
Relationship between perceived workplace envy and job performance in Egypt: Moderating effect of self-esteem

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● **ABSTRACT.** L'invidia percepita è un'emozione prevalente sul posto di lavoro che può influenzare il comportamento organizzativo e le relazioni interpersonali. L'invidia è collegata all'ostilità verso gli altri: tuttavia, in Egitto, l'attenzione sull'invidia percepita e sulle sue conseguenze nel posto di lavoro è limitata e questo studio è il primo ad indagarla dal punto di vista egiziano. Lo studio esamina le relazioni tra l'invidia percepita sul posto di lavoro e la prestazione lavorativa (comprende: prestazione nel compito, prestazione contestuale e comportamento controproducente sul lavoro). Inoltre, viene indagato l'effetto moderatore dell'autostima su queste relazioni. Un campione di convenienza di 303 dipendenti egiziani (121 maschi e 182 femmine) è stato selezionato dal settore privato e pubblico in Egitto. I soggetti hanno risposto a tre questionari che valutavano l'invidia percepita sul posto di lavoro, le prestazioni lavorative e l'autostima. I risultati hanno dimostrato che esiste una significativa relazione di correlazione negativa tra prestazioni contestuali e invidia percepita sul posto di lavoro, mentre un comportamento controproducente sul lavoro è stato positivamente associato con l'invidia percepita sul posto di lavoro. Inoltre, i risultati della regressione hanno rivelato che l'autostima modera solo la relazione tra l'invidia percepita sul posto di lavoro e le prestazioni contestuali. I risultati contribuiranno a migliorare la comprensione dell'invidia percepita sul posto di lavoro e dei suoi risultati negativi.

● **SUMMARY.** *Perceived workplace envy is a prevalent emotion. Moreover, envy may influence in organizational behavior and interpersonal relations. Envy is linked with hostility toward others. However, the focus on perceived envy and its consequences at the workplace is limited in Egypt. This study is the first to investigate perceived workplace envy from the Egyptian perspective. Toward this end, the current study examines the relationships between perceived workplace envy and job performance (includes: task performance, contextual performance and counterproductive work behavior). In addition, the study investigates the moderating effect of self-esteem on these relationships. A convenience sample of 303 Egyptian employees (121 males and 182 females) was selected from private and public sectors in Egypt. They responded to three questionnaires that assessed perceived workplace envy, job performance, and self-esteem. The results demonstrated that a significant negative correlation relationship exists between contextual performance and perceived workplace envy, whereas counterproductive work behavior was positively associated with perceived workplace envy. Additionally, the regression results revealed that self-esteem was found to moderate the relationship between perceived workplace envy and contextual performance only. The findings will contribute to the enhancement of the understanding on perceived workplace envy and its negative outcomes.*

Keywords: *Perceived workplace envy, Job performance, Self-esteem, Egypt*

INTRODUCTION

Envy is a prevalent emotion at the workplace (Smith & Kim, 2007), which influences organizational behavior and work context (Eissa & Wyland, 2016; Vidaillet, 2007). In addition, it is an unpleasant and undesirable emotion that stems from the dark side of a person, which may become undeniable and exert a negative impact in the workplace (Mosquera, Parrott & Hurtado de Mendoza, 2010; Van de Ven, Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2009; Vidaillet, 2007).

According to Parrot and Smith (1993), envy occurs when a person lacks or desires the qualities and achievements of others. Smith and Kim (2007) defined envy as “an unpleasant and often painful blend of feelings characterized by inferiority, hostility, and resentment caused by comparison with a person or group of persons who possess something we desire” (p. 49). Although envy and jealousy are often used synonymously, they are distinct concepts. Envy refers to situations in which an individual want what another individual has. Conversely, jealousy pertains to situations in which person Y wants what person X owns. However, person X does not want to share ownership with person Y. Additionally, envy involves two persons (envier and envied), whereas jealousy involves three persons and corresponds to the emotions aroused when one person fears losing a valued relationship to a rival (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Sheppard, 2017; Smith, Parrott, Diener, Hoyle & Kim, 1999). However, envy and jealousy are unpleasant and painful emotions (Sheppard, 2017). Additionally, envy is considered one of the forms of negative interpersonal relations at the workplace (Eissa & Wyland, 2016). Moreover, envy is linked with hostility, negativity toward others such as harming the envied, putting the envied down, diminish the qualities of others and or resentful feelings (Tai, Narayanan & McAllister, 2012). In addition, envy decreases one’s desire to establish relationships and openness to sharing achievements and information with others (Dunn & Schweitzer, 2004; Eissa & Wyland, 2016). Furthermore, envy can be a predictor of mental health issues, such as stress, anxiety, and depression, which may lead to further costs for health care in organizations (Erdil & Müceldili, 2014). Goetzl, Guindon, Turshen and Ozminkowski (2001) illustrated that approximately 50% of costs incurred in the workplace is linked to mental health issues. Envious feelings may reduce job and group satisfaction and promote withdrawal, turnover intention, and decreased commitment (Duffy & Shaw, 2000; Tai et al., 2012). Furthermore, envy increases exhaustion,

