

# Moral Identity as Moderator in the Relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors

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**Abstract:** This paper aims to examine the nature of the relationship between Machiavellian leadership perception and employees' opportunistic behaviors, with the moderating role of moral identity. The study was conducted over a two years period, in which, a simple random sample was used with 295 questionnaires distributed on the employees of different service industries in Bahrain. Descriptive analysis, Simple and multiple regressions were used to analyze the data and test the hypotheses. The main results of the study indicate that there is a significant positive effect for Machiavellian leadership perception on employees' opportunistic behaviors. They also indicate significant negative effects for both Internalization Moral Identity and Symbolization Moral Identity on employees' opportunistic behaviors. Furthermore, the results show a partially moderating role for Internalization Moral Identity on the relationship between Machiavellian leadership perception and employees' opportunistic behaviors. They also confirm a fully moderating role for Symbolization Moral Identity on the relationship between Machiavellian leadership perception and employees' opportunistic behaviors.

**Keywords:** Machiavellian Leadership, Perception, Opportunistic Behaviors, Moral Identity, Internalization Moral Identity, Symbolization Moral Identity, Bahrain.

## 1 Introduction

Conformity theory (Bernheim, 1994) states that the individual behavior is affected in large by such social factors as the desire for prestige, acceptance, or popularity. If we look at the organizational behavior of employees, we find that this is why they behave in certain ways in certain situations. Opportunistic behavior falls under such category. It was stemmed from economics, is traditionally viewed as a self-interest act (Chohan, 2020). Humans, as rational beings, sensibly allocate the scarce resources for their own use as stated by Simon (1978). But actually, humans get irrational (Mazar and Ariely 2006) when they encounter the opportunity to act opportunistically for their personal interest, and human usually are tempted to act in this way (Jensen & Meckling, 1976).

Opportunistic behavior has been depicted as a "range of misbehavior", like cheating, deception and misrepresentation (Jap, 2003, p.98).

Other authors, like Hudson & McAurthur (1994) tie it to "bad faith". Opportunistic behavior includes the hidden pursuit of private interests by the employees at the expense of the firm and implies self-interest seeking with guile, and as Chohan (2020) refers to opportunistic behavior as "any act that constitute self-interest seeking with guile. In other words, it is an act that benefits the opportunistic party while detriments the party being taken advantage of. Heuterman (2012) defined three types of opportunistic behavior, namely shrinking, which is similar to Avoiding contractual duties, focus on short-term revenue, imposing as much as possible costs on the joint venture, free riding, which is nothing more than waiting for the other partners to make arrangements and then benefitting from it, and lastly hold-up, which is exploiting the partner's dependency on the alliance.

One of the most prominent prime movers, based on related literature, of organizational opportunistic behavior is the tendency of organizational leaders to show Machiavellian

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attitudes within their professional conduct. (Belschak et al., 2018).

Machiavellianism is named after Niccolo Machiavelli, the Renaissance Italian diplomat, who described the ideal but unethical behavior of royalty to achieve the required objectives. It was first introduced by Christie and Geis (1970) psychological construct. The construct, according to them, describes one as a master manipulator who employs aggressive tactics and acts immorally to reach the required goals, no matter what is stepped on during the process. Hence, this construct is usually described as a negative side and has attracted a substantial attention in the organization behavior context behavior (e.g., Belschak et al. 2015; Dahling et al. 2009, 2012). According to Furnham (2013), there have been several studies that characterized Machiavellianism in the form of a dark personality trait, and it usually threatens the well-being of employees and organization alike (Dahling et al. 2009, 2012). Machiavellianism in both, leaders and employees, were linked to the unethical and manipulative and counterproductive work.

The significance of this study is that it aims to address the gap of inserting the moral identity, internalization and symbolization, as a moderating variable in the relationship between the leaders' Machiavellianism and the tendency of employees towards the opportunistic behavior to find out if employees would rely on their moral identities in their attitudes towards opportunistic behavior or not, even though their leaders show a Machiavellian tendency in their organizational behavior.

## 1.1 Review of the Literature

### 1.1.1 The relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors

"The Prince", a famous book written by Niccolo Machiavelli who was a Florentine writer in the 16th century, was the source of the term Machiavellianism, based on which, a lot of studies and theories were formulated on the political power and influence in organizations (Castille et al., 2016). In his book, tactics like pragmatism, manipulative influence, and emotional distance were highlighted in navigating the organizational systems with all their complexities. Centuries after he wrote his book, Machiavelli's theory has become the basis for several research on Machiavellianism as stated by Christie and Geis (1970), as they formed four attributes for such personality, which are the desire to neglect the ethical standards for the sake of self-oriented outcomes (the amoral manipulation), the (distrust of others), (desire to control) represented in the tendency to dominate the interpersonal situations and lessen others' powers, and (desire for status) represented in the strong desire to gain external career success indicators (see Dahling et al. 2009 ; Wu and

Lebreton 2011). Hence, Dahling et al. (2009) argue that it reflects a higher-order implicit construct.

