**If I Fail, They will Feel Win:**

**A Lesson about Two-Ways Social Envy in Indonesia**

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**Abstract**

Keywords: Social comparison, anticipated emotion, emotion intelligence, achievement goals, approach motivation, avoidance motivation.

**Introduction**

Social envy has been known as a dangerous behavior since thousand years ago. In Christian tradition, social envy was impressed as one of the deadly sins. Initial researches in this field are mostly inspired by this point of view (Aquaro, 2004).

In the modern world, much of the researchers about social envy still follow this tradition. The researchers are mostly focused mainly on the negative affective states following an upward comparison of the envier to the envied person concerning the envied object (Lange, Weidman, and Crusius, 2018).

Some researchers (e.g. de Ven, Zeelenberg, and Pieter, 2009; Falcon, 2015; Crucius and Lange, 2014) propose a softer category of social envy called benign envy. In this category, social envy is described from a more positive side. They saw social envy as a motivational force that propels people to work harder to get what the envied already have. Lange, Weidman, and Crusius (2018) operationalized this motivational force as emulation, improvement motivation, positive thoughts about the other person, and admiration of the envied person.

The problem is, besides being a minority view, benign envy theory still focuses on the enviers. This theory, including other theory of social envy as a whole, haven't discussed envy behaviors from the envied side. This research is purposed to fill this gap. Based on emotional intelligence theory (Salovey and Maehr, 1997), this study views that individuals can predict the emotional response of the enviers to their success or failure. Thus, they can regulate their behavior to avoid failure to prevent the enviers from feeling good or to get success so that the enviers feel dissatisfied.

The objectives of this study are as follow. First, to identify the enviers' positive emotions anticipated by the envied persons, caused by the envied person failures to achieve goals or to accomplish a task. Second, to investigate the influence of those emotions on the envied persons’ achievement motivation. The answers to these objectives are expected to be the original contribution of this study. Moreover, the study about envy behavior from the envied persons’ side is still new to the social envy research tradition. Generally, such studies are departed from the enviers’ side.

To achieve the above objectives, the author conducts three studies with detailed methods. But, before that, the author proposes a literature review to provide a theoretical foundation for the studies.

The result of each study is discussed in details. In the final section, the author exhibits a conclusion, limitation of the research, and direction for practical implementation and further research.

**Literature Review**

**Social Envy**

Human life can’t be separated from others. In social life, others consist of significant others (Ajzen, 1991) and ‘rivals’ (Celse, 2010). Significant others are people that are important in one’s life. Their role is accounted for in the model of behavioral theory, such as the Theory of Reasoned Action (Fishbein and Ajzen, 1975), Theory of Planned Behavior (Ajzen, 1991), and Model of Goal-Directed Behavior (Perugini and Bagozzi, 2001).

Rivals are people with whom an individual has openly or silently anti-social relationships (Celse, 2010). The existence of the 'enemies' gave birth to the social envy concept (see Celse, 2010; Clanton, 1996; Smith & Kim, 2007). Social envy is defined as an unpleasant, often painful emotion characterized by feelings of inferiority, hostility, and resentment produced by an awareness of another person or group of persons who enjoy the desired possession (Smith & Kim, 2007: 47).

The existence of ‘the enemy’ (called rival by Celse, 2010) mentioned in ‘social envy’ is also reflected in a phenomenon known in Germany as schadenfreude. In van Dijk et al. (2011), it is defined by Heider (1958) as the feeling of joy or pleasure when one sees others’ fail or suffers misfortune or the feeling of unhappiness over others’ good fortune.

Envy behavior involves three components, such as the envier, the envied person, and the envied object (Lange et al. 2018). The envy objects can be an achievement, characteristic, or possession, that has high prestige value and strongly relate to the envied social status (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999; Lange et al. 2018).

Social envy stems from a social comparison of oneself to a superior person in terms of the ownership of the envied object (Kant, 1780/1997). The pain is not arisen by the fact that the rival does well, but does better than oneself. So, envy is an upward comparison in nature (Van de Ven and Zeelenberg, 2018).

**Two-Way Social Envy**

As described above, social envy stems from upward social comparison. However, social envy doesn't cover the emotions generated from downward social comparison. Therefore, we dare to say that the existing concept of social envy has not covered a two-way comparison so far.