burnout, and poor job engagement (Erdil & Müceldili, 2014; Tai et al., 2012).

Envy is considered a sensitive topic because individuals seldom admit feeling envy toward another individual (Mosquera et al., 2010). Previous studies have observed that envy has significant consequences on the envier and envied individuals (Mosquera et al., 2010; Van de Ven et al., 2009; Vidaillet, 2007). The literature on perceived envy in the workplace has paid little attention to the topic, especially in the Egyptian context. Furthermore, the concept of envy is considered with religious specificity, and Egypt is a society with a religious orientation. Moreover, in this line with the religious background of Egypt, as it is stated in the Holy Quran that benign envy is religiously acceptable, because the enviers do not desire to harm others. This is in contrast to malicious envy, which is not acceptable in the Holy Quran. In addition, the majority of previous research has focused on enviers (e.g., Lee, Duffy, Scott & Schippers, 2018; Schaubroeck & Lam, 2004; Tai et al., 2012). Accordingly, overlooking the crucial role of envy generally and at the workplace restricts the understanding of researchers regarding its negative outcomes across numerous levels (e.g., interpersonal relations, individual performance, and incentives) (Tai Tze Suen, 2013). To fill this research gap, the current study focuses on perceived workplace envy. Specifically, it aims to highlight individuals who are envied (target) with a focus on the negative and unpleasant experience of being envied.

Literature review

Perceived workplace envy (PWE). Envy is one of the important workplace constructs that have a significant emotional impact on employees and organizations (Erdil & Müceldili, 2014; Vecchio, 2000). Workplace envy occurs when employees observe injustice in the distribution resources of organizational authorities, promotions, salary, and opportunities (Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017; Tai et al., 2012). Envy can be explained as a result of social comparison between the envier and the target (envied) (Khan, Peretti & Quratulain, 2009). People are more likely to be envious when they consider themselves inferior to another person in any manner (Vrabel, Zeigler-Hill & Southard, 2018). Previous studies proposed that employees who have superior resources than their coworkers frequently become the envied (Hill & Buss, 2008; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017; Wobker, 2015).

Hence, dealing with envy is commanding for employers and employees because it impacts employees' attitude and behavior toward the organization and coworkers (Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017).

Envy can be classified as benign or malicious envy. The first may motivate individuals to excel, thus accordingly reducing the differences between them and the targets of envy through self-enhancement. However, the second is related to undesirable consequences (Erdil & Muceldili, 2014; Tai et al., 2012; Van de Ven et al., 2009). The source of malicious envy is more likely prone to inferiority and hostility, which may bring harm to the envied people or organization (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Erdil & Muceldili, 2014; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017). Furthermore, malicious envy can trigger acts that decrease or eliminate the advantage of others or even risk one's position to hurt the prospects of others (Mosquera et al., 2010; Thompson, Glasø & Martinsen, 2016; Van de Ven et al., 2009).

With respect to the perceived envy at workplace, envied employees may experience negative emotions, which cause dissatisfaction and affect employee performance in a negative manner. In addition, envied employees have to cope with envy, which will consume considerable resources, time, and effort (Huang, Tao & Jiang 2018; Lee et al., 2018). Furthermore, they may feel uncomfortable and anxious as they perceive that their qualities and achievement arouse interpersonal conflict and threaten social relationships and work achievements (Lee et al., 2018). Envy is correlated with psychological and physical pain because it is an unpleasant and uncomfortable feeling (Duffy, Scott, Shaw, Tepper & Aquino, 2012). Such pain fosters stress and frustration at the workplace. When people experience stresses every day, they cannot appropriately deal with it sufficiently (Erdil & Muceldili, 2014). Therefore, the current study seeks to shed light on the people who perceive themselves as targets of envy and its negative consequences at the workplace; it may effect on their interpersonal relations (e.g. abuse against others, making fun, nasty comments, withdrawal behavior), their job performance (e.g. poor task performance, absenteeism) and work context (job satisfaction, job engagement, stressful work environment). Consequently, the envied may perceive envy as stressful event.

