; Jones, 2004; Spector, 1997). In line with this position, the Machievallian personality becomes a variable of interest due to the negative connotation it has enjoyed in literature, especially in scholarly discussions of employees' career development.

In recent leadership researches, Machiavellianism as a personality trait has been oversimplified to the extent that most scholars narrowly define Machiavellian behaviour as manipulative, cruel and self-centered while neglecting its potential benefits as a political skill in organisations. Due to the negative connotations associated with Machiavellianism, many study participants are reluctant to complete the Mach IV scale or receive feedback about political behaviour in their organisations. The evident importance of work ethics inspired the need to investigate the possible association of this personality dimensions (negative interpersonal tactics, positive interpersonal tactics, cynical view of human nature and positive view of human nature) that has been viewed largely as a moral contradiction. Specifically, this research sets to find answer to the question of 'which dimensions of Machiavellian personality will be associated with work ethics? It is also a goal in this study to investigate whether male and female bank employees will differ significantly on work ethics.

#### LITERATURE REVIEW

Examination of the theoretical foundation of work ethics construct makes it necessary to look at the translation of Weber's original work. The Protestant Work Ethics (PWE) factor includes the characteristics of industriousness, individualism, asceticism, community involvement and an overall value of work as the most beneficial way to spend one's time (Weber, 1958). PWE — also known as the "Puritan work ethic" or just "work ethic" — is based on the necessity for hard work, perfection and the virtue of labour. PWE according to Mudrack (1997), represent the degree to which individuals place work at the center of their lives. It is regarded as one's belief in the importance of hard work and frugality (Morrow, 1993) and "industriousness (Wayne, 1989). In Weber's original work 'Die Protestantische Ehtik und der Geist des

Kapitalismus' (The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism) (1904/05) the following elements were considered to be characteristic of the Protestant work ethic (PWE): work is a central, religiously legitimated fact of life; it is a duty to work hard; a rational attitude to life and good time- management serve an individual's diligence; success is important; consumption and leisure should be treated with a degree of suspicion; caring for others and good citizenship are civic duties. According to Weber's definition, work ethics is a multidimensional construct. Some investigations have sought to determine the factor structure of PWE and typically found at least four factors (Furnham, 1990a, 1990b; McHoskey, 1995; Mudrack, 1997; Tang, 1993). For example, McHoskey identified these four factors: (a) Success; (b) Asceticism; (c) Hard work; and (d) Anti-Leisure. Similarly, Mudrack classified these factors: (a) Hard Work; (b) Asceticism; (c) Negative Views; and (d) Anti-Leisure. Tang identified: (a) Hard Work; (b) Internal motive; (c) Asceticism; and (d) Attitudes towards leisure. Furnham (1990a, 1990b) identified five readily interpretable factors: (a) Respect for, admiration of and willingness to take part in hard work; (b) Disdain for leisure; (c) Religion and morality; (d) Independence from others; and (e) Asceticism and the danger of having too much time and money.

#### **A traditional African perspective of work ethics**

Atkin's (1993) book 'The moon is dead! Give us our money back!' makes it clear that black workers for almost two centuries exhibited a set of patterned responses that were guided by a body of corporate values shaped by structural practices that unmistakably constituted an African work ethic. Cultural values in traditional African societies showed that the people had a perception of moral truth by which they sought to structure not just their lives but their understanding of the universe. With regards to individuals as 'workers' in their society, several points need to be stressed for lucid understanding of the status of work in society. It was not just

community expectations but a sense of entitlement was attached to occupations in which elders traditionally engaged. Atkins (1993) reported that the respected elders possessed prescriptive rights to all professions of social and economic consequences.