Even though some writers argue that Machiavelli's perspective of influence and power depicted in his book, *The Prince*, is far less malicious than described commonly. Some of authors, like Gustafson (2000) argue that the true Machiavellians would be able to gain the required resources from others without causing them any disfavor. But this is not the mainstream in the literature on the matter, as most authors argue about the negative impact this tendency has on several organizational outcomes, especially when it comes to the opportunistic behavior from the employees' side when their leaders adopt Machiavellianism.

As argued by John, (1984), in organizational context, the opportunistic behavior attitudes could hinder the effective exchange as they are likely to profit from it. Consequences of opportunistic behavior were examined in several related studies, so while Rawwas et al. (2004) found that shoppers with opportunistic tendencies are usually less likely to perceive questionable action as being unethical, and Rawwas et al. (2004) found that in academia, students with more opportunistic tendencies perceive cheating actions as less unethical to be compared with other students with less opportunistic tendencies, whether in U.S. or China. Similar findings were reported by Yin et al. (2020), Suryani et al. (2018), and Chohan (2020).

Literature on corporate ethics might demonstrate the leader's desire to influence subordinates to compromise ethical behaviors (Hawkins, 2007). Baumhart (1968), Brenner and Molander (1977) from the corporate environment did two surveys on the issue and their findings suggest that one driver of the two related to opportunistic unethical behaviors from the employees' side is the patterns of their leaders' behaviors.

Brenner and Molander (1977), in their study about the ethics of business executives, found that most of the sample surveyed individuals had the feeling of responsibility towards clients, more than toward employees or shareholders. Hence, such type of leaders does not feel remorse at all to cross over suppliers and employees for the sake of the ultimate benefit or the clients, who represent the leaders' utmost interest.

Another study on the issue conducted by Kolmakov et al., (2019) demonstrated that the company's managers' behaviors are on the top of the factors affecting the unethical and opportunistic decisions and behaviors by their subordinates. Nevertheless, several researches show that the motivation of any decision maker to abide with referent others, such as company leaders, affects his/ her decisions as argued by Suryani et al., (2018). On the same sheet, we find that research demonstrated that subjectivity to authority is considered as a solid predictor of opportunistic and unethical actions (Olivier and Benjamin, 2020). Furthermore, research has shown also positive relationship between Machiavellianism of individuals and their tendency towards opportunism and unethical behavior as argued by Bonfá-Araujo and Hauck-Filho (2021).

*These findings inspire the following hypothesis:*

*H1: "There is a positive significant relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors".*

### *1.1.2 The Relationship between Moral Identity and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors*

A person might use several possible identities, moral identity is one of them, as a basis for his self- definition as argued by Aquino and Reed (2002). Recently there is an increasing evidence that the moral identity in specific plays a vital role the moral functioning through effecting how people might interpret and respond to different situations that involve moral choice and judgment (Cui et al., 2021). As for Blasi (1984), the obligation one feels towards engaging in moral actions is related directly to his moral identity via his willing to maintain his self-consistency. As agreed with several theorists (e.g. Blasi, 1980, 2004; Lapsley and Lasky, 2001, Aquino and Reed, 2002), Aquino and McFerran (2011) argue that we differ in the degree we experience the moral identity as being central to our overall self-definition.

The conceptualization of Aquino and Reed (2002) suggests that moral identity consists of two dimensions, the first one reflects the private experience of the moral identity centrality, which they called internalization, and the other one deals with its public expression, and they called it symbolization. Both dimensions are in line with the theories of the self that suggests that self- awareness could be characterized by the internal awareness of the inner feelings and thoughts, while on the external level, it acts as the social object that affects others (Fenigstein, Scheier, & Buss, 1975). Gotowiec (2019) argues that the internalization dimension refers to what level the moral traits would be central to one's self-concept, while on the other side, symbolization refers to what level such moral traits would be reflected on public choices and actions in social identifiable situations (Hannah et al., 2020).

Aquino and McFerran (2011) argue that previous literature demonstrate that moral identity dimensions show positive relationships with several morally relevant construct. For instance, symbolization showed a positive relation with charitable giving, volunteerism, religiosity, and willingness to help outgroups (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Reed & Aquino, 2003; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007), while internalization showed a positive relation with volunteering and satisfaction from it, moral reasoning, and donating food to those in need (Aquino & Reed, 2002; Reynolds & Ceranic, 2007).