Perceived workplace envy and job performance. Job performance (JP) is defined as "the total expected value to the organization of the discrete behavioral episodes that an individual carries out over a standard period of time" (Motowidlo, 2003: p. 39). In addition, job performance is a

concept that consists of behaviors under an employer's control, which contribute to the accomplishment of organizational goals (Campbell & Wiernik, 2015; Koopmans, 2015; Ramos-Villagrasa, Barrada, Fernández-del-Río & Koopmans, 2019). Previous studies conceptualized Job performance from three main domains, namely, task performance, contextual performance (Koopmans, 2015; Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019), and counterproductive work behavior (Koopmans, 2015; Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019; Saad, 2019).

Task performance (TP) refers to activities that contribute to the production of goods or provision of services, such as planning, organizing, and workforce functions that enable efficient organizational functioning (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002; Saad, 2019). It involves behaviors that differ across jobs and job description, such as implementing tasks, ensuring accurate work, planning and organizing, updating knowledge, and solving problems (Koopmans, 2015; Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019; Saad, 2019).

Contextual performance (CP) or organizational citizenship behavior refers to behaviors that contribute to the accomplishment of organization goals by contributing to the psychological and social environments (Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). It comprises behaviors beyond duties, such as, assistance, initiative, volunteerism, proactivity, support, cooperation with others, or enthusiasm to perform extra effort (Koopmans, 2015; Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019; Saad, 2019).

Counterproductive work behaviors (CWBs) can be defined as a worker's behavior that contradicts the organization's legitimate interests and harms or destroys the organization (Koopmans, 2015; Rotundo & Sackett, 2002). It involves destroying company property, presentism, complaining, insulting another employee, doing tasks incorrectly on purpose, gossiping, and misusing privileges (Koopmans, 2015; Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019). Such deviant behaviors are associated with negative outcomes such as, absenteeism, complaining and doing tasks incorrectly on purpose, at the personal and organizational levels (Khan et al., 2009; Koopmans, 2015).

Recent studies suggested that benign envy leads to positive consequences and may predict increased appreciation, willingness to learn, and advice-seeking from the envied (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Lee & Duffy, 2019; Van de Ven et al., 2009), improved motivation to work (Lee & Duffy, 2019), and enhanced job performance (Lee & Duffy, 2019; Schaubroeck & Lam, 2004). However, empirical evidence exists with respect to the relationship between workplace envy and negative

consequences (Erdil & Müceldili, 2014; Koopmans, 2015). As previously mentioned, envy is considered an unpleasant and negative emotion that leads to stress in the workplace. In turn, stress leads to exhaustion, anxiety, and burnout. Additionally, envy negatively affects interpersonal relationships and leads to reduced engagement in organizational roles (Erdil & Müceldili, 2014; Tai et al., 2012) and job performance (Lee et al., 2018). Successful employees who strive to attain incentives, promotions, and other rewards experience stress and negative emotions, which reflect on their job performance when they are perceived as targets of envy by coworkers (Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Mosquera, Parrott & De Mendoza, 2010; Vecchio, 2005).

Envious workers may direct counterproductive behaviors to other employees (Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007). As a result, envied employees may become anxious of the negative and hostile behaviors of envious people, which then weaken their performance (Ereback, 2019; Exline & Lobel, 1999). Khan et al. (2009) found that envy was a significant predictor of counterproductive work behaviors (e.g., withdrawal behavior, gossip, and abuse against others). In addition, employees who perceive envy from others tend to display low levels of job satisfaction (Ereback, 2019; Vecchio, 2005). Lee and colleagues (2018) indicated that envied persons can elicit unpleasant mood or undesirable feelings and anxiety that negatively influence work engagement and job performance. Exline and Lobel (1999) found that being envied reduces person's performance. Furthermore, envied workers are consumed by anxiety, which affects their concentration at work (Khan et al., 2009; Kodewrita, 2012). Being envied influences the motivation of employees (i.e., work engagement) followed by functioning at work in a negative manner (i.e., job performance) (Khan et al., 2009). Furthermore, employees may perceive that envious coworkers threaten their relationships with other employees and supervisors. Additionally, envied workers may feel uncomfortable and anxious because they perceive that their achievement induces relational conflicts at the workplace. In addition, they may fear that coworkers who feel inferior can become hostile and potentially harm their social relationships at the workplace and organizational rewards (e.g., Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Khan et al., 2009; Lee et al., 2018).