Nineteenth century African workers had effective organisational structures and clear notions of power relationships based on position and status. Adherents to African traditional religions believe that a lack of respect towards one's superiors equates with a lack of respect to the ancestors who are responsible for blessings at work such as promotion and salary increments (Mafunisa, 1998). An African work ethic could therefore be seen as that which emerged from the traditional religious practice as well as the basic existential conditions in which the people lived in their consideration for human well being (Sitoto, 2002). Based on the description of the African culture and view, it may be proposed that work ethics of bank workers in an African setting would not be influenced by machievalian personality characteristics.

The concept of social exchange has long been used by organisational theorists to describe various employee reactions to organisational stimuli. An interpretation from this theory concerns the relationship between an employee and his or her employing organisation. According to Blau (1964), the social exchange theory maintains a position that workers trade efforts and loyalty to the organisation for such tangible incentives as pay and fringe benefits. The incentives include socio-emotional benefits such as esteem, approval, and caring which concern the perception that the contract will not be terminated arbitrarily. By this position, workers are expected to exhibit high work ethics irrespective of their level of Machievallian personality characteristics.

Empirical studies have consistently shown that a high degree of Machiavellianism leads to less-than-ethical decisions (O'Fallon and Butterfield 2005). The MACH-IV, a widely available personality test to assess Machiavellianism, indicates that people who score high in

Machiavellian personality are power oriented and calculating with others. They do not shy away from manipulating others to pursue their goals by using deceptive tactics or insincere promises. People who score low in Machiavellianism are more open in their interactions with others and more trusting in the good intentions of others.

Niccolò Machiavelli, a 15th century Italian politician and statesman is famously known for *The Prince*, which laid out how a strong (ruthless, deceptive, and cruel) individual as leader should behave. The prescriptions in the document laid a framework for Machievalian personality characteristics being considered in work ethics as workplace effectiveness factors in this study. PWE is related to several individual different variables. One such variable is locus of control. Mirels and Garrett (1971) posited that belief in the PWE significantly correlated positively with measures of morality-conscious guilt, but negatively with external locus of control beliefs. Job satisfaction was also implicated as relating to work ethics. Stone (1975, 1976) reported a positive relationship between job scope and job satisfaction, but not with work ethics. Many studies found that PWE is related to low education levels (MacDonald, 1972; Aldag & Brief, 1975; Buchholz, 1977, 1978), while Tang & Tzeng (1988, 1992), Furnham (1982, 1987), Ma (1986) and Wentworth & Chell (1997). Thus, education seemed to be negatively correlated with work ethics. Wollack et al. (1971) and Goodale (1973), however, found that the educational level of subjects was positively correlated with a strong work ethics because individuals with higher levels of education showed strong work ethical values.

In terms of gender, several studies did not find any difference between male and females on PWE (Goodale, 1973; Buchholz, 1978; Beit-Hallahmi, 1979; Gonsalves and Bernard, 1985; Wayne, 1989; Ma, 1986; MacDonald, 1972; Mirels and Garrett, 1971; Tang and Tzeng, 1988; Tang, 1989; Tang and Tzeng, 1992). Other researchers reported that work ethics varied by



gender (Ali and Azim, 1995; Boatwright and Slate, 2000; Wentworth and Chell, 1997), with males demonstrating stronger work ethical values than females. Still other researchers stated that women were more committed to work ethics than men (Wollack et al., 1971; Allender, 1993; Baguma & Furnham, 1993; Furnham and Muhiudeen, 1984; Furnham and Rajamanickam, 1992; Hill, 1992, 1996, 1997; Petty and Hill, 1994; Boatwright and Slate, 2002). Gilligan (1977, 1982) argues that females are more concerned with their relationships with others, and are less likely to engage in unethical activities. As previously reported (Baguma & Furnham, 1993; Boatwright and Slate, 2002), it can be hypothesised that male bank workers would differ from their female counterparts on work ethics.