Aquino and Reed (2002) took the social-cognitive perspective (Bandura, 1986; Cervone, 1997; Lapsley & Narvaez, 2004), and conceptualized the moral identity in the form of an associated network of moral behaviors, goals and traits that constitute one's schema of moral character. Aquino et al. (2009) argue that the one, in their model, who is characterized as having a high level of internalization is

the one with such network of morally knowledge constructs is accessible chronically, in terms of both speed and quantity within the functional self-concept.

Opposite to the dimension of internalization, Winterich et al. (2013) argue that symbolization, the public dimension, represents the level to which a person might tend to convey his moral identity to the external side via actions in the world. The one with high level of symbolization dimension is the one who has the tendency to be involved in explicit activities that might transfer to others the commitment to specific moral ideas and goals. On the other side, when one has a low level of the symbolization dimension of moral identity, he would incline to get involved in such type of public activities. In the model developed by Aquino and Reed's (2002), the levels of both dimensions, internalization and symbolization, do not necessarily correspond to each other, even though there must be some sort of a positive relationship for both of them (Winterich et al., 2013).

According to these empirical work and theoretical considerations, the study presents the following hypothesis:

*H2: "There is a negative significant relationship between Moral Identity and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors".*

### *1.1.3 The relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors with the moderating role for Moral Identity*

As per Dahling, Whitaker, & Levy (2009:219), Machiavellianism is considered to be a personality trait that catches one's inclination towards distrust others, look for control over others, look for self-status above all, and amoral manipulation. Numerous studies and empirical reviews demonstrate that employee with a high level of Machiavellianism could be completely disruptive to the functioning of the organization in an effective way (Dahling et al., 2009; Rehman and Shahnawaz, 2018; Hauser et al., 2021; O'Boyle, Forsyth, Banks, & McDaniel, 2012). Moreover, related research have found that those employees have the likelihood to steal (Laakasuo et al., 2021; Reimann et al., 2019), opportunistic economically, less cooperative (Sakalaki, Richardson, & Thepaut, 2007), and usually experience a low level of job satisfaction while having a high level of turnover (Fehr et al., 1992; Wilson, Near, & Miller, 1996, Al Samman and Mohmaed, 2020).

Recently, there has been a growing interest in the potential role Machiavellianism plays in shaping the employee's organizational performance and behaviors (Castille, 2018). As Machiavellians have the tendency to ignore the positive mutual norms (Gunnthorsdottir et al. 2002), they are to some extent cold when it comes to interpersonal organizational relations (Wiggins and Broughton 1985), and they lack the empathy (Paal and Bereczkei 2007), in addition, authors argue that they could be less likely to aid

colleagues or the organizations they work for (Moore et al. 2012; Zagenczyk et al. 2014).

“Ends justify the means” is the main value of Machiavellianism, hence, it indicates the unethical opportunistic behavior of employees as demonstrated by Kish-Gephart et al. (2010). Furthermore, it was recently proven to be positively associated with organizational counterproductive behavior (O’Boyle et al. 2012), which suggests that those employees with Machiavellianism do not have the willing to be involved in any valued forms work contextual performance (Castille, 2018).

According to Amir and Malik (2016), people with high level of Machiavellianism are more likely to get engaged in such behaviors that might lead them to achieve their objectives by any means, legitimate or otherwise. Base on the main value of Machiavellianism, which is “Ends justify the means”, such people could be high achievers, and in their way to do so, they are more likely exposed to engage in work counterproductive behavior. As a personality construct, Machiavellianism promote that one’s manipulative deeds are justified as long as they achieve the desired outcomes.

Machiavellians might try to get ahead of colleagues at any cost, moral or not (Granitz, 2003; Gunnthorsdottir, McCabe, & Smith, 2002; Hegarty & Sims, 1979; Chen & Tang, 2006). Leaders with high level of Machiavellianism were found engaged in taking unethical decisions for their own self-interest as proved by O’Fallon & Butter (2005). In addition, several studies support that they involve in unethical opportunistic behavior such as bullying, among other counterproductive behaviors such as cheating, theft, lying and sabotage. They mainly show high levels of compromised wellbeing, dissatisfaction and anxiety rather than the lack of guilt feeling for committing deviance actions (Dahling, 2012). But among the affecting factors in this we find organizational structure and set up, the type of the jobs they perform, the career level, skills and the level of rewards offered to goal achieving (Jones & Paulhus, 2009). Due to the perspective of high-level Machiavellians and the fact that they are prone to involve in politics with organizations, they tend to look at the moves of others, superiors, peers and subordinates, as political moves (O’connor & Morrison, 2001). Hence, they tend to use manipulative tactics to be in the spotlight as favorable by others, peers and superiors, (O’Hair & Cody, 1987). In addition to that, they were found highly career-oriented supervisors, taking roles of leadership to influence their co-worker as demonstrated by Bratton & Kacmar (2004).

