

## БИОЛОГИЧЕСКИЕ НАУКИ



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### Manipulativeness as a Syndrome Component in Various Personality Disorders

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#### Abstract

The article studies the phenomenon of manipulation in the context of personality disorders, focusing on its relationship with Machiavellianism, mentalization deficits, and cognitive impairments. The aim of the study is to analyse the mechanisms of manipulative behaviour and its role in clinical-and-psychological practice. The study focuses on various forms of personality disorders and encompasses the analysis of manipulative strategies, neuropsychological factors, and psychodiagnostic techniques. The results ascertain the correlation between the manipulative behaviour and the presence of personality disorders, and reveal the influence of mentalization deficits on the development of manipulative strategies. The relationship between cognitive features, emotional intelligence, and a tendency to manipulation was established. The practical importance of the research lies in its contribution to improvement of the methods of diagnosing and treating manipulative behaviour, which opens up prospects for psychotherapy and development of new approaches to clinical psychology.

**Keywords:** manipulativeness, personality disorder, psychopathy, mentalization, Machiavellianism

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### Манипулятивность как составляющая синдрома комплекса при различных расстройствах личности

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#### Аннотация

Рассматривается феномен манипуляции в контексте личностных расстройств, с акцентом на его взаимосвязь с макиавеллизмом, дефицитом ментализации и когнитивными нарушениями. Цель исследования — анализ механизмов манипулятивного поведения и его роли в клинико-психологической практике. Объектом выступают различные формы расстройств личности, а последовательность анализа охватывает изучение манипулятивных стратегий, нейропсихологических факторов и психодиагностических методик. Результаты подтверждают взаимосвязь манипулятивности с наличием личностных расстройств, выявляют влияние дефицита ментализации на формирование подобных стратегий. Установлена зависимость между когнитивными особенностями, эмоциональным интеллектом и склонностью к манипуляции. Практическая значимость работы заключается в совершенствовании методов диагностики и психокоррекции манипулятивного поведения, что открывает перспективы для психотерапии и разработки новых подходов в клинической психологии.

**Ключевые слова:** манипулятивность, расстройство личности, психопатия, ментализация, макиавеллизм

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**Introduction.** Manipulation is a complex psychological phenomenon that combines purposeful attempts to control the behaviour of others for achieving various goals. One of the central concepts that allows us to define a manipulative personality is Machiavellianism, which is a conscious set of attitudes and behavioural strategies characterized by the use of means and techniques of pressure.

Clinical and psychological studies demonstrate a close relationship between manipulative behaviour and personality disorders, particularly the deficit in the ability to mentalize, which is the ability to adequately interpret the emotional state of oneself and others. At the neuropsychological and cognitive-emotional levels, manipulativeness is caused by a combination of biological abnormalities, empathy deficits, and specific disorders of mental regulation. Various manifestations of manipulativeness are observed in paranoid, antisocial, narcissistic, hysterical, borderline, and other types of personality disorders.

**Research Results.** Manipulation is often considered as a way of controlling others and a form of functional communication carried out against the will of the partner and aimed at achieving certain goals. One of the important psychological concepts that makes it possible to determine the manipulative orientation of the individual is the concept of Machiavellianism. Professor V.V. Znakov defines this as a special behavioural attitude, which is characterised by the use of various manipulative actions and strategies as means of achieving certain goals and interests [1].

Machiavellianism is a set of attitudes consciously conceived by an individual that determine the formation of goals and ways to achieve them. The variety of manipulative strategies (guilt, lies, fear, demonstration of suicidal intent, mental and/or physical pressure) raises the problem of differentiation of pathological and acceptable forms of manipulative behaviour.

In accordance with the criterion of awareness, manipulation can perform various functions. In the case of using involuntary forms of manipulation, which include primitive defense mechanisms, the basic needs of an individual are mainly satisfied, while conscious manipulative strategies, characteristic of Machiavellianism, are aimed at achieving specific benefits [2].

The study of manipulation as a phenomenon has attracted the attention of many scientists. One of the first works considering manipulation in interpersonal interactions as a criterion of personality disorder was the work of H.M. Cleckley "The Mask of Sanity" (1941) [3]. In subsequent studies, special attention was paid to metacognitive abilities such as mentalization, emotional intelligence, psychological insight and intersubjective susceptibility. These abilities play an important role in understanding the behaviour of others and adapting to complex social situations. Various clinical-and-psychological studies demonstrate that manipulation is often associated with personality disorders (psychopathy). In its most severe forms, manipulation can contribute to the chronicity of mental illnesses, decreased treatment adherence and inefficiency of psychotherapeutic intervention. These factors negatively affect the therapeutic alliance, which is critical in clinical practice.

The International Classification of Diseases, 10<sup>th</sup> Revision, identifies the following personality disorders:

- Paranoid personality disorder (F60.0);
- Schizoid personality disorder (F60.1);
- Antisocial personality disorder (F60.2);
- Emotionally unstable personality disorder (F60.3) with subtypes: impulsive (F60.30) and borderline (F60.31);
- Histrionic personality disorder (F60.4);
- Anankastic personality disorder (F60.5);
- Anxious (avoidant) personality disorder (F60.6);
- Dependent personality disorder (F60.7);
- Other specific personality disorders (F60.8);
- Unspecified personality disorder (F60.9);
- Mixed personality disorder (F61.0) [4].

Manipulativeness as a personality trait is expressed in the peculiarities of emotional responses, beliefs, motivational attitudes, and behavioural strategies. Manifestations of manipulativeness vary depending on the type of personality disorder. According to research, difficulties with mentalization are characteristic of many mental disorders, especially in conditions of their comorbidity.

Machiavellianism has certain parallels with psychopathy, including dissatisfaction with close relationships, impulsivity, aggressive behaviour, emotional impoverishment, and lack of empathy. At the neuropsychological level, research shows that damage to the frontal lobes can lead to decreased control over behaviour, which contributes to the emergence of cynical attitudes and increased Machiavellian tendencies. Along with this, disorders in mentalization processes, i.e., in the ability to adequately interpret the emotional state of oneself and others, are an important factor in the formation of manipulative behaviour. Thus, the combination of biological dysfunctions and cognitive-emotional disorders causes pathogenic patterns of interpersonal interactions characteristic of personality disorders.

Research conducted to study the relationship between mentalization, Machiavellianism and personality disorders determines the primacy of communication disorders in connection with a deficit in the ability to mentalize, and not in connection with the lack of desire to understand others. Machiavellians, like primary psychopaths, focus primarily on pronounced emotions, ignoring more subtle emotional signals.

The development of manipulative strategies is closely related to cognitive process disorders, empathy deficit and specific features of mental regulation.

In describing schizoid personality disorder, Laing gives an example of a response based on the type of mentalization deficiency. A person suffering from this disorder experiences difficulties in overcoming ontological anxiety without using the strategy of "objectifying" another person (Laing, 1995) [5]. Such disorders of the representation of the Other, mechanisms and causes are also described by P. Fonagy in the concept of mentalization.

In the presence of borderline personality disorder, regular and unpredictable jumps from a sufficiently satisfactory level of mentalization to disorganization of the concept of the mental Other are characteristic. Often in this case, a deficit of mentalization is found, which manifests itself in a lack of awareness of one's own involvement in the situation, difficulties in understanding the hierarchy of activity and polymotivation, both one's own and that of others, which leads to rigid, specific, superficial assessments and, as a consequence, to a decrease in criticality. M.M. Linehan writes: "... Undoubtedly, individuals with borderline personality disorder influence other people, often the most effective pattern is parasuicide or the threat of suicide, in some situations - complaints of severe pain and suffering, some kind of crisis requiring help from others ..." [6]. Many researchers consider manipulateness as a sign, including antisocial personality disorder. Describing antisocial personality disorder, Davis D.D. writes that the behaviour of these individuals can change significantly — from manipulation to direct attack. Manipulative behaviour of antisocial personalities is manifested in the peculiarities of the emotional sphere, ideas about themselves and other people, in beliefs, and behavioural strategies.

Specific manifestations of manipulateness in antisocial personality disorder are identified by researcher N. McWilliams. The author believes that with this type of personality disorder, it is difficult for individuals to recognize the presence of natural emotions in themselves, since this causes them to associate it with weakness and vulnerability, while there is a pronounced need to confirm their own influence on others through manipulation [7].

A number of studies consider manipulateness as one of the signs of narcissistic personality disorder. According to A.T. Beck, A. Freeman, manipulateness in narcissistic personality disorder is manifested in specific behavioural strategies, obtaining benefits from interpersonal relationships [8]. B. Bursten also considered manipulateness as a sign of narcissistic personality disorder, according to him, the essence is presented by the diagnostic criterion, which is the organizing principle of the psychopathic personality and consists in the conscious use of manipulative strategies. At the same time, the author emphasizes that this feature is associated not with the delinquent orientation of the personality, but with the internal motivation of the individual [9].

Psychiatrist P.B. Gannushkin described the tendency to deceit and, accordingly, to manipulateness, as a sign of hysterical personality disorder. At the same time, he identified the following characteristics:

- 1) the desire to attract attention to oneself by any means;
- 2) lack of understanding of objective reality both in relation to others and in relation to oneself.

It also indicates that this personality disorder is characterised by behavioural patterns of theatricality, deceit, emotional blackmail (showing tears, hysteria, acting out scenes, etc.) [10].

Paranoid personality disorder is characterised by such manifestations as an unreasonable tendency to evaluate the actions of others in terms of deliberate threat and danger; in this case, the strategy of manipulation is expressed in beliefs, bias, control, and suspicion.

In order to study manipulation, the characteristics of behavioural strategies, manifestations, influencing factors, etc. in clinical practice and for research purposes, the following methodological tools are used:

- Thematic Apperception Test (TAT), for analysing the cognitive and emotional aspects of representations;
- Questionnaire for diagnosing the ability to empathize (Mehrabian-Epstein, adapted by Orlov and Emelyanov);
- Mach-IV questionnaire (Christie R. & Geis F.L. in Znakov's adaptation);
- Mayer-Salovey-Caruso Emotional Intelligence Test;
- Rorschach test;
- Psychological Mindness Scale (PMS) for assessing the availability of internal experience;
- Rosenzweig Frustration Reaction Test;
- Leary's method for diagnosing interpersonal relationships.

**Conclusion.** Thus, the analysis of clinical-and-psychological studies confirms that manipulateness is a complex phenomenon that requires detailed study within the framework of specific personality disorders. Its formation and development is determined by many factors, including mentalization abilities, emotional intelligence, empathy and cognitive characteristics. Understanding the mechanism of manipulateness is of significant importance for diagnostics, therapy and scientific research in the field of psychology and psychiatry.

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