Work ethics comparison relative to age levels of participants also produced mixed results: Aldag and Brief (1975) and Goodale (1973) found that older individuals were committed to PWE, whereas MacDonald, 1972; Buchholz, 1977, 1978; Furnham, 1982, 1987b; Hill, 1992; Wayne, 1989 and Ma, 1986 found no significant relationship between age and work ethics. On the other hand, Tang and Tzeng (1988, 1992); Wentworth and Chell (1997) Furnham and Rajamanickam (1992) showed that young people were more oriented toward work ethics than older people. The results are mixed. That is, subjects in the early stage of their career score higher on the scales designed to measure tendency to work hard and delay gratification. Another study reported that single people tend to have stronger commitments to the work ethics than other groups. One conceivable interpretation was that unmarried persons might be involved in more work activities than the married (Tang & Tzeng, 1988).

Literature suggests that individuals that are good tend to accept moral norms of behavior in social settings (Trevino, Weaver & Reynolds, 2006). Thus, individuals with higher scores on the Machiavellian scale may be more deceitful, less moral, more indifferent to societal needs and

more manipulative. This has provided a justification for the present study because it showed relationship between moral behaviour and ethical decision making. Hence, it can be assumed that Machiavellian personality dimensions would be an important factor in work ethics.

*Hypotheses:*

- (a) Machiavellian personality dimensions (negative interpersonal tactics, positive interpersonal tactics, cynical view of human nature and positive view of human nature), gender, working experience in the present organisation, experience on the present position will significantly predict work ethics among bank workers.
- (b) Male employees would significantly report lower on work ethics than their female counterparts in the bank.

#### METHOD

*Design:* The survey adopted an ex-post facto research design. The variables included work ethics and Machiavellian personality dimensions.

*Participants:* The study involved a sample size of 230. The participants were drawn from different branches of Zenith Bank in Lagos metropolis. In the sample, there are 98 (42.6%) junior employees, 106 (46.1%) middle level and 26 (11.3%) senior level employees. Males are 123 (53.5%) and females -107(46.5 %). They were also in different age brackets, 201(87.4%) were less than 35 years in age, 27(11.7%) were between 36 and 45 years, while 2 (0.9%) were above 45 years in age. Furthermore, their working experience at the present organisation ranged from 1 to 14 years with a mean of 3.55years and S.D of 3.22 while experience in present position occupied ranged from 1 to 8 years with a mean of 1.37 years and S.D of 0.80.

*Instrument:* Two instruments contained in the questionnaires were used for data collection. Apart from requiring participants to provide demographic information, the Machiavellian personality

dimensions on the Mach IV scale which is a 20-item instrument was designed to measure a respondent's Machiavellian-type behavior. It assesses feelings about the extent to which a person believe that others are susceptible to manipulation in interpersonal situations (Gable, 1988). The original Mach IV scale consisted of 71 items based upon the writings of Niccolo Machiavelli adapted from *The Prince* and *The Discourses*. An item analysis indicated the ten highest-related items in favour of Machiavellian statements, and the ten highest-related items not in favour. It resulted in the 20 statements that comprised the scale. It was scored on a Likert scale format ("agree strongly" being scored 7, "no opinion" 4, and "disagree strongly" 1). Ghosh and Crain (1996) previously obtained a coefficient of 0.74 in a study of tax compliance behaviour, whereas Hunt and Chonko (1987) obtained a coefficient of 0.76 among marketing practitioners. In this study an alpha coefficient of 0.71 was obtained.

The second instrument is work ethics scale developed by Wayne (1998). The 10-item scale was designed to measure an individual's level of work ethics. The response pattern ranged from 1 (Strongly Disagree) to 5 (Strongly Agree). Items 3 and 8 had reversed scores. The total measure of work ethics can be obtained by addition of the scores on each item. Possible scores ranged from 10 to 50, high scores on the scale reflect high work ethics. In this study, a coefficient alpha of 0.69 was obtained.

*Procedure:* Permission was obtained from the appropriate authority in the organization covered in order to allow their employees to participate in the study. The questionnaires were administered over a 6-week period by a graduate student as assistant for the research. Out of the 300 questionnaires administered, 230 were adequately completed and returned.

