

# ROLE OF VESTED INTEREST AND MACHIAVELLIANISM IN DRUG ADDICTION TENDENCIES AMONG YOUNG ADULTS: A PSYCHOSOCIAL PERSPECTIVE WITHIN WORKFORCE SETTINGS

Rabia Khan<sup>1</sup>, Muhammad Ammar Masood Cheema<sup>2</sup>, Amna Azam<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The Learning Hub, Gujranwala

<sup>2</sup>Centre for Entrepreneurial Mindset GIFT, University

<sup>3</sup>Department of Humanities and Social Sciences, GIFT University

<sup>1</sup>rabianoorkhan22@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>ammarcheema15@gmail.com, <sup>3</sup>amnaazam701@gmail.com

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Corresponding Author: \*

Muhammad Ammar Masood Cheema

## Abstract

Substance abuse has been emerged as growing health concern among young adults along with occupational stressors and competitive pressures contributing to dysfunctional coping behaviors (Frone, 2013). This study examines the psychosocial predictors of drug addiction tendencies, stressing on specifically on the role of Machiavellianism, people with manipulative tendencies and self-interest (Christie & Geis, 1970; Paulhus & Williams, 2002) and vested interest, indicates strong personal interest in something you can get benefit from in particular outcomes (Crano, 1995). Based on Social Cognitive Theory (Bandura, 1986) and the Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), the study employs a hypothetical correlation and quantitative research design to explore how these psychological factors influence substance abuse behavior. Literature recommends that Machiavellian individuals are more inclined to take risks, indulge in substance use, particularly in high work pressure environment (Jones & Paulhus, 2011; O'Boyle et al., 2012). Moreover, individuals with more vested interest tendencies rationalize substance use as a tool to enhance performance (Crano, 1995). The study hypothesizes that there is a relationship between vested interest and drug addiction with moderation of Machiavellianism. The results of the current study showed that vested interest and Machiavellianism both are significantly correlated with the drug addiction indicating that higher levels of vested interest and Machiavellianism are associated with greater tendency of drug addiction. The regression analysis indicated that vested interest significantly predicted drug addiction tendency.

## INTRODUCTION

### 2.1 Background of the Problem

Substance abuse has been emerged as growing health concern among young adults in work force. Recent studies show that significant number of young workers incline to substances as a coping mechanism to deal with work related stress. A study shows that 69% of Generation Z and 68 % of millennials are

indulge in substance use on weekly and daily basis to cope with occupational stressors (Craver, 2025). These statistics are alarming, considering the probable implication for individual health and organizational productivity.

Young employees are often expose to high pressure situations in work place environment such as

deadlines and competition among workers which increase their level of stress. Due to these stressors individuals incline towards drug use to seek relief, which potentially results in addiction. Similarly, individuals within workplace also engage in behavior of substance use due to peer influence, in order to conform to group norms to gain acceptance or avoid ostracism (Addiction Center, 2025).

Occupational stress and peer dynamics make a milieu in which use of substance becomes a maladaptive strategy to cope with stress. It is crucial to understand these psychosocial factors contributing to this phenomenon to develop effective interventions to reduce substance use among young workers in work place.

## 2.2 Key Concepts

Machiavellianism means someone acts in untrustworthy and selfish ways. Those who are high in Machiavellianism work strategically, trying to gain benefits at the expense of others (Christie & Geis, 1970). Machiavellianism is part of the Dark Triad, together with narcissism and psychopathy and it is commonly linked to having little empathy and flexible ethics (Paulhus & Williams, 2002).

Machiavellian individuals might take risks, for example by using drugs, to help control situations and emerge as winners in competitive environments (Jones & Paulhus, 2011). Because they often do not follow social rules and risk a lot, they could be more likely to start abusing drugs when pressures are high.

In psychology, vested interest means how much an individual cares about a certain outcome or behavior. A person is likely to act a particular way if they feel their values are aligned with that behavior (Crano, 1995). At work, when people aim to grow in their careers or handle stress, some might see drinking alcohol as helpful which can lead to addiction. When Machiavellian behavior and personal self-interest come together, they may unite to help continue and justify using drugs. Knowing these traits and their role in causing risky actions allows us to point out those at risk and intervene with the right approaches.