The question here is whether subordinates with moral identity might get affected by the attitudes of their Machiavellian superiors and be inclined to unethical opportunistic behaviors or not. As moral identity plays the role of a self-regulatory mechanism to propagate moral

actions as argued by Aquino and Reed (2002), people with who position a high self-importance on the moral identity get less involved in unethical opportunistic behaviors than do those who place less importance of self-concept (Aquino et al., 2007; Detert et al., 2008; McFerran, Aquino, & Duffy, 2010). For instance, and as demonstrated by Aquino et al. (2007), the moral disengagement rendered into unethical behaviors and degraded moral feelings and emotions towards reaction to war for those who position a low level of self- importance on moral identities. Hence, by identifying strongly with moral traits, we find that high level moral identity individuals tend to disengage in unethical opportunistic behaviors than those with low level of it (Kennedy et al., 2017).

The study of Aquino and Reed (2002) demonstrated that there are two dimensions for moral identity, which was consistent with Erikson’s conception (1964) of an identity as being rooted in the very core of one’s being and as being true to oneself in action. They labeled them as the dimensions of internalization and symbolization. The first (Internalization) corresponds to the level to which the set of moral traits is central to the self-concept, where the latter (Symbolization) corresponds to the level to which such traits are expressed explicitly via the individual’s action in social context. This actually corresponds to the definition of Laughlin’s (1970) to Symbolization as the process “through which an external object becomes the disguised outward representation for another internal and hidden object, idea, person, or complex” (p. 414).

*Based on the above, we propose the following hypothesis:*

*H3: “Moral Identity have a significant, direct and positive role in the relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees’ Opportunistic Behaviors”.*

This hypothesis could be divided into two sub-hypotheses as follows:

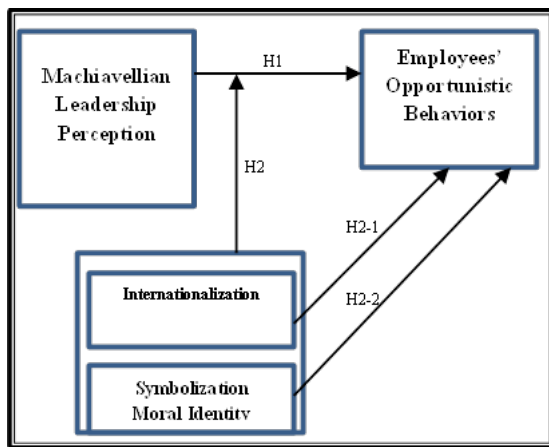
*H3-1 “The Internalization Moral Identity have a significant, direct and positive role in the relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees’ Opportunistic Behaviors”,*

*H3-2 “The Symbolization Moral Identity have a significant, direct and positive role in the relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees’ Opportunistic Behaviors”.*

## 2 Conceptual Frameworks

In the current study, researchers have developed a conceptual framework to depict the relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees’ Opportunistic Behaviours, with the moderating variables of Moral Identity as follows:





**Fig.1:** Study Conceptual Framework Source: Developed by Researchers.

### 3 Methodology and Procedures

#### 3.1 Study Variables and Measurement

This study contains three types of variables:

- (1) Independent Variable, represented in “Machiavellian Leadership Perception”.
- (2) Moderating Variables, represented in “Moral Identity” which Includes two dimensions, namely “Internalization Moral Identity” and “Symbolization Moral Identity”.
- (3) Dependent Variable, which is “Employees’ Opportunistic Behaviors”.

#### 3.2 Measures

A self-reported questionnaire was employed to assess employees' perceptions of Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP), The Internalization Moral Identity (IMI), The Symbolization Moral Identity (SMI) and Employees’ Opportunistic Behaviors (EOB). The questionnaire’s content was about the perceptions of these variables. The first part of the questionnaire has addressed the demographic and functional variables, including Gender, Age, Marital Status, Educational level, Years of

Experience, and Position. The Second part of the questionnaire was developed to assess Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP) which was measured using a 14 -item scale which was developed at the first time by Dahling et al. (2009).

“My department chair believes that lying is necessary to maintain a competitive advantage over others.” According to moral identity, this variable includes two dimensions, The Internalization Moral Identity (IMI), The Symbolization Moral Identity (SMI), ) that had been measured using a 10 -item scale 5 items for each dimension, the original scale was developed by Aquino and Reed (2002), this scale begins with the following text “The person with these characteristics could be you or it could be someone else. For a moment, visualize in your mind the kind of person who has these characteristics. Imagine how that person would think, feel, and act. When you have a clear image of what this person would be like, answer the following questions.” Sample items of this scale are “It would make me feel good to be a person who has these characteristics. (Internalization)” and “The fact that I have these characteristics is communicated to others by my membership in certain organizations (Symbolization) finally, Employees’ Opportunistic Behaviors was assessed by using 6 items depending on original scale that developed by Dwyer and Oh (1988) that Adopted later by Ping (1993) and Joshi and Stump (1999) .Each one of the respondents was asked to state his Owen level of agreement on a five-point Likert scale (started from 1=strongly disagree to 5=strongly agree). We use the back-translation method for preparing an Arabic version of the mentioned questionnaire. The questionnaire was made a pre-tested using the validity and reliability testing, the adjusted version of the questionnaire was based on the mentioned results as will be demonstrate later.

#### 3.3 Validity and Reliability

Cronbach Alpha - which is the most commonly used statistical method in measuring the reliability- was employed, the square root of Alpha coefficient was reached to define the validity of the variables, upon which, the validity of the measurement structure is determined. Table (1) below summarizes these results:

**Table 1:** Validity and Reliability.

Ser.	Variables	Items	Alpha	Alpha R <sup>2</sup>
1	Machiavellian Leadership perception	14	0.930	0.964
2	Employees’ Opportunistic Behaviors	6	0.834	0.913
3	The Internalization Moral Identity	5	0.856	0.925
4	The Symbolization Moral Identity	5	0.859	0.926

Table (1) above displays the results of Validity and Reliability analysis. These results indicate that all variables are reliable and valid as all coefficients were relatively high, as the lowest value that was recorded for the reliability coefficient was 0.834 for Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors. Regarding to validity coefficient, confidence was high for all study variables as well, in this regard the least coefficient was 0.913 for Employees' Opportunistic Behaviours. Hence, these results indicate that there is a good level of internal consistency for all items used for assessing the study variables, and consequently, the study instrument was logically and statistically valid

for collecting the needed field data.

### 3.4 Study Population and Sample Characteristics

The study population is represented in the private and governmental service sector in Bahrain. Researchers adopted the convenience sample through distribution of an online survey. Sample size was (295) items, the collected right surveys was (227) with a response rate of 76.9%. Table (2) below shows the descriptive statistics of the sample's demographic variables.

**Tables 2:** Descriptive statistics for nominal (categorized) variables.

Characteristics	Category	Number	%
<b>Gender:</b>	Male	115	50.7
	Female	112	49.3
<b>Age:</b>	20-30	62	27.3
	30-40	63	41.0
	40 - 50	52	22.9
	50 or above	20	8.8
<b>Marital Statue:</b>	Married	163	71.8
	Single	58	25.6
	Divorced	6	2.6
<b>Educational level:</b>	High school	24	10.6
	Bachelor	89	10.6
	Master	72	31.7
	PhD	42	18.5
<b>Years of Experience:</b>	Below 1 year	13	5.7
	2-5	35	15.4
	5-10	50	22.0
	10 and above	128	56.4
<b>Position:</b>	Executive	101	44.5

Table 2 above displays descriptive statistics for the nominal (categorized) items. As is shown in table 50.7 % of the respondents were males, while 49.3% were females. According to age, the age was categorized into four categories started with (20-30) with an interval of ten years among them, these categories were recorded of 27.3%, 41.0%, 22.9% and 8.8% respectively. Regarding Marital Statue, this factor was categorized into 3 categories named

Married, Single, Divorced, these categories were rated of 71.8%, 25.6%, 2.6% respectively. As for educational level, this item was categorized into four categories which named High school, Bachelor, master, and PhD, these categories were recorded of 10.6%, 10.6%, 31.7%, 18.5% respectively.

Regarding years of experience, this item was divided into

four categories named (Below 1 year) with ratio of 5.7%, (from 2 - less than 5 years) with ratio of 15.4%, (from 5 - less than 10 years) with ratio of 22.0%, and (10 years and above) with ratio of 56.4%. Finally, regarding Position, there is executive position with ratio of 44.5%, middle managers with ratio of 48.9%, and top manager that rated of 6.2%.

## 4 Data Analysis and Discussion

The researchers used SPSS for analyzing the collected data. The following techniques were deployed:

- Descriptive statistical (i.e., frequencies' ratios, means, standard deviations, and Pearson correlation).

- Simple and multiple regression analyses were used to test the relationships that included in the study model.

Table (3) displays the descriptive statistics of the study variables and their correlations.

The result indicates that there is a significant and positive relation between Machiavellian leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors, but the relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and both of the internalization moral identity, and the symbolization moral identity were not significant, while the correlation between Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors and both of the internalization moral identity, and the symbolization moral identity were negative and significant. Finally, the results indicate that there is a strong positive and significant correlation between the two sub-variables of moral identity.

#### 4.1 Testing the First Hypothesis:

The first hypothesis is formulated as follows:

*H<sub>1</sub>: "There is a positive significant relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors".*

To test this hypothesis, simple regression analysis was conducted.

Table (4) results indicate that:

- Pearson correlation reveals that there is a positive and significant correlation between Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP) and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors (EOB).
- The Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> confirms that Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP) interprets 5.7% of Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors (EOB) variance.
- Sig. F confirms the significance of these results at  $P < 0.01$ , furthermore, sig T. refers that the regression coefficients (B & Beta) are significant.
- Depending on these results, the first hypothesis that stated that "*There is a positive significant relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors*". could be accepted.

#### 4.2 Testing the Second Hypothesis:

The second hypothesis is formulated as follows:

*H<sub>2</sub>: "There is a negative significant relationship between Moral Identity and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors".*

To test this hypothesis, a multiple regression analysis was conducted.

**Tables 3:** Study variables descriptive data and Correlations among them

Variables	M	S.D	Machiavellian Leadership perception	Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors	The Internalization Moral Identity	The Symbolization Moral Identity
Machiavellian Leadership perception	2.839	0.917	1			
Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors	2.677	0.920	0.247**	1		
The Internalization Moral Identity	3.681	1.046	0.043	- 0.281**	1	
The Symbolization Moral Identity	3.452	0.968	0.057	- 0.122 *	.810**	1

\*\*  $P < 0.01$

**Table 4:** Results of simple regression analysis for the relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors.

Predictor	Beta	B	R	R <sup>2</sup>	T. Value	Sig. T
Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP)	0.247	0.248	0.247	0.061	3.828	0.000**
Constant		10.210				
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>		0.057				
F		14.657				
F Sig.		0.000**				

**Table 5:** Results of multiple regression analysis for the relationship between the two dimensions of moral identity and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors.

Predictor	Beta	B	R	R <sup>2</sup>	T. Value	Sig. T
The Internalization Moral Identity (IMI)	-.467	-.531	-4.941	0.000	**	The Internalization Moral Identity (IMI)
The Symbolization Moral Identity (SMI)		.292				
Constant		15.154				
R		0.334				
R <sup>2</sup>		0.112				

\*\* P&lt;0.01

Table (5) results indicate that:

- Pearson correlation reveals that there is a negative and significant correlation between both of the internalization moral identity (IMI), the symbolization moral identity (SMI) on one hand and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors (EOB) on the other.
- The Adjusted R<sup>2</sup> confirms that the internalization moral identity (IMI), and the symbolization moral identity (SMI) together interpret 10.4% of Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors (EOB) variance.
- Sig. F confirms the significance of these results at  $P < 0.01$ ; furthermore, sig T. indicates that the regression coefficients (B & Beta) are significant.
- Based on these results, the second hypothesis that states "There is a negative significant relationship

Behaviors" could be accepted.

### 4.3 Testing the Third Hypothesis

*H<sub>3</sub>: "Moral Identity have a significant, direct and positive role in the relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors".*

This hypothesis could be divided into two sub-hypotheses as follows:

*H<sub>3-1</sub>: "The Internalization Moral Identity have a significant, direct and positive role in the relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors".*

*H<sub>3-2</sub>: "The Symbolization Moral Identity have a significant, direct and positive role in the relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors".*



*Behaviors*”.

To test the first sub-hypotheses, a multiple regression analysis was used through interring both of Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP), The Internalization Moral Identity (IMI) and The Interaction between them (MLP\*IMI) as predictors, and then, the researchers will

compare the coefficients of this regression (B & Beta) for the recent model with the same coefficients for the first hypothesis, and determine the differences between them to confirm if there is a moderating effect or not. This technique for testing the moderation named Baron and Kenny's Method for Moderation (Baron and Kenny, 1986). These results are shown in the tables (6,7) below:

**Table 6:** Results of multiple regression analysis.

Predictor	Beta	B	R	R <sup>2</sup>	T. Value	Sig. T
The Internalization Moral Identity (IMI)	.467	.531	4.941	0.000	**	The Internalization Moral Identity (IMI)
The Symbolization Moral Identity (SMI)				.292		
Constant				15.154		
R				0.334		
R <sup>2</sup>				0.112		

\*\* P<0.01

**Table 7:** The moderating role for the internalization moral identity

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	Stage 1 Before Mediator			Stage 2 After Moderator		
		B	t. value	sig .t	B	t. value	sig .t
Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors	Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP)	0.248	3.8258	0.000**	0.177	0.611	0.542 NS
	The Internalization Moral Identity (IMI)				-.0365	-2.475	0.014**
	The Interaction (MLP*IMI)				0.194	0.787	0.432 NS
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.061			0.149		
	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.057			0.138		
	F	14.657			13.018		
	(Sig. F)	0.000**			0.000**		

\*\* P<0.01

Table (6) above indicates that the effects for both of Machiavellian leadership perception (MLP), and the Interaction variable (MLP\*IMI) on Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors are not significant. While the Internalization Moral Identity (IMI) itself has a negative effect on the employees' opportunistic behaviors. R<sup>2</sup> indicates that the three variables together interpret 14.9% of the variance of the employees' opportunistic behaviors. Sig F. indicates that these results are significant at  $P < 0.01$ , in addition. Sig T. refers that the regression coefficients (B, Beta) are significant. In order to determine the nature of the interactive role, table (7) below summarizes the regression models before and after entering of the moderator.

Table (7) above shows the two stages of the regression analysis that deployed to detect the nature of the interactive role of The Internalization Moral Identity (IMI) in the relationship between Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP) and the Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors. In the stage one, results indicate that there is a positive and significant effect of Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP) on Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors, as (F) value is (14.657), which was significant at level of significance  $p < 0.01$ , and Adj. R<sup>2</sup> value is (5.7%), and (B) value which determine the degree of the effect was (0.248).

In stage two, we induced the internalization moral identity (IMI), and the interactive variable Which expresses the interaction between Machiavellian Leadership Perception and The Internalization Moral Identity (MLP\*IMI), all of them were induced alongside of Machiavellian leadership

three variables were presented as predictors. This procedure

led to an increasing of the Adj. R<sup>2</sup> to be (0.138), that means that there is an added interpretive content as a result of the introducing of the Interactive variable, in addition, (F) value has decreased to be (13.018) and (B) value for Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP) has also decreased to be (0.177). Those results were significant at  $p < 0.01$ . As a result of the moderator, the significant effect of the independent variable Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP) in stage one was canceled, as this effect in the stage two was not significant, hence, The Internalization Moral Identity (IMI) has a partially moderating role in the direct relation between Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP) and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors.

Based on these results, the first sub-hypotheses that stated that The Internalization Moral Identity have a significant, direct and positive role in the relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors. Is partially accepted.

To test the second sub-hypotheses, a multiple regression analysis was used through entering both of Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP), The Symbolization Moral Identity (SM) and The Interaction between them (MLP\*SM) as predictors, and then, the researchers will compare the coefficients of this regression (B & Beta) for the recent model, with the same coefficients for the first hypothesis, and determine the differences between them to confirm if there is a moderating effect or not. These results are shown in the tables (8,9) below:

**Table 8:** Results of multiple regression analysis for the moderating role of The Symbolization Moral Identity.

Predictors	B	Beta	T	Sig. T	Effect
Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP)	-0.063	-0.063	-.524	.601	NS
The Symbolization Moral Identity (SM)	-0.446	-0.507	-5.511	.000	**
The Interaction (MLP*SM)	0.462	0.438	3.098	.002	**
Constant	10.352				
R	0.426				
R <sup>2</sup>	0.182				
Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.171				
F	16.525				
F Sig.	0.000**				

\*\* $p < 0.01$

**Table 9:** The moderating role for The Symbolization Moral Identity.

Dependent Variable	Independent Variables	Stage 1 Before Mediator			Stage 2 After Moderator		
		B	t. value	sig .t	B	t. value	sig .t
Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors	Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP)	0.248	3.8258	0.000**	-0.063	-.524	.601 NS
	The Symbolization Moral Identity (SM)				-0.446	-5.511	.000 **
	The Interaction (MLP*SM)				0.462	3.098	.002 **
	R <sup>2</sup>	0.061			0.182		
	Adj. R <sup>2</sup>	0.057			0.171		
	F	14.657			16.525		
	(Sig. F)	0.000**			0.000**		

\*\* P&lt;0.01

Table (8) above indicates that the effects for both of The Symbolization Moral Identity (SM), and the Interaction variable (MLP\*SM) on Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors are significant. While the Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP) has a nonsignificant effect on the employees' opportunistic behaviors. R<sup>2</sup> indicates that the three variables together interpret 17.1% of the variance of the employees' opportunistic behaviors. Sig F. indicates that these results are significant at  $P < 0.01$ , in addition. Sig T. refers that the regression coefficients (B, Beta) are significant. As shown above in the first sub-hypotheses, in order to determine the nature of the interactive role, table (9) below summarizes the regression models before and after entering of the moderator.

Table (9) above shows the two stages of the regression analysis that used to detect the nature of the interactive role of The Symbolization Moral Identity (SM) in the relationship between Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP) and the Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors. In the stage one, results indicate that there is a positive and significant effect of Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP) on Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors, as (F) value is (14.657), which was significant at level of significance  $p < 0.01$ , and Adj. R<sup>2</sup> value is (5.7%), and (B) value which determine the degree of the effect was (0.248).

In stage two, we induced The Symbolization Moral Identity (SM), and the interactive variable Which expresses the interaction between Machiavellian Leadership Perception

and The Symbolization Moral Identity (SM) (MLP\*SM), all of them were induced alongside of Machiavellian leadership perception (MLP) in the second regression equation, the three variables were presented as predictors. This procedure led to an increasing of the Adj. R<sup>2</sup> to be (17.1%), These results were significant at  $p < 0.01$ , which means that there is an added interpretive content as a result of the introducing of the Interactive variable, in addition, (F) value has increased to be (16.525). According to the changes of (B) value for Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP), B value has decreased to be (-0.063). As a result of the moderator, the significant effect of the independent variable Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP) in stage one was completely canceled, as this effect in the stage two was not significant, hence, The Symbolization Moral Identity (SM) has a fully moderating role in the direct relation between Machiavellian Leadership Perception (MLP) and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors.

Based on these results, the second sub-hypotheses that stated that *The Symbolization Moral Identity have a significant, direct and positive role in the relationship between Machiavellian Leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors.* Is accepted.

Results reveal that Machiavellian leadership perception has a positive impact on Employees' opportunistic behaviors, which is consistent with other studies, such as Chohan (2020) and Yin et al. (2020). This result could be

interpreted as when employees perceive Machiavellian features in their leaders, who believe that the mean justifies the end and try to achieve their goals no matter what they would step over along their path in doing so, employees would be tending more towards acting immorally and engage in the opportunistic behaviors, in the footsteps of their leaders. Finally, this result could be concluded that some of the employees still effected by their leader and mostly they will behave in the acceptable manner to them. This phenomenon can be interpreted by social conformity theory that presented first time by Berghem (1994).

Concerning the relationship between Moral Identity and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors. Pearson correlation and regression analysis reveal that a negative and significant relationship between both of the internalization moral identity and the symbolization moral identity on one hand, and employees' opportunistic behaviors on the other. This agrees with Blasi, 1980, 2004; Lapsley and Lasky, 2001 and Aquino and Reed, 2002. As as the moral identity, that refers to a sense of morality and moral values that are central to one's identity, hence enjoying it makes the individual tends to act ethically. On the other side, as the nature of the opportunistic behaviors are immoral and unethical, those who enjoy a high level of moral identity stay away from engaging in them.

Regarding the moderating role of moral identity in the relationship between Machiavellian leadership perception and employees' opportunistic behaviors, results indicate that when internalization moral identity has a partially significant moderating role in this path, we find that symbolization moral identity has a fully moderating role in this regard. This result could be interpreted as by both dimensions of moral identity, Internalization and the symbolization moral identity, could play the role of the main driver for the individual's behavioral choices.

## 5 Conclusions

This study adds a new perspective to the relationship between Machiavellian leadership perception on Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors through shedding light on the moderating role played by the employee's moral identity, which is divided into two dimensions, The Internalization Moral Identity, and The Symbolization Moral Identity.

This current study contributes to an emerging discourse on the ethical ambiguities surrounding several prosocial acts with the intention of protecting and promoting the organizations interests alongside with their members and stakeholders.

Results demonstrate a significant impact of this type of leadership on the Opportunistic Behaviors engaged by employees who tend to go on the footsteps with their manager, which is consistent with findings of other studies as mentioned earlier. This implication has serious

consequences on the organizational behavior. It means that the more Machiavellian leadership occurs at an organization, the more its employees would tend to engage in unethical behaviors. This is stemmed from political behavior as per the conformity theory, they tend to get along with their manager, who has "power" over them. So, if they behave opportunistically, they think they might get along with the Machiavellian leadership style of the manager.

Findings also reveal a moderating significant role of the employees' moral identity in the path of the relationship between Machiavellian leadership perception and Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors, with internalization moral identity it is a partially significant moderating role, while with symbolization moral identity it is a fully moderating role. This indicates that the moral identity plays a buffer role between the Machiavellian tendency of the leader and the tendency to engage in opportunistic behaviors by the employees.

## 6 Limitations and Future Research

There are some limitations to the current study. First, it used a self-reported survey, in which respondents had to report on their own perception of their leadership style, their own perception of their moral identity, and their own perception of their behaviors, opportunistic or not. This makes the study exposed to the respondents' bias. This should be considered when going through the results and findings of the study. Second, the study belongs to the cross-sectional type that includes data collection at the same point in time. To deal with this limitation further, researches could be using longitudinal methodology. Finally, the results of this study were based on collecting information from employees of different service sector industries in Bharani context, hence, the results and conclusions could not be generalized on all other business sectors in Bahrain. The current results and their implications could contribute to shed light on some dark aspects in the literature. However, the literature still needs further investigations in many of human resources and organizational behavior areas. Having said that, the current study suggests some topics for future research, such as the relationship between Servant Leadership Style Employees' Opportunistic Behaviors, with the moderating role of Leader- Member exchange (LMX). Furthermore, researchers suggest studying the relationship between ethical leadership style and employees' opportunistic behaviors with the mediating role of supervisor's organizational embodiment. It is expected that the study of these leadership styles would lead to different findings about the employees' willing to engage in opportunistic behaviors.

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