Building on the conservation of resources theory (COR), proposed by Stevan E. Hobfoll in 1989 to explain that humans are motivated to maintain their current resources and achieve new resources. COR argued that both maintain resources or

gain new resources depend on persons' appraisals of stressful events and able to cope with these events. Furthermore, COR assumed that people who lack resources more vulnerable to negative outcomes (e.g. burnout, psychological distress, material loss) (Hobfoll & Schumm, 2009). So, envied individuals who appraise workplace envy as stressful situation and suffer from anxiety and unpleasant feelings at the workplace, this appraisal might influence negatively on their job performance. Accordingly, the study expects negative effects on job performance (task performance and contextual performance) and positive relationships with counterproductive work behaviors among individuals who perceive malicious envy from other coworkers. Therefore, the paper presents the following hypotheses.

H₁: there is a negative relationship between perceived workplace envy and task performance and contextual performance.

H₂: there is a positive relationship between perceived workplace envy and counterproductive work behaviors.

Self-esteem as a moderating variable of the relationship between perceived workplace envy and job performance. Self-esteem (SE) can be defined as the degree of subjective evaluation to which individuals perceive themselves as proficient, successful, effective, and worthy, and is considered a fundamental domain of human functioning (McDonald & Leary, 2013; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017). In addition, self-esteem pertains to one's perception of personal worth in terms of value, respect, and confidence (Bayram Arli, Aydemir & Aral, 2018).

The degree of self-esteem was negatively related with malicious and benign envy (Rentzsch, Schröder-Abé & Schütz, 2015; Vrabel et al., 2018). Previous studies have emphasized that people with low levels of self-esteem are more likely to make upward social comparisons than people with high levels of self-esteem (e.g. Brockner, Wiesenfeld & Diekmann, 2009; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017). This finding may explain the negative association between levels of self-esteem and envy that has frequently emerged in past studies (e.g., Rentzsch et al., 2015; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017). Envied individuals with high levels of self-esteem perceive themselves as targets of envy and can respond in a negative manner at the workplace because they tend to concentrate on means to avoid envy, which in turn influences job performance (Tai et al., 2012). Additionally, they spend time and effort in ruminating about being envied by coworkers instead of investing such time and effort in their work (Huang et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2018).

Rentzsch et al. (2015) suggested that triggering relational negative emotions (i.e., envy) contributes to the interpersonal negative or hostile behaviors of envious with low levels of self-esteem. Furthermore, Vrabel et al. (2018) reported that employees with high levels of self-esteem will likely report that their coworkers envy them, whereas the opposite is true for employees with low levels of self-esteem. Therefore, the current study addresses the moderating role of self-esteem in the relationship between perceived workplace envy and job performance. The model of job demands-resources (JD-R) suggests that there is a relationship between job demands and resources and employees well-being (Lee et al., 2018). The JD-R model contains two dimensions; job demands which refer to physical, psychological, social, organizational features of the job that require sustained physical or/ and psychological effort, whereas job resources (job positives) which refer to the physical, social, or organizational factors that help you achieve goals, decrease stress and reduce job demands as well (Demerouti, Bakker, Nachreiner & Schaufeli, 2001). According to the model of job demands-resources (JD-R), an increase in positive resources (personal and job) or decrease in negative job demands improve both organizational outcomes and person job performance (Lee et al., 2018). Accordingly, the current study considers self-esteem as (personal resources) and perceived workplace envy as (job demands) and job performance is considered the outcome. So, the third hypothesis is formulated as follows.

H₃: self-esteem moderates the relationship between perceived workplace envy and job performance.