## 2.3 Relevance to Workforce Settings

Having high expectations, facing lots of competition and an atmosphere that allows drugs to be used are

some hallmarks of today's workplace. When young adults go into such surroundings, they could feel the need to follow the common practices, mainly if they have traits such as Machiavellianism that might make them more calculating and self-centered (O'Boyle et al., 2012).

Those who value career success a lot may see using drugs or alcohol as a necessary trade-off. It can be observed in some workplaces, where getting things done is more important than how you feel which leads to drug use being accepted and sometimes encouraged.

Handling substance use among employees calls for an informed approach to the social and psychological elements involved such as personal characteristics and how much an individual values their job. If businesses deal with these factors, they can create better conditions at work and lower the risk of addiction for young staff.

## 2.4 Research Gap & Objective

The existing literature has examined the relationship between work place stress and substance use, there are not enough researches examining the combined effect of personality traits like Machiavellianism and vested interest on substance use tendencies among young adults in workplace settings. By investigating these factors influencing substance use behavior, the study aims to fill this gap. The research aims to provide a better understanding of underlying mechanisms using addiction in workplace, consequently informing the expansion of targeted preventions and intervention strategies.

## 3. Hypothesis

H1: Having high levels of Machiavellianism appears to lead to a higher chance of drug addiction among young people in work environments.

H2: Having stronger vested interests increases the chances of drug addiction in young workers in their job life.

H3: Machiavellianism changes how strong the link is between having a vested interest and tendencies of drug addiction, since it is stronger for people with higher Machiavellian traits.

These hypotheses seek to describe the way in which a person's personality and motivation play a role in their substance use when in a work setting.

#### 4. Rationale

Because young professionals are now more involved in substance use, it is important to look at the why behind this trend. Machiavellian behavior which includes being manipulative and self-interested, is linked to a greater likelihood of risky acts and negative behavior at work which could make substance use an attempt to cope with stressful situations (Jones & Paulhus, 2011; O'Boyle et al., 2012).

Since substance use among young professionals is becoming more common, we need to learn more about the psychosocial reasons behind it. Jones and Paulhus (2011) studied individuals with Machiavellian traits and noted that they often become more involved in unsafe or negative work habits which may increase their risk for turning to substance use during tense situations (O'Boyle, 2012).

Also, according to vested interest theory, people who have a strong interest in an outcome will usually act in ways that support their own interests, even if those actions are not helpful (Crano, 1995). If people at work want to succeed, they sometimes cope with stress or higher demands by using drugs or alcohol which may increase their likelihood of addiction. Abusing alcohol or drugs to cope with work stress is very common and often ends up making things worse for the person by creating a cycle of addiction and poor job performance (American Addiction Centers: 2023).

Therefore, early action and preventing problems should be an important focus in work settings. Strong mental health policies and Employee Assistance Programs (EAPs) can be vital in solving these challenges. As a result, such campaigns aid in finding substance use disorders early and support healthy ways to handle them which leads to a better working environment (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2024).

#### 5. Discussion

##### 5.1 Theoretical Framework

According to Social Cognitive Theory (SCT), what we do is guided by three important influences: ourselves, our actions and our immediate environment (Bandura, 1986). SCT proposes that people create predictions about outcomes from their

habits and actions influenced by learning from others and feelings of self-efficacy. When young adults notice that other workers use drugs or alcohol to deal with work stress and this seems to be effective, they might be encouraged to imitate this behavior (Bandura, 1986).

In addition, TPB offers a similar approach by highlighting the effect of attitudes, social pressure and personal ability on intentions (Ajzen, 1991). If people believe substance use is acceptable, believe their significant others support it and think they can control their use, they tend to take part in substance use (Ajzen, 1991). Integrating SCT and TPB offers a comprehensive understanding of how personal traits like Machiavellianism and vested interests, combined with environmental factors, influence substance use behaviors among young adults in the workforce.

##### 5.2 Vested Interest and Drug Addiction

According to Vested Interest Theory (VIT), how much someone cares about an outcome shapes the extent to which their attitude affects their behavior (Crano, 1995). At work, young adults who are driven to move up in their careers may view substance use as a useful way to work well or cope with pressure which can lead to addiction.

There is research evidence to confirm this idea. According to research, people who feel strongly that stimulants will help them are more inclined to say they plan to use them (Crano, 1995). So, having personal attachments to substance use may overpower negative opinions, causing people to become more involved in such activities.