Indonesian culture has a social envy-like element called *sirik*. Besides the painful emotions described in social envy, this cultural element also covers the enviers' feeling of pleasure stemmed from the envied person's lack of ownership of prestige object or the adverse event experienced by the envied person. It can also be described as "feel hard to see others happy and feel happy to see others suffer".

From the above description, it's clear that sirik covers upward and downward social comparisons. Therefore, besides the painful feeling described in social envy, it also generates a feeling of pleasures stemmed from downward social comparison. For this reason, this concept is called further as two-way social envy (TWSE).

**The Influence of the Enviers Anticipated Emotions on Achievement Motivation**

With emotional intelligence, Mayer and Salovey (1997) stated that an individual is capable to monitor his or her own and other’s feelings and emotions then use this knowledge to guide his or her thinking and actions. Baumester et al. (2007) strengthened this notion. They said that an individual can choose a behavior to hinder the significant others from unpleasant feelings.

In its relation to the TWSE, as mentioned above, the author believes that an individual can anticipate the envier’s positive and negative emotions following his or her failure or success to achieve and accomplish prestige goals or tasks. Anticipated emotions can be the goals itself toward which an individual’s efforts are directed (Bagozzi, Baumgartner, and Pieters, 1995; Perugini and Bagozzi, 2001; Baumeister et al., 2007).

Elliot (1999) defined achievement motivation as "the energization and direction of the competence-based affection, cognition, and behavior". This concept is relevant in a situation where the expectancy is produced by skill-related factors owned by high ability subjects (Nicholls, 1984). As stated by Nicholls (1984: 328), “Achievement behavior is defined as behavior directed at developing or demonstrating high rather than low ability”.

The aspect of demonstration places achievement motivation as one of the envy objects (Lange et al., 2018; Van de Ven and Zeelenberg, 2018). In the TWSE, with downward social comparison, the author believes that the enviers will feel good when the envy persons' achievement fallen below their achievement or the level the envy persons deserve to get. On the other hand, the enviers will experience an unpleasant feeling when the envy persons' achievement surpassed their achievement or the level they think the envy persons deserve to get.

The envied persons know the enviers’ emotional response toward their achievement. The author presumes that envied persons can regulate their behavior to avoid failure to hinder being the object of rivals' feeling of pleasure or to get success to upset their rivals. These arguments are formalized in the following hypotheses:

H1: Positive anticipated emotions of rivals influence avoidance motivation positively.

H2: Negative anticipated emotions of rivals influence approach motivation positively.

**Study 1: Preliminary Research**

**Positive Anticipated Emotions of Rivals**

***Objective.*** Preliminary research is required to investigate the items of positive anticipated emotions of the opponents when individual failures to achieve goals or establish a task. As many 150 students of Kwik Kian Gie School of Business enrolled in *Business English* class are involved in this study.

***Measures****.* Study 1 is purposed to investigate the items of positive anticipated emotions of the opponents. Therefore, the respondents are demanded to imagine the emotions of persons who envy them openly or silently when reading the following instructions: “In this life, there are always persons that envy you openly or silently. Imagine you fail in your study, please indicate their possible emotions”.  Then, the respondent responded to the measurement instrument that uses seven levels of Likert type scale, ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree).

***Result*** The descriptive analysis is presented in Table 1. To be considered as significant emotion, an item should surpass test value=4 (nor agree, nor disagree) used as the cut-off point. One sample T-test is used to test the null hypotheses (Ho): “For the i item, the difference between mean and cut-off point is zero (Ho:  i-4=0)”. The alternative hypothesis states that for the i item, the difference between mean and cut-off point is higher than zero (Ha: i-4>0).