METHOD

Sample and data collection

The study used a non-probability convenience sample of 303 Egyptian employees (121 males and 182 females). The participants were recruited from the private and public sectors. Participants were visited in their workplace and were asked to fill the questionnaires. Before participation, participants reviewed the consent form and were informed that their participation was strictly voluntary. Subjects were informed that their responses were confidential and would not reported to their organizations. To confirm anonymity, the subjects were informed that their responses and the names of their organizations will remain anonymous. Thus,

the participants were not required to state their names on the forms. The questionnaires were completed in single and group sessions. Each group consists of 3-4 employees. Data were collected on March 2020. Latin square procedure was used to control the sequence of presenting the three questionnaires. Table 1 provides the characteristics of the sample.

Measures

Perceived workplace envy. We reviewed the available literature on perceived workplace envy. Since studies on perceived workplace envy were limited, only one questionnaire developed by Vecchio (2005) was designed for graduated business students to measure feeling of being envied by others and contains only 3-item, To more understand the perceived workplace envy, we conducted a pilot study on 50 employees. Subjects were asked about their experiences of being envied at their work by their co-workers. Based on the results of pilot study and the literature review, we developed an 18-item scale to measure the perception of being envied by coworkers. All items were measured on a five-point Likert scale ranging from 1 (never happens) to 5 (happens all the time), for example, my coworkers envy me for my achievement at work; my colleagues spot each achievement I do.

Job performance was measured using the *Individual Work Performance Questionnaire* (Koopmans, 2015; Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019). This questionnaire is composed of 18-items that measure the three dimensions of job performance, namely, task performance (5 items), contextual performance (8 items), and counterproductive work behavior (5 items). All items require a response on a five-point Likert scale ranging from (1 = never) to (5 = always), for example, "I managed to plan my work so that I finished it on time"; "On my own initiative, I started new task when my old tasks were completed"; "I talked to colleagues about the negative aspects of my work". Two bilingual individuals translated the questionnaire from English to Arabic using the back translation procedure. Then, a native professional translator evaluated the agreement between the English and Arabic forms, which is supposed to be similar to the translated form.

Self-esteem was measured using the Arabic version of the scale (Abdel-Khalek, Korayem & El-Nayal, 2012), which is based on the original version of the self-esteem scale

Table 1 – Participant characteristics

Characteristic	Description
<i>Gender</i>	
Male	39.9%
Female	60.1%
<i>Age</i>	
	Range 20-66 $M = 35.60 \pm SD = 8.33$
<i>Education</i>	
Postgraduate	73.6%
Bachelor	26.1%
High school	.3%
<i>Sector</i>	
Public	66%
Private	34%
<i>Years of experience</i>	
	$M = 11.74 \pm SD = 8.08$

developed by Rosenberg (1965). It is composed of 10-item and rated on a five-point scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). For example, “I feel that I have a number of good qualities, I do not have much to proud of”. Moreover, demographic variables, such as sex, age, education, sector, and years of experience were considered. Table 2 provides the descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of the abovementioned measures.

Notably, all Cronbach’s alpha coefficients were rationally high. To assess the validity of PWE, the author used two procedures. First, the questionnaire was reviewed by a panel of eight experts who assessed the content of the items. The comments of all experts indicated that the used items are valid for measuring PWE. Second, exploratory factor analysis (EFA) is used to explore the factorial structure of PWE. Maximum likelihood factor analysis indicates a cut-off point

of .40 and Kaiser’s criterion of eigenvalues greater than 1 (Field, 2009; Stevens, 1992).

As shown in Table3, two factors are extracted from the items. these factors were named as follows:

1. Malicious envy involves annoying others regarding their success and positive relationships with other employees and supervisors. A total of 13 items were loaded on this factor (for example, my colleagues compare themselves with me all the time; and my coworkers destroy my good relationships with managers) and explained (57.29%) of variance.

2. The spotting factor involves putting employee under close scrutiny regarding every step or achievement inside or outside workplace. Five items were loaded on this factor (for example: my coworkers tell me that they want to achieve what I achieved through my life), and explained (9.62%) of variance.

Table 2 – Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients of variables

Variable	Mean	SD	Cronbach's alpha
<i>Perceived workplace envy (PWE)</i>	52.36	14.56	.954
<i>Task performance (TP)</i>	19.77	3.02	.823
<i>Contextual performance (CP)</i>	17.08	5.69	.884
<i>Counterproductive work behavior (CWB)</i>	14.01	3.87	.791
<i>Self-esteem (SE)</i>	37.19	5.12	.744

A confirmatory factor analysis, using AMOS20, was conducted to confirm the factor structure of the *Perceived Workplace Envy Questionnaire* in the Egyptian culture. The sample consisted of 248 participants (97 males and 151 females); aged 20-56 years ($M = 34.79$; $SD = 7.44$) as shown in Table 4.

