

Managers' Perspectives on Workplace Envy: A Qualitative Study in the Private Sector

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| ARTICLE INFO | ABSTRACT |
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| <p>Keywords: Workplace Envy Benign Envy Malicious Envy Nepotism Qualitative Research</p> <p>Received 20 October 2025 Revised 15 May 2026 Accepted 30 May 2026</p> <p>Article Classification: Research Article</p> | <p>Purpose – This study aims to explore the perspectives of individuals in managerial positions within the private sector regarding the emotion of “envy” and the behaviors it elicits.</p> <p>Design/methodology/approach – For the purpose of this research, in-depth interviews were conducted with 13 department managers working in small and medium-sized enterprises located in the Çiğli district of İzmir, Türkiye. The study employed in-depth interviews as a qualitative data collection method. The data obtained from these interviews were transferred to NVivo 11, a qualitative data analysis software, and subsequently analyzed using content analysis.</p> <p>Results – Research results show that both constructive and destructive feelings of envy can be experienced among employees, and the reasons for these are “wage” and “nepotism” issues.</p> <p>Discussion – Envy, as experienced by managers, appears to have both constructive and destructive implications within organizational settings. On the one hand, managers reported that when confronted with feelings of envy, they encouraged employees to engage in self-improvement and assumed a guiding role. They also indicated that such feelings enabled them to recognize their own deficiencies and motivated them to address these shortcomings and pursue further personal development. On the other hand, envy was found to generate negative organizational outcomes, including unrest and dissatisfaction, as well as behaviors such as resignation, complaining, opposition, and social exclusion.</p> |

1. Introduction

Envy is a widely discussed concept across multiple disciplines (Russell, 1930; Foster, 1972; Klein, 1977; Schoeck, 1969; Barrows, 2002; Epstein, 2003; Vidaillet, 2008), as well as in artistic and philosophical works (Aristotle, 1954; Cicero, 1824; Shakespeare, 1944a; Shakespeare, 1944b; Pushkin, 1985). A review of the literature suggests that this negatively valenced emotional state is often associated with destructive interpersonal tendencies and socially undesirable outcomes. Although some scholars, such as Erich Fromm, conceptualize such tendencies as inherent aspects of human nature, contemporary research tends to frame them in terms of maladaptive emotional responses and harmful behavioral inclinations. In this regard, envy is understood as a universal emotional experience rather than a culture-specific phenomenon (Russell, 1930; Foster, 1972; Smith & Kim, 2007; Wobker & Kenning, 2013; Bedeian, 1995), manifesting in everyday life as a complex and often negatively valenced affective state.

Envy, which is generally used in the same sense as jealousy but is different from that concept (Smith et al. 1988; Vecchio, 1995; Parrott & Smith, 1993), contains different emotions within itself. In short, these are discontent, longing, ill-will and a sense of inferiority. For this reason, it has not been possible to present the exact emotional formation formula of envy, which brings together very complex emotional states within itself. However, as mentioned above, it has a structure that includes the negative emotions that individuals display in their social environments and the behavior or behaviors that cause mental and physical harm to others resulting from these emotions.

As with many concepts in the social sciences, envy has both positive and negative aspects. This dual nature has led to its conceptualization as malicious envy, arising from hostility, and benign envy, arising from

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admiration (Bedeian, 1995; Smith et al., 1999; Smith, 2004; Smith & Kim, 2007; Van de Ven et al., 2009; Van de Ven et al., 2012; Wobker & Kenning, 2013; Lange & Crusius, 2015; Sterling et al., 2017; Lange et al., 2018; Dong et al., 2019; Truong et al., 2022; Kimplova et al., 2024).

Envy, which is widely experienced in daily life, arguably manifests most prominently in workplace settings, where individuals spend a significant portion of their time engaged in professional roles and relationships. Unlike private life, the professional sphere is characterized by a structured environment in which individuals are in constant competition. As Thomas Hobbes (1949) suggests, human life is marked by an ongoing struggle, a notion that can be extended to organizational contexts where interpersonal dynamics often resemble a form of conflict. In this sense, workplaces may be perceived as arenas in which both constructive and destructive behavioral patterns emerge. Similarly, Thorstein Veblen (1922) emphasizes that envy, as a central element of power struggles in industrial life, can lead to behaviors that are largely detrimental. Accordingly, envy has been identified as a significant underlying driver of both detrimental and constructive behaviors within organizations. While it may lead to perceptions of distributional injustice in areas such as rewards, wages, and promotions (Smith & Kim, 2007; Lange & Crusius, 2015), it can also motivate individuals toward higher achievement, stronger organizational belonging, and the development of distinctive competencies (Parrott & Smith, 1993).