### Procedure for Data Analysis

The data collected were subsequently collated and coded. Using the SPSS version 7, the data analysis was done in two parts. The first part involved descriptive analysis to obtain the demographic characteristics of the respondents in the form of frequency and percentage distribution of their characteristics. The second part involved inferential statistics in order to test the hypotheses generated in the study.

## RESULTS

Hypothesis one which stated that Machiavellian personality dimensions, gender, working experience in the present organisation, experience on the present position will significantly predict work ethics was tested with multiple regression and presented below:

Table 1: Summary of hierarchical multiple regression results showing the influence of Machiavellian personality (negative interpersonal tactics, positive interpersonal tactics, cynical view of human nature and positive view of human nature), gender, working experience, present position experience on work ethics

Variables	R <sup>2</sup>	F	P	$\beta$	t	P
Machiavellianism Personality Dimensions						
Negative Interpersonal Tactics				-.17	-2.31	<.05
Positive Interpersonal Tactics				-.18	-2.85	<.01
Cynical View of Human Nature	.33	13.58	<.001	-.36	-5.95	<.001
Positive View of Human Nature				.12	2.00	<.05
Gender				-.04	-0.63	n.s
W. Experience in the Organization				-.14	-2.16	<.05
Experience on the Position				.14	2.27	<.05

The result showed a significant prediction of work ethics by Machiavellian personality dimensions (negative interpersonal tactics, positive interpersonal tactics, cynical view of human nature and positive view of human nature), gender, working experience and present position experience ( $R^2 = .33$ ;  $F(7, 221) = 13.58$ ;  $p < .001$ ). It shows that the seven predictor variables jointly accounted for 33% of variance in work ethics among the bank workers.

Specifically, results showed significant prediction of work ethics by personality dimensions of negative interpersonal tactics ( $\beta = -.17$ ;  $t = -2.31$ ;  $p < .05$ ), positive interpersonal tactics ( $\beta = -.18$ ;  $t = -2.85$ ;  $p < .05$ ), cynical view of human nature ( $\beta = -.36$ ;  $t = -5.95$ ;  $p < .001$ ) and positive view of human nature ( $\beta = .12$ ;  $t = 2.00$ ;  $p < .05$ ).

However, gender was not a significant predictor of work ethics ( $\beta = -.04$ ;  $t = -.63$ ;  $p.n.s$ ). This means that being female or male does not account for variation in work ethics among the employees. Years of working experience contributed significantly to work ethics ( $\beta = -.14$ ;  $t = -2.16$ ;  $P < .05$ ). This suggests that the employees who have spent longer years with the bank reported higher level of work ethics than others. Similarly, experience in the present position contributed significantly to work ethics ( $\beta = .14$ ;  $t = 2.27$ ;  $P < .05$ ). It meant that employees who have spent longer years at their present positions reported higher level of work ethics than their counterparts. Therefore, the hypothesis was accepted. The results showed that the significant predictors have strong influence on work ethics.

The second hypothesis which stated that male employees would significantly report lower level of work ethics than the females was tested using t-test for independent sample.

Table 2: Summary of t-test result comparing male with females on work ethics

Sex	N	X	SD	Df	t	P
Male	123	39.66	4.20	228	1.68	n.s
Female	107	40.02	4.08			

n.s= not significant

Result showed no significant difference on work ethics between male and female bank employees ( $t=1.68$ ,  $df=228$ ,  $p.n.s$ ). This means that both male ( $x=39.66$ ) and female ( $x=40.02$ ) employees reported comparable levels of work ethics. Thus, the hypothesis was rejected.

## DISCUSSION

The first hypothesis which stated that Machiavellian personality (negative interpersonal tactics, positive interpersonal tactics, cynical view of human nature and positive view of human nature), gender, working experience, experience on the present position will significantly predict work ethics was accepted. This finding is consistent with previous evidence that Machiavellians are more grounded or reality-based in their sense of self (Christie & Geis, 1970). The finding also supports those of Mirels and Garrett (1971) who found certain individual variables significantly correlate positively with belief in the PWE. As earlier reported, an African work ethic was seen as that which emerged from the basic existential conditions in which the people lived in their consideration for human well being (Sitoto, 2002). It was such that workers are expected to express similar values of work. Contrary to the description of the African culture and view, work ethics of the bank workers in an African setting was influenced by machievallian personality characteristics.

The study by O'Fallon and Butterfield (2005) support the present findings that identified strong association of the personality trait with work ethics. The work ethics of employees that were involved in the present study was influenced largely by the Machievallian personality characteristics. However, as previously asserted in the social exchange theory which deviated from the present finding, events in the 21<sup>st</sup> century organization in an African society may have overtaken Blau's (1964) position. The theory maintained that a worker trade efforts and loyalty to the organisation for such tangible incentives as pay and fringe benefits and such socio-emotional benefits as esteem, approval, and caring which includes the perception that the contract will not be terminated arbitrarily. By this position, workers are expected to exhibit high work ethics. On the contrary, the present findings did not support the old position. Other social

characteristics such as length of service and experience in present position were also important predictors of work ethics.

The present study found no significant difference between male and female bank workers. It supports those of Goodale (1973), Buchholz (1978), Beit-Hallahmi (1979), Gonsalves and Bernard (1985), Wayne (1989), Ma (1986), Tang and Tzeng (1988), Tang (1989), and Tang and Tzeng (1992) who found no proof of a gender impact on PWE. However, Ali and Azim (1995), Boatwright and Slate (2000), and Wentworth and Chell (1997) reported that work ethics varied by gender, with males demonstrating stronger work ethics values than females. Still other researchers stated that women were more committed to PWE than men (Wollack et al., 1971; Allender, 1993; Baguma & Furnham, 1993; Furnham & Muhiudeen, 1984; Furnham & Rajamanickam, 1992; Hill, 1992, 1996, 1997; Petty & Hill, 1994; Boatwright & Slate, 2002). Gilligan (1977, 1982) argued that females are more concerned with their relationships with others, and are less likely to engage in unethical activities. The present finding is in contrast to all these positions that reported gender differences in work ethics. The findings in the present study that supported some and contradicted earlier studies indicate the importance of cultural relativity in drawing research conclusions. It has shown that studies carried out in workplaces are subject to the organisational culture and climate which shape its workforce dispositions.

Based on the findings in the present study and subsequent discussion in line with previous literature, it can be concluded that Machiavellian personality, working experience, and experience in present position do influence bank workers' work ethics. Gender is not a major factor in work ethics among the employees.

### *Implication of findings*

From the results it is evident that negative interpersonal tactics, positive interpersonal tactics, cynical view of human nature and positive view of human nature predicted work ethics. This implies that organisational politics which Machievallian personality depicts in workplaces constitute a major factor that can influence work ethics. It means that the personality characteristics are important in bank workers job performances and therefore need not be ignored. They constitute relevant behaviours (desirable or undesirable) that would require modification in order to promote productive work outcomes.

### *Recommendation*

It is recommended that future research directions in this study area may advance understanding of the role of Machievallianism personality dimensions on work ethics in other work settings. Due to the important role it plays on work ethics, it would be necessary to incorporate their assessment and modification during employees' selection and orientation training. Other personality factors deserve to be considered in further investigation of work ethics. They may provide additional insight to the strength of influence by different variables. Also, being male or female is not a relevant issue in terms of work ethics among bank workers. Therefore, gender preference need to be de-emphasised in selection and placement.

Despite the limitations of negative attitude toward research by a number of potential respondents, covering only one organisation and involving just Machievallian personality as the main variable for investigating work ethics, the study has provided baseline data. The findings can serve as reference and stimulate further interest in work ethics that may cover other sectors, especially in sub-saharan Africa where the topic is under emphasised in management and scholarship.



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