It can be shown from the results that the *Perceived Workplace Envy Questionnaire* items have significant factor loadings on the latent variables. The fit indices for the factor structure were above the recommended levels of acceptance.

RESULTS

To test the first two hypotheses, namely, a relationship between exists PWE and JP (positive relationship with CWBs; negative relationship with TP and CP), Pearson's correlation coefficients. For more elaboration simple and multiple regression analysis were calculated, as shown in (Tables 5 to 7).

Results show that a significant negative relationship exists between CP and PWE with 99% confidence interval. Additionally, only a significant positive relationship exists between TP and spotting with 95% confidence interval. In addition, a significant positive relationship was observed between CWBs and PWE with 99% confidence interval. As well as a significant regression equation was found $TP = 10.09 + (.24) (SE) + (.02) (PWE)$ where task performance increase when SE increase and PWE was not significant. Furthermore, a significant regression equation was found $CP = 35.7 - (.38) (SE) - (.09) (PWE)$ where contextual performance increase when both WPE and SE decrease. In addition, a significant regression equation was found $CWB = 16.29 - (.19) (SE) + (.09) (PWE)$ where counterproductive behaviors increase when WPE increase and SE decrease. Accordingly, the study supports the first two hypotheses.

To test the third hypothesis, the study assumes that SE moderates the relationship between PWE and JP. A multiple regression technique was conducted using the standardized scores of the total score for PWE and SE and interaction between them as independent variables (Tables 8 to 10).

Table 3 – Results of exploratory factor analysis

Item	Malicious envy	Spotting
1		.511
2	.598	
3	.912	
4	.932	
5	.929	
6	.766	
7	.837	
8	.738	
9		.844
10	.804	
11	.790	
12	.470	
13		.651
14		.772
15	.830	
16	.916	
17	.600	
18		.687
<i>Eigenvalues</i>	10.31	1.73
<i>Percentage of variance</i>	57.29%	9.62%

Table 4 – Fit indices for the factor structures of the PWE

Items	Malicious envy		Spotting	
	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>t-value</i>	<i>Estimate</i>	<i>t-value</i>
1			.507	10.545**
2	.681	12.963***		
3	.907	18.591***		
4	.918	17.844***		
5	.972	19.773***		
6	.870	17.380***		
7	.874	16.000***		
8	.892	16.708***		
9			.598	10.175***
10	.873	17.246***		
11	.860	15.899***		
12	.752	12.580***		
13			.809	15.277***
14			.849	13.713***
15	.877	18.031***		
16	.935	19.060***		
17	.777	14.317***		
18			.835	13.987***
GFI		.956		
AGFI		.926		
CFI		.996		
RMSEA		.026		

Legenda. GFI = Goodness of Fit Index; AGFI = Adjusted Goodness of Fit Index; CFI = Comparative Fit Index; RMSEA = Root Mean Square Error of Approximation.

*** Coefficient is significant at .001 level.

Table 5 – Pearson’s correlation coefficients between PWE and JP

	Task performance	Contextual performance	Counterproductive work behaviors
	<i>TP</i>	<i>CP</i>	<i>CWBs</i>
<i>Malicious envy</i>	.75	-.199**	.364**
<i>Spotting</i>	.133*	-.267**	.176**
<i>PWE</i>	.097	-.234**	.339**

Legenda. TP = Task performance; CP = Contextual performance; CWB = Counterproductive work behavior.

**Correlation coefficient is significant at the .01 level.

*Correlation coefficient is significant at the .05 level.

Table 6 – Simple regression for the relationship between JP and both of PWE and SE

IV	DV	R ²	F	B	T
	Task performance	.009	2.861	.020	1.691
<i>PWE</i>	Contextual performance	.055	17.401	-.091	-4.171**
	Counterproductive behavior	.115	39.057	.090	6.250**
	Task performance	.159	56.994	.235	7.549**
<i>SE</i>	Contextual performance	.118	40.262	-.382	-6.345**
	Counterproductive behavior	.244	19.025	-.185	-4.362**

**Correlation coefficient is significant at the .01 level.

Table 7 – Multiple regression analysis for the relationship between JP and both of PWE and SE