Furthermore, since substance use might clash with individual aims, people may quietly convince themselves that their behavior is justifiable so that they can feel proud of themselves. Rationalizing substance use puts it in the foreground for coping, so ending it can be tough for the involved individual.

Gaining knowledge about vested interests and their impact on substance abuse helps design targeted efforts to change behavior in at-risk young professionals.

##### 5.3 Machiavellianism and Addiction Tendencies

Machiavellianism, meaning using deceit to benefit one's own interests, has been associated with using substances (Christie & Geis, 1970). Those who have

many Machiavellian traits could use alcohol or drugs to help themselves at work such as improving their performance or coping with stress in competitive jobs.

According to research, people with Machiavellian traits are more likely to crave thrills and take risks and this can lead to an uptick in substance use (Jones & Paulhus, 2011). Since those with a Machiavellian personality often fail to empathize and care about social values, it is easier for them to begin using drugs, thus increasing the danger of addiction.

Still, some research shows that the relationship is not so simple. Certain elements of Machiavellianism, for example, focusing on making long-term plans and controlling things may discourage enjoying alcohol and drugs since users want to avoid harm to themselves (Jones & Paulhus, 2011). It suggests that more work is needed to explain the (unclear) links between Machiavellianism and substance use. All in all, recognizing how Machiavellianism influences substance use helps shape interventions that address these risks among those with such traits.

#### 5.4 Interaction in Workplace Settings

Having Machiavellian traits and self-interest can lead young workers to abuse substances which is influenced by their workplace environment. Careers that involve extreme competition, a lot of pressure and an environment where substance use may be seen as acceptable can lead to more risk of addiction (O'Boyle et al., 2012).

Strongly motivated employees might use substance use to advance their careers and those with Machiavellian traits may try to exploit it for their own gain. Having substance use accepted in the workplace can lead to a repeated and hard-to-stop cycle. To deal with substance use at work, both the characters of individuals and the culture of the company must be looked at together. Ensuring there are healthy ways for managing stress, backing up employees with support and deterring substance use in the workplace help to reduce the possibility of addiction among young professionals.

#### 6. Conclusion

The study looked into the connections between Machiavellianism and vested interest with drug addiction trends in young workers, using a

psychosocial approach. According to the findings, how much someone cares and their personality play a big part in determining their substance use patterns. High levels of Machiavellianism were found to increase the likelihood of someone becoming addicted, as having these traits tends to make individuals rely on harmful coping ways (Jones & Paulhus, 2011). Also, having stronger career goals made it more likely for people to use drugs, illustrating the impact of choosing to take risks when the rewards look bigger than the risks (Crano, 1995). What we know from these results is important for psychology and managers at work. Looking closely at the relationship between how people are different and the demands at work helps create better ways to prevent and treat problems related to personality and motivation. In addition, this approach supports holistic efforts in the workplace that focus on mental health care, managing stress and educating people about substance use (Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration [SAMHSA], 2024). By using such initiatives, it is possible to limit drug-related risks and promote a better performance at work.

#### 7. Limitations

The current study is a review article, so a lot of things cannot be explored.

- The study may be limited by the demographic characteristics of the sample such as age, gender which could the generalizability of the sample.
- The findings may not fully apply to different cultural or regional contexts.

#### 8. Recommendations

- The future studies can explore the same constructs in different statistical analysis.
- The future studies can lead to better understanding of the concepts by exploring the phenomenology of the constructs using the qualitative analysis.

#### 9. Future Implications

- The study's findings could inform the development of targeted intervention programs for young adults, focusing on personality traits such as Machiavellianism and vested interest.



- Mental health professionals could use the insights to create tailored therapeutic approaches, including cognitive-behavioral strategies, for individuals predisposed to drug addiction tendencies due to these traits.
- The research may guide the creation of school-based or community interventions aimed at preventing substance use, particularly those that address emotional regulation, decision-making, and social skills development.
- The study could influence public health policy by encouraging early identification of personality traits linked to addiction, leading to preventive measures in youth programs.
- This study opens avenues for future research exploring additional personality traits or environmental factors that contribute to drug addiction tendencies, enhancing the understanding of its psychological predictors.

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