Subsequently, the interview technique was employed as a field study on “envy” to explore managers’ approaches to such behaviors, both personally and among their subordinates. Given their central responsibility for maintaining workplace harmony, ensuring effective task completion, motivating employees, and providing adequate performance feedback, managers constitute a critical group for examining this phenomenon. In this context, in-depth interviews were conducted with 13 department managers working in small and medium-sized enterprises located in the Çiğli district of İzmir, Türkiye. The study utilized in-depth interviews as a qualitative data collection method. The data obtained from these interviews were transcribed and transferred to NVivo 11, a qualitative data analysis software, and subsequently analyzed using content analysis.

When the literature is examined, it becomes evident that studies on envy have predominantly focused on either lower-level employees (Vecchio, 1995; Lange & Crusius, 2015; Lange et al., 2018; Schaubroeck & Lam, 2004) or students (Smith et al., 1999; Dong et al., 2019; Truong et al., 2022). Additionally, some research has approached the topic from a gender-based perspective (Kimplova et al., 2024; Del Priore et al., 2012). In contrast to these approaches, the present study contributes to the literature by examining workplace envy from the perspectives of managers using a qualitative research design.

2. Conceptual Framework

2.1. Envy

When discussing individuals who engage in harmful or destructive behaviors, it is often suggested that such individuals negatively affect or even damage their surrounding environments. One of the underlying psychological drivers that may contribute to such behaviors is envy, which constitutes the central focus of this study. As outlined in the introduction, envy is an emotional state that can be associated with negative affect and may give rise to a range of undesirable behaviors. According to Melanie Klein (1977), envy emerges in early childhood as part of the individual’s psychic development and is rooted in oral-sadistic and anal-sadistic expressions of destructive impulses. In later life, it can be observed within social relationships and may be regarded as one of the negative emotional tendencies influencing human behavior.

Envy is often confused with jealousy, and the latter is frequently used in place of the former (Schoeck, 1969). However, there is a clear distinction between the two concepts. Envy refers to a feeling directed toward another person due to the advantages or possessions they have. In contrast, jealousy involves the fear of losing a valued relationship or possession—such as a spouse, friend, or relative—to a third party (Foster, 1972; Schoeck, 1969; Barrows, 2002; Epstein, 2003; Vidaillet, 2008).

Envy occurs when a person perceives that they lack another individual’s superior quality, achievement, or possession and either desires it or wishes that the other person did not possess it (Parrott & Smith, 1993; Van de Ven et al., 2012). Smith and Kim (2007) further define envy by incorporating social comparison, describing it as “an unpleasant and often painful blend of feelings characterized by inferiority, hostility, and resentment

caused by a comparison with a person or group of persons who possess something we desire.”

Given that envy is an emotional state, it emerges through a certain psychological process. According to Vidaillet (2008), the formation of envy involves three main stages:

- triggering factors related to an individual’s vulnerability;
- the emergence of a wide range of negative and painful emotions;
- behavioral responses ranging from self-directed harm to aggression toward the envied person, and in some cases, emulation and efforts toward self-improvement.

Schaubroeck and Lam (2004) offer a more simplified explanation of this process. They argue that envy arises when a person (P) perceives that a similar other (O) has obtained a valuable outcome that P has not achieved, thereby disrupting P’s sense of equity or balance.

Envy may be directed toward individuals who are superior, equal, or inferior in status, depending on perceived differences in possession, achievement, or opportunity. According to Vidaillet (2008), envy toward subordinates can be observed in cases where a manager deliberately withholds training or development opportunities to prevent an employee from advancing and potentially replacing them. Similarly, Barrows (2002) highlights generational dynamics, noting that older individuals may express envy through the criticism or condemnation of younger generations. Foster (1972) argues that envy among individuals of equal status is often less visible, emerging primarily in competitive contexts and becoming more pronounced once such competition reaches a clear outcome. In contrast, envy directed upward – by individuals in lower social strata or subordinate organizational positions toward those who are more successful or powerful – can generate fear among the envied. In such situations, particularly in environments lacking clear norms or regulations, those who are envied may feel threatened and anticipate potential hostility or aggression from those in lower positions. A central mechanism in the emergence of envy is social comparison. The evaluation of oneself relative to others often produces feelings of inferiority or resentment, which subsequently give rise to envy (Smith & Kim, 2007; Duffy & Shaw, 2000; Schaubroeck & Lam, 2004).