IV	DV	R ²	F	B	T
<i>SE</i>	Task performance	.167	30.074	.234	7.534**
<i>PWE</i>				.018	1.677
<i>SE</i>	Contextual performance	.169	30.552	-.376	-6.432**
<i>PWE</i>				-.089	-4.301**
<i>SE</i>	Counterproductive behavior	.178	32.479	-.190	-4.800**
<i>PWE</i>				.092	6.577**

**Correlation coefficient is significant at the .01 level.

Table 8 – Multiple regression analysis to test the moderating effect of SE in the relationship between PWE and TP

Independent variables	Regression coefficient	t-value	R ²	F
<i>Z-PWE</i>	.328	2.022*	.176	21.258**
<i>Z-SE</i>	1.197	7.543**		
<i>Interaction</i>	.253	1.785		

Note. Dependent variable = TP.

**Correlation coefficient is significant at the .01 level.

*Correlation coefficient is significant at the .05 level.

Table 9 – Multiple regression analysis to test the moderating effect of SE in the relationship between PWE and CP

Independent variables	Regression coefficient	t-value	R ²	F
Z-PWE	-1.496	-4.957**	.197	24.526**
Z-SE	-1.918	-6.500**		
Interaction	-.855	-3.245**		

Note. Dependent variable = CP.

**Correlation coefficient is significant at the .01 level.

Table 10 – Multiple regression analysis to test for the moderating effect of SE in the relationship between PWE and CWB

Independent variables	Regression coefficient	t-value	R ²	F
Z-PWE	1.391	6.705**	.182	22.239**
Z-SE	-.977	-4.818**		
Interaction	.231	1.274		

Note. Dependent variable = CWB.

**Correlation coefficient is significant at the .01 level.

Multiple regression indicated that only a significant interaction effect was observed between PWE and SE on CP with a .01 confidence level. Therefore, the third hypothesis is partially sustained.

DISCUSSION

Despite the importance of PWE, the literature cites only a few studies on this topic. In addition, this study is the first to view this aspect from the Egyptian perspective. To address the lack of studies, the current paper presents two objectives, namely, 1) to examine the consequences of PWE on JP and 2) the moderating role of SE in the relationship between PWE and JP.

With regard to the first purpose, results revealed that CP is negatively associated with PWE; TP is positively linked with spotting; and a positive relationship exists between CWBs and PWE. These results are in agreement with those of several studies (e.g., Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Erebak, 2019; Exline & Lobel, 1999; Khan et al., 2009). In addition, many researchers demonstrated that envied workers experience anxiety and unpleasant emotions when they perceive that they are targets of envious coworkers (Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Lee et al., 2018; Mosquera et al., 2010; Vecchio, 2005). As a result of perceived envy at the workplace and anxiety, envied persons tend to display reduced work performance and low levels of job engagement and satisfaction (Erebak, 2019; Vecchio, 2005). Furthermore, envied employees experience painful negative emotions because of undesirable social comparisons from coworkers who are less successful (Duffy et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2018).

In addition, individuals noted as targets of envy frequently hide their good fortune and even actively avoid excessive success. Hence, envy has a strong influence on people's work behavior (Van de Ven et al., 2009) and other negative outcomes, such as fear of ill will from others (Mosquera et al., 2010) and lack of a safe space in which to work hard (Lee et al., 2018). The reason underlying this notion is that envied employees may perceive envy from coworkers as a threat to their relationships with other employees and supervisors (e.g., Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007; Duffy et al., 2012; Lee et al., 2018) and a hindrance to attaining organizational rewards (Lee et al., 2018). This result can be explained based on COR theory which assumed that persons who perceive themselves as targets of envy

from their coworkers; feel frustrated from organizational context and effect negatively on their performance and increase their counterproductive behaviors (e.g. destroying company property, complaining, doing tasks incorrectly on purpose, gossiping, and misusing privileges) (Khan et al., 2009; Koopmans, 2015; Ramos-Villagrasa et al., 2019). Accordingly, they are more likely to negative consequences (e.g. burnout, psychological distress, material loss) and either could not maintain their resources or achieve new resources (Hobfoll & Schumm, 2009)

With respect to the positive relationship between TP and spotting as a component of PWE, may be explained by the Hawthorne effect (i.e., the observer effect) on worker productivity. Previous studies reported that worker productivity increased constantly throughout the Hawthorne effect. That is, employee performance or change in behavior may improve as a result of feedback and observation (e.g. Hansson & Wigblad, 2006; Kaur, 2012; Oswald, Sherratt & Smith, 2014). Accordingly, employees who perceive that they are targets of envy tend to accomplish their duties as stated in the job description because knowledge of being observed may be considered a threat to tenure, incentives, or relationship with managers (Hansson & Wigblad, 2006).