Table 1. Positive Anticipated Emotions of Opponents

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Items | Mean | Std. Deviation | Difference from Cut-off Point (Test Value=4) | T-Value | Sig. (1-tailed) |
| Win (X1) | 5.2632 | 1.43161 | 1.26316 | 10.878 | .000 |
| Pleased (X2) | 4.9737 | 1.34680 | .97368 | 8.913 | .000 |
| Satisfied (X3) | 4.9013 | 1.45466 | .90132 | 7.639 | .000 |
| Like (X4) | 4.6711 | 1.54310 | .67105 | 5.361 | .000 |
| Happy (X5) | 4.6118 | 1.55708 | .61184 | 4.845 | .000 |
| Joyful (X6) | 4.5855 | 1.58404 | .58553 | 4.557 | .000 |
| Exited (X7) | 4.5197 | 1.43269 | .51974 | 4.473 | .000 |
| Spirited (X8) | 4.4079 | 1.59617 | .40789 | 3.151 | .001 |
| Surprise (X9) | 4.3618 | 1.59697 | .36184 | 2.793 | .003 |
| Released (X6) | 4.3618 | 1.43997 | .36184 | 3.098 | .001 |
| Thankful (X7) | 4.1316 | 1.60992 | .13158 | 1.008 | .157 |
| Confident (X8) | 4.0461 | 1.75045 | .04605 | .324 | .373 |
| Proud (X9) | 3.3816 | 1.63137 | -.61842 | - | - |
| Inspired (X10) | 3.1579 | 1.74578 | -.84211 | - | - |

Two items (i.e. thankful and confident) failed to pass the t-test and automatically considered as not part of positive anticipated emotions of rivals. Another two items (i.e. proud and inspired) have the averages that fell below 4 and therefore removed instantly. The items of emotions that successfully pass the test, from the highest one are: win, pleased, satisfied, like, happy, joyful, excited, spirited, surprise and released (Table 1). Subsequently, they are used in Study 1 and Study 2 as the emotions presumed will be experienced partly or wholly by opponents if the respondents fail to achieve goals or accomplish tasks.

**Negative Anticipated Emotions of Rivals**

**Study 1**

Study 2 is conducted to investigate the influence of the anticipated emotions of opponents on achievement motivation. In this study, an individual’s achievement, besides his or her score, is also based on his or her rank among peers. This situation is commonly found in public high school, where the opportunity to enter a famous state university is based on grade point average and student ranking in class. In this situation, besides his or her achievement, an individual also watchs others’ achievements and vice versa. Good achievement of an individual could be ‘bad news’ to others. In this case, to avoid ‘good news to his or her peers and vice versa. It's assumed that this consciousness can motivate an individual to get success, as stated in hypotheses 1.

**The Context of the Study**

This study is conducted in First State Senior High-Class Doloksanggul, a favorite public high school in the district of Humbang Hasundutan, Province of North Sumatra. The selection of this school is based on the student assessment system that uses grade point average (GPA) and its ranking.

Besides students' social status in school, the GPA and its ranking determine strongly students' opportunity to enter prestigious state universities through a free-test path. The higher the GPA and its ranking, the higher the students' opportunity. Consequently, this system creates high competition among students that enables social envy to grow, the situations expected in this study.

**Participants.**

As many 150 12-th degree students (37 males and 113 females) are involved in this study, in which 63 students are treated as the control group and 87 students are used as the experimental group. Both group have the same grade point average (GPA) (ΔGPA=0.972, t=1.63, α=0.106) as well as age (age difference=0.008 year, t=0.079, α=0.937).

**Method**

This study used a quasi-experimental method. With this method, the participants were grouped into experimentation and control groups. The experimentation group was treated through a description of the existence of evil people in students' life who see students' failure to get a good GPA as good news for them. This story occupied the introduction part of the questionnaire. Evil face caricature was embedded below the story to strengthen the message. Next, the participants read this statement:  “If you fail in your study, people that envy you openly or silently will feel win, pleased, satisfied, like, happy, joyful, excited, spirited, surprised, and released.  To increase the anticipation of the emotions of evil people, participants were asked to highlight each item of emotions with a highlighter pen. After that, the participants responded to the dependent variables.

**Dependent Variables**

Dependent variables are approach and avoidance motivations taken from Eliot's (1999)’s achievement motivation measurement scale. The study utilized seven levels of Likert-type scale ranging from extremely disagree to extremely agree.

**Result**

Confirmatory factor analysis failed to validate the approach and avoidance motivations specified in Eliot's (1999) measurement scale. Exploratory factor analysis with principal component attraction (PCA) technic offered four factors instead of two factors as expected. Each offered-factor contains poor loading items. They can't be used as motivational dimensions. Therefore, as a solution, the items are treated as separate variables.

Table 2. Result of Study 1

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Items | EG