2.2. Classification of Envy

Since admiration and hostility coexist within the experience of envy (Epstein, 2003; Vidaillet, 2008; Duffy & Shaw, 2000), researchers have examined envy from both positive and negative perspectives. Accordingly, individuals may exhibit different behavioral patterns depending on how envy is experienced (Barrows, 2002; Vidaillet, 2008). Based on this dual nature, envy is most commonly classified into two forms: “malicious envy” and “benign envy” (Smith & Kim, 2007; Wobker & Kenning, 2013; Bedeian, 1995; Smith et al., 1999; Smith, 2004; Van de Ven et al., 2009; Van de Ven et al., 2012; Lange & Crusius, 2015; Sterling et al., 2017; Lange et al., 2018; Dong et al., 2019; Truong et al., 2022; Kimplova et al., 2024).

2.3. Malicious Envy

In fact, malicious envy is the envy that is known by everyone and is tried to be expressed with the definitions above. However, it has a structure that contains much more detailed paradigms within itself. The most obvious basic cognitive components are “hostility” and the “resentment” that causes it (Van de Ven et al. 2012). Because without this feeling, it seems impossible to talk about malicious envy. (Smith, 2004). This type of envy is given different names by different authors. For example, Smith and Kim refer to this type of envy as “envy proper” by referring to its dictionary meaning (2007), while Wobker and Kenning call the same concept as “destructive envy” (2013). Whatever name it is given, since malicious envy is considered as a hostile behavior (Epstein, 2003), its most prominent behavioral pattern is “aggression” (Foster, 1972). The main reason for this is that the main target of the envious individual is not the possessions of the person he envies but the person himself who is envied. Since envy is generally considered bad, the basic idea of individuals who experience this emotion intensely is that they wish evil on the individuals they target (envied) with their aggressive behavior patterns (Barrows, 2002). Malicious envy, which starts with “resentment”, mainly due to organizational injustices in working life, then continues with hatred and hostility (Vidaillet, 2008). When this situation is reflected in life in general, the main target of anger or rage is life and destiny. While the aggression in malicious envy can often be direct and physical either to envied or his/her assets (Garay & Móri, 2011; Hill & Buss, 2008), such as violence, it can also take the form of indirect aggression, especially towards the reputation of the envied

individual (Foster,1972, Vidaillet, 2008). For example, creating negative gossip about the envied person, slandering him, insulting him, and smearing him are among these. These can also be viewed as behaviors against the harmony of the group in which the envious is in (Vidaillet, 2008; Van de Ven et al. 2009).

An important feature of malicious envy is the difference in the person targeted. Malicious envier pays more attention to others around her/his than to herself/himself and experiences this feeling through what they have. In other words, the malicious envier focuses on the envied rather than herself/himself (Crusius & Lange, 2021).

2.4. Benign Envy

At the beginning of our explanation about the classification of envy, we talked about the differences in the cognitive components underlying the distinction between malicious and benign envy. Just as there is resentment and resulting hostility in malicious envy, there is also admiration in benign envy. In short, envier admires envied and strives to be like her/him. In this context, some researchers have attempted to explain “benign envy”, with the names “nonmalicious envy” (Parrott,1991; Bedeian,1995), “emulative envy” (Rawls,1971), “constructive envy” (Smith & Whitfield, 1983), based on the concept of “admiration”. According to Smith et al. (1999), envy, free of ill-will, is a benign form of the emotion, is less prototypic and may be better granted an alternative label such as admiration or unhappiness. Benign envy, unlike hostility, involves trying to be like the person one envies and thus attain things that the person has but does not have, or trying to reach the same level as her/him. Benign enviers want to improve themselves and close the gap between them and the person they envy in order to reach what they do not have (Van de Ven et al., 2009). From this perspective, benign envy is motivational (Wobker& Kenning, 2013; Lange, &Crusius, 2015). Another point to be noted here is the envier's thought about whether the envied one “deserves” what they have. If the envier perceives the envied individual as deserving of his or her advantages, the envier is more likely to engage in self-improvement and strive to emulate that individual rather than develop hostility toward him or her (Van de Ven et al., 2012). Individuals who have this feeling or make it a habit want to make themselves like the people they envy, rather than seeing them in a bad situation. They act like them, dress like them, and think like them. Since the idea of evil or hostility is relatively low in this type of envy, which can be considered as constructive (Smith & Whitfield, 1983), it is possible to accept the emulation behavior of individuals towards “what is good” as an emotion that can lead to increased solidarity when evaluated from a social or organizational perspective. This type of behavior is also associated with mindfulness. According to this, the malicious form of envy does not affect the thoughts of individuals, individuals control the hostile thought with mindfulness and transform the malicious envy into benign envy (Dong et al., 2019). Especially in the organizational field, individuals who see themselves as a part of and affiliated with the “value system” will use this feeling in a way that is beneficial to themselves and indirectly to the organizations they are in, rather than being destructive (Vidaillet, 2008).