Furthermore, Khan et al. (2009) found that envy was a strong predictor of CWBs, such as abuse against others and withdrawal behaviors. The study elucidated this relationship in terms of the model proposed by Spector and Fox (2003) the stressor-emotion model of counterproductive behavior, which suggest that CWB is considered a response to situations that arouse emotions at the workplace. Previous scholars stated that CWB is linked to measures of negative emotions (Khan et al., 2009; Miles, Borman, Spector & Fox, 2002; Spector & Fox, 2003). The stressor-emotion model also posited that anger and anxiety resulting from envy are related with such behaviors (Khan et al., 2009). Nevertheless, envied employees distract themselves from the unpleasant feelings caused by envy using withdrawal as a coping strategy (Duffy & Shaw, 2000; Khan et al., 2009).

With respect to the second objective, the current study revealed, however, that the moderating effect of SE was noted only for CP but not for TP and CWB. The study predicted that employees with high levels of SE and who perceived themselves as targets of malicious envy will display decreased CP. In this context, other studies found that envied employees with high levels of SE can respond in a negative manner because they focus on the ways to avoid envy,

which in turn influences their job performance (Tai et al., 2012). Additionally, such individuals invest time and effort thinking about being envied by coworkers instead of using such time and effort to achieve their tasks or succeed in work (Huang et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2018). Additionally, successful employees who perceive themselves as envied do not attempt to volunteer for extra activity or exert much effort to avoid being spotted and watched (Schoeck, 1969; Van de Ven et al., 2009). This result can be interpreted as follows: people who perceive themselves as targets of envy consider envy as a threat to their SE. Hence, they avoid exerting extra effort or volunteering for organizational activities to avoid being spotted and envied.

Limitations and future research

Although the current research contributes to the extant literature on PWE from the Egyptian context, it has seven limitations. First, the sample design of the research (convenience sample) limits the generalization of results. In other words, the findings may not be applicable to all Egyptians employees. Second, the current research overlooked various organizational factors that may exist in the culture of organizations, which may decrease or increase PWE. Future studies can examine the negative outcomes of envy, such as hostility, revenge, turnover, sabotage, and theft, in organizations. Third, the current study did not endeavor to analyze the differences between employees from private and public sectors and years of experience as study variables. Fourth, the study only focused on malicious envy and did not consider all types of workplace envy (i.e., benign, episodic, and dispositional) and their impact on job performance. Fifth, female and male perceived negative feelings (including envy) in a different way, so gender may have a role in feelings of envy and its outcomes at the workplace either in their performance or interpersonal relations. Sixth, social desirability may influence in the subjects' responses

because envy is considered sensitive topic, so observation in such topics may be useful besides the self-report measures. Seventh, cross-sectional data was used in the current study, accordingly, detecting causality is not possible. Consequently, it is argued that perceived workplace envy may result in poor in job performance. Therefore, using longitudinal data may be important to examine the chronological sequence of perceived workplace envy and job performance.

CONCLUSION

Given the prevalence and importance of workplace envy in the Egyptian context, the current study addressed the relationship between the components of PWE and dimensions of job performance, because of the negative and undesirable outcomes of envy especially malicious envy at workplace either the individual or organizational level. Our findings revealed that CP is negatively associated with PWE, whereas TP is positively linked with only one component of envy, namely, spotting. In addition, a positive relationship exists between CWBs and components of PWE. The study found that SE moderated the relationship between PWE and CP. It is suggested, that there are several tactics a manager can use to better control or reduce envy at the workplace. Furthermore, these tactics may help in organizational life through enhancement the relationship between the organization and its members. HR and managers can formulate appropriate interventions for employees who are performing poorly due to PWE or companies may offer regular assessments of PWE among employees to create a safe and comfortable organizational environment. As well as managers and supervisors may overcome prevalence envy through balance in the distribution of job privileges such as, promotions, authorities, incentives and other job resources. Moreover, to promote open communication; managers can encourage their employees to communicate how they feel and to share their envious emotions.

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