Envy is widely regarded as a destructive emotion. Even in its benign form, it may contain an underlying malicious intent. Although the behavioral manifestations of envy may vary according to its intensity, it has been conceptualized, from an individual perspective, as a form of psychological pathology (Schoeck, 1969) with the potential to adversely affect social life and organizational functioning. From the perspective of human behavioral patterns, it is inevitable that some individuals within society, motivated by envy, may exhibit aggressive attitudes and behaviors toward others.

2.5. Workplace Envy: Antecedents and Consequences

As a social construct, envy emerges as a phenomenon that may manifest across all domains of society. As noted above, this phenomenon becomes particularly salient in workplace environments, which often resemble highly competitive arenas.

When examining the antecedents of envy, it becomes evident that the objects triggering this emotion span both abstract and concrete domains. Intangible attributes—such as social status, profession, education, talent, intelligence, physical appearance, and power—often constitute key sources of envy, as they reflect personal qualities and achievements of the comparison target (Epstein, 2003). In contrast, tangible possessions, including houses, cars, money, mobile phones, and luxury goods, also serve as salient stimuli for envy. Furthermore, the scope of envy-inducing factors has evolved alongside societal changes. As noted by Foster (1972), the increasing complexity and improved living standards of modern life have expanded the range of desirable assets. Whereas in earlier periods individuals primarily sought resources necessary for survival,

contemporary societies emphasize not only basic needs but also the acquisition of goods and attributes associated with a “good” or desirable life.

Considering the emotional states generated by social inequalities and the tangible and intangible factors underlying them, more specific distinctions can be mentioned in workplace envy. According to Duffy and Shaw (2000) competition for and allocation of scarce organizational rewards in the form of merit raises, office space, promotions, grants, valued assignments, and promotions are all potential catalysts (antecedents) for social comparison among colleagues. Considering these premises, it can be argued that they generally involve tangible factors. In other words, they include causes associated with differences in financial conditions. Salary differences can also be added to these factors. On the other hand, nepotism—defined as the hiring or promotion of unqualified or inadequately qualified individuals solely on the basis of their relationship with an employee, manager, or shareholder (Wong & Kleiner, 1994)—may contribute to the development of envy among employees in the workplace. In such contexts, employees may perceive these practices as unfair and unethical, leading to feelings of betrayal (Lim et al., 2023).

However, what is crucial here is the form that envy takes in the workplace and the consequences it produces. According to Vecchio (1995), consequences of envy may include sabotaging the rival’s work, back-stabbing a competitor, harassment or ostracism of the rival, pretending to be disinterested in the rival, and bolstering one’s own self-image. In contrast, Duffy et al. (2021) categorized the outcomes of workplace envy in organizational settings under specific headings. These categories are destructive-engaged outcomes, destructive-disengaged outcomes, constructive-engaged outcomes, and constructive-disengaged outcomes.

3. Method

3.1. Ethical Committee Decision

This study was conducted according to the decision of Hakkâri University Scientific Research and Publication Ethics Committee dated 25.12.2024 Nr.1.

3.2. Research Questions

This study aims to determine the perspectives of individuals working in managerial positions in the private sector regarding the feeling of “envy” and the behaviors that this feeling causes in them. In this context, answers were sought to the following fundamental questions:

1. What are the opinions of managers about the causes of envy?
2. What are managers’ opinions about the consequences of envy?
3. How is managers’ approach to the feeling of envy?

3.3. Research Sample

The participants in the qualitative research are managerial-level employees working in the most extensive industry district on the west coast of Türkiye. In qualitative research, the sample size is determined by the specific insights needed to achieve the study’s objectives and the constraints of resources. In information-rich situations, detailed information collected from a small group of individuals can be extremely valuable (Patton,2014). To achieve theoretical saturation, qualitative research needs to include four to 10 cases (Eisenhardt,1989; Yin,2003). Conversely, Patton (2014) argues that when the goal is to gather the maximum amount of information, sampling can cease at the point where no new information arises from additional sampling units. Purposive sampling was employed to determine the sample size. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985), in purposive sampling, sample size is guided by informational 1320istrict, and data collection continues until no new insights emerge. In this context, data saturation—defined as the repetition of information—serves as the primary criterion (Patton, 2014). Accordingly, the sample of this study consisted of 13 department managers working in small and medium-sized enterprises operating in the industrial sector in the Çiğli 1320istrict of İzmir, Türkiye.

3.4. Research Method

Qualitative research aims to comprehend how individuals construct their social lives and to interpret their perceptions of the world around them (Wahyuni, 2024). Therefore, the in-depth interview technique is the

preferred data collection technique in the current research. In-depth interviews are an open-ended, discovery-oriented data collection method that allows the collection of information about the behavior, attitudes, and perceptions of the interviewees (Boyce & Neale, 2006). During conversations, it is possible to easily convey words' literal and figurative meanings to the other party through emphasis and additions. In this way, the interviewer can more easily understand what the other party wants to say and the "main" meanings underlying the words (Yüksel et al. 2007).

3.5. Data Collection and Analysis

The semi-structured interview form used in the research was developed in line with a review of the relevant literature (Vecchio, 2000; Khan et al., 2017). The interview questions consisted of open-ended questions aimed at revealing the participants' experiences in depth. To ensure content validity, the prepared interview form was submitted to two academic experts in the field for their review, and necessary adjustments were made based on the feedback received. The final interview form consists of 11 main questions, and additional (exploratory) questions were asked as needed to deepen participant responses during the interviews. Some of the interview questions are listed below:

- How do you feel when you see your boss praising people in the same position at other companies?
- How would you feel if your boss asked someone from another company for help on a matter that falls within your area of responsibility?
- What would you think if an employee in your company, working in a lower position than you, possessed more professional skills?
- Do you think there is jealousy among employees in the workplace?
- What causes feelings of envy in the workplace?

Interviews were held with 13 department managers working in firms in the Çiğli Region of İzmir/Türkiye. Interviews started on October 5, 2024, and continued until November 25, 2024. The participants were contacted before the interview, the purpose and content of the research were explained, and an appointment was made for a face-to-face or telephone interview.

The basic stages of the qualitative data analysis process suggested by Miles and Huberman (1984) and Miles et al. (2014) are as follows: The first stage refers to the process of reducing raw data collected by various data collection tools by subjecting it to extraction, summarization and transformation processes. Second stage is the process of presenting or visualizing data. The data set is made more visual and understandable at this stage by creating various patterns. Various matrices, graphs, and tables are used to do this. The last stage is the stage of reaching and verifying the result. The researcher tries to understand what the regularities, patterns, explanations, and sentences mean, starting from the data collection stage. At this stage, the hidden reality contained in the data obtained from the beginning about the research subject and tried to be interpreted is revealed.

Each interview conducted within the scope of research was listened to repeatedly on a computer and transcribed. A total of 22 pages of written documents were obtained. Each recorded interview was read repeatedly after deciphering to ensure that it was not incomplete or inaccurate and to ensure the depth of the research. Efforts were made to reshape the themes and codes with each reading. The resulting text files were prepared and coded as separate pages for each interview. The records were transferred to NVIVO 11, a qualitative data analysis program, and content analysis was performed.

Content analysis is any attempt to reduce and make sense of qualitative data by taking large amounts of qualitative material to identify fundamental consistencies and meanings (Patton, 2014). The primary purpose of content analysis is to reach concepts and relationships that can explain the collected data. Through content analysis, data is tried to be identified, and facts that may be hidden in the data are revealed (Krippendorff, 2004).

3.6. Validity and Reliability

In qualitative studies, the validity of interview research is concerned with its 'fitness to examine what it claims to report and its accuracy in reporting' (Mears, 2012). Reporting the data obtained in detail and explaining

how the researcher reached the results are also among the important criteria of validity in qualitative research (Miles et al., 2014). To ensure validity in the current research, the findings were presented objectively and in detail.

Reliability means that scientific research is replicable and consistent (Franklin et al., 2010). One of the things that must be done to ensure reliability in qualitative research is to ensure transparency at every stage of the research. Explaining in detail the research strategy, how the data were collected, and how the analysis was carried out will increase the reliability of the research (Miles et al., 2014). In order to ensure reliability in the current research, the data were recorded on a voice recorder with the permission of each participant, and the related results were translated to the current paper without any comments. To further strengthen the reliability of the coding process, an inter-coder reliability analysis was conducted. A subset of the dataset was coded according to the preliminary coding framework developed by the primary researcher. 30% of the dataset (randomly selected interview recordings) was independently coded by the second researcher. The codings performed by both researchers were compared to determine agreement and disagreement, and inter-coder reliability was calculated using the formula as proposed by Miles and Huberman (1984). Discrepancies arising during the coding process were resolved through discussions between the researchers; where necessary, code definitions were revised to reach a common consensus. The resulting inter-coder reliability coefficient of 84% is above the commonly accepted threshold of 70% in the literature, indicating the reliability of the analysis process.

4. Findings

Attempts were made to reach employees working as managers in different sectors in Türkiye, and interviews were conducted with thirteen managers who responded. The mean meeting time is 23 minutes. Demographic characteristics of the participants are presented in Table 1.

Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

| | Age | Gender | Educational Status | Seniority | Sector |
|------------|-----|--------|--------------------|-----------|----------------|
| Manager 1 | 38 | Female | University | 13 | Textile Sector |
| Manager 2 | 33 | Male | University | 8 | Plastic Sector |
| Manager 3 | 45 | Male | University | 22 | Plastic Sector |
| Manager 4 | 32 | Male | University | 8 | Energy Sector |
| Manager 5 | 42 | Female | University | 18 | Textile Sector |
| Manager 6 | 37 | Male | University | 13 | Food Sector |
| Manager 7 | 35 | Male | University | 10 | Plastic Sector |
| Manager 8 | 50 | Male | University | 28 | Food Sector |
| Manager 9 | 32 | Female | University | 9 | Food Sector |
| Manager 10 | 31 | Female | University | 6 | Textile Sector |
| Manager 11 | 47 | Female | University | 23 | Energy Sector |
| Manager 12 | 45 | Male | University | 20 | Textile Sector |
| Manager 13 | 36 | Male | University | 13 | Food Sector |

As shown in the table, 5 participants are female and 8 are male. The ages of the participants range from 31 to 50. All participants have completed their undergraduate education. The average working time of the participants is 16 years. The sectors in which the participants work are textiles, plastics, energy, and food.

4.1. Managers' Views on the Causes of Envy

4.1.1. Causes of Envy (MT1)

The answers given by the managers to the questions about the reasons for the feeling of envy are gathered under the theme "Work-Related Reasons" (T1) (See Table 2).

Table 2: Themes, Codes, and References of Views on the Causes of Envy

| Main Theme | Themes | Codes | References |
|----------------------|---------------------------|-------------------------|------------|
| Causes of Envy (AT1) | Work-Related Reasons (T1) | Salary Differences (k1) | 7 |
| | | Nepotism (k2) | 3 |

Work-Related Reasons (T1)

The “Work-Related Reasons” theme includes two codes as “Salary Differences” (k1) and “Nepotism” (k2) (See Figure 1). Excerpts from the statements of the managers are given below:

k1- Manager 4: The reasons generally as “I do more at work than my other friend, but why do we get paid the same?”. These are the dialogues that took place in the second month. People in the 24-25 age group are in a mood of trying to make money quickly and not get tired. That is why they may have feelings of envy among themselves.

k1-Manager 2: Thoughts like, "We're at the same level, why is he/she getting paid more than me?" arise. There's a lack of motivation. Things like resentment and negligence occur. An atmosphere of conflict is deliberately created

k2-Manager 12: If the engineers in charge of the employees do nepotism among employees, there may be self-confidence, lack of work, and comfort among the favorite employees. In such cases, other employees may experience feelings of envy.

k2-Manager 11: It may seem like those in production unit are working less or those in the warehouse are working less. In our call center, it can as “his areas are better than mine”.

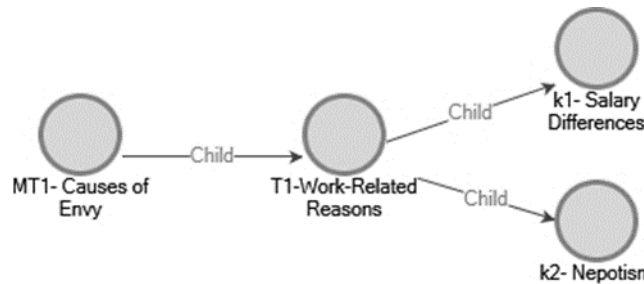


Figure 1. Themes and Codes Regarding the Causes of Envy NVivo Model-1

4.1.2. Consequences of Envy (MT2)

The managers’ responses to questions about the consequences of envy were grouped under the themes of “Positive Consequences” (T2) and “Negative Consequences” (T3) (Table 3 and Figure 2).

Table 3: Themes, Codes and References of Views on the Consequences of Envy

| Main Theme | Themes | Codes | References |
|----------------------------|----------------------------|---------------------------------------|------------|
| Consequences of Envy (MT2) | Positive Consequences (T2) | Self-improvement of the Employee (k3) | 7 |
| | | Disrupting work (k4) | 9 |
| | Negative Consequences (T3) | Restlessness-Unhappiness (k5) | 4 |
| | | Taking a Stand – Excluding (k6) | 4 |

Positive Consequences (T2)

The “Positive Consequences” theme includes only one code as “Self-improvement of the Employee” (k3). Excerpts from the statements of the managers are given below:

k3- Manager 8: If an individual is open to personal development, he or she may transform envy into a constructive force by using it as motivation for self-improvement and further personal growth.

k3- Manager 5: Actually, it varies from person to person. I can distinguish between malevolent and well-intentioned. If you are well-intentioned, yes, this might stimulate you. But if you are malevolent, you can also think about the bad things you can do to the other person. If you have good intentions and want to improve, that envy can take you completely to different places.

Negative Consequences (T3)

The “Negative Consequences” theme includes four codes as “Disrupting Work” (k4), “Complaining (k5)”, “Restlessness-Unhappiness (k6)” and “Taking a Stand Excluding (k7)”. Excerpts from the statements of the managers are given below:

k4- Manager 6: As a result of the feeling of envy, passive aggression occurs. People do not say what they really need to say and behave in childish ways. Like resentment. This leads to a loss of communication. The work is interrupted. A job that takes one day will be finished in three days.

k4- Manager 2: There emerges an inner urge not to do anything. The work is left unfinished. It's not being done. This kind of unrest is happening. This time, it is others who must complete what she or he left unfinished.

k5- Manager 13: This time, everyone starts to question the job. They think as “They chose me for this project, but there were bigger projects, they did not include me, and my development was hindered.” They sit and talk to each other. This is how it spreads. He thinks: I should be sitting at that table, I should be getting that salary, I should be going on that trip. This creates dissatisfaction and unhappiness.

k5- Manager 1: You want to create an integrity. Where there is integrity, for example, when one person does not come, another person can do that job. When there is a feeling of envy, even if you are in a difficult situation, it is getting as “it is not my job but her/his job, let her/him do it then”. Since you are in a managerial position, you are trying to complete the work of the missing person there. It also feels like there's a bomb about to explode there. There is no tranquility.

k6- Manager 11: The bad part is this: There may also be envy and an attitude towards the other person because he or she is always selling.

k6-Manager 6: As a result of the feeling of envy, passive aggression occurs. People do not say what they really need to say and behave in childish ways. Like resentment. This leads to loss of communication. The work is interrupted.

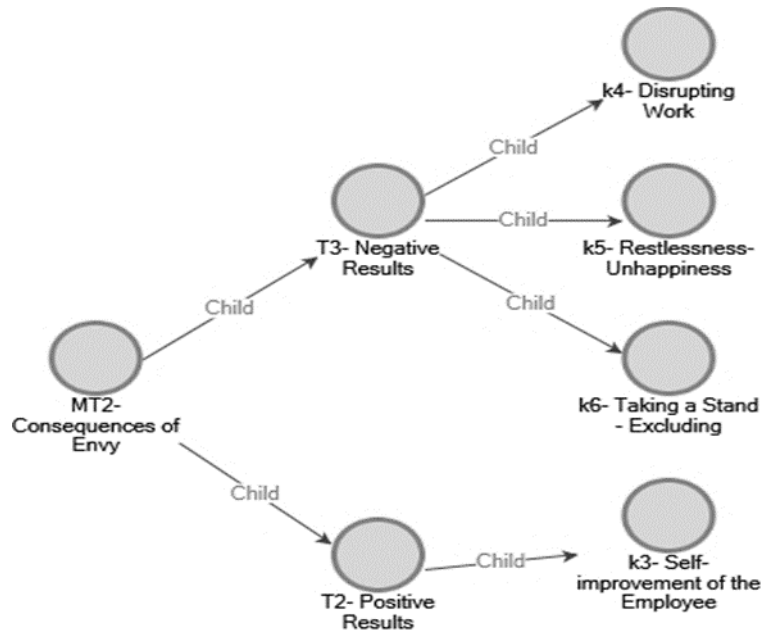


Figure 2. Themes and Codes Regarding the Consequences of Envy NVivo Model-2

4.1.3. Manager’s Approach (MT3)

The managers’ responses to questions about the managers’ approaches to envy were grouped under the themes of “Feeling of Envy in Managers” (T4) and “Approach to Employee Envy” (T5) (Table 4 and Figure 3).

Table 4: Themes, Codes, and References of Views on the Managers' Approaches to Envy

| Main Theme | Themes | Codes | References |
|--------------------------|----------------------------------|--------------------------------------|------------|
| Manager's Approach (MT3) | Feeling of Envy in Managers (T4) | Self-improvement of the Manager (k7) | 10 |
| | Approach to Employee Envy (T5) | Speaking - Guidance (k8) | 10 |

The Feeling of Envy in Managers (T4)

The "Feeling of Envy in Managers" theme includes one code as "Self-improvement of the Manager" (k7). Excerpts from the statements of the managers are given below:

k7- Manager 10: It happened in the first years when I started working. It motivated me to do more with ambition. That's how I improve anyway. For example, there is a "x" job, why can't I do it too? I always tried to learn more in this way.

k7- Manager 2: I sometimes emulated colleagues who were more knowledgeable in areas related to my work, thinking that I should also develop those skills. This did not involve any negative feelings; rather, it motivated me to learn and improve myself.

Approach to Employee Envy (T5)

The "Approach to Employee Envy" theme includes 1 code as "Speaking - Guidance" (k8). Excerpts from the statements of the managers are given below:

k8-Manager 12: If anyone feels differently around me, I prefer to meet them directly, based on my experience. I'll try to figure it out myself first. I tell him that this approach is not correct.

k8-Manager 11: When I worked as a call center manager for a while, I encountered a situation of envy. I always guided my friends. I showed that his thought was not correct. Or I asked him "did you listen to that friend of yours?" I put her or him next to his friend so that she or he could listen to her or him and see how she or he was selling. I provided him to see.

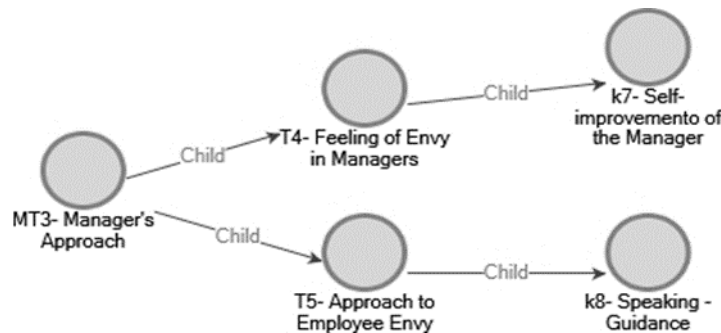


Figure 3. Themes and Codes Regarding the Manager's Approach NVivo Model-3

Word frequency analysis was carried out in order to determine the words most frequently emphasized by the managers participating in the interview. The result of the analysis is given in Figure 4.

and its causes can be analyzed. Finally, since the results of the research show that the feeling of envy in organizations arises due to issues such as “pay” and “nepotism”, it may be suggested that the feeling of envy should be addressed together with the issue of “organizational justice” in future studies.

Some practical and theoretical contributions of the research should also be mentioned. In line with the recommendations proposed by Sterling and Labianca (2015)—such as providing feedback and encouraging self-comparisons, implementing recognition programs, offering frequent rewards, introducing variation through changes in office space and team composition, and making strategic task assignments—it is also possible to advance additional recommendations concerning organizational structure. Although the managers who participated in the study also mentioned generational differences in their responses, this issue should be examined more closely in future research. As generational differences have become increasingly important in today’s business environment, organizations should consider their possible effects, especially in recruitment processes such as setting hiring criteria and designing selection procedures. In addition, organizational change efforts should take into account changing employee expectations, including those related to generational differences. Accordingly, job descriptions and managerial practices need to be designed with greater flexibility and responsiveness to diverse employee needs. Relying solely on traditional management approaches may be insufficient for addressing contemporary workplace dynamics shaped by technological advancement, shifting values, and changing career expectations. On the other hand, to prevent envy among employees in the workplace as much as possible, certain issues can be clarified through written procedures. For example, transparency in salary regarding how much is paid for each job, making the reward system fairer, defining the criteria for promotions (time, improvement in qualifications, achieving significant success, etc.), and providing conflict and emotion management training to managers can be beneficial in preventing both conflicts and envy among employees.

From a theoretical perspective, it is necessary to act on the method and results of the research. As can be understood from the overall research, “envy” is a negative emotion, and it can be thought that many individuals will not accept this emotion and the behavior it causes. In addition, it can be predicted that discussing such issues directly with individuals without the help of a psychiatrist may lead to some prejudices that may lead to less valid data. However, this study not only detects the feeling of “envy” and the behavior it causes in the work environment but also reveals that the individuals interviewed sincerely accept the issue for themselves in contrast to other statements existing in different studies (Barrows, 2002; Epstein, 2003; Vidaillet, 2008).

Business managers participating in the study reported that, based on their experiences, they occasionally experienced feelings of envy; however, they also indicated that they were able to transform this emotion into a constructive force. In this context, it was understood that managers did not perceive envy as a purely negative emotion, but rather as a mechanism that contributed to their career advancement and served as a positive motivational tool for both themselves and their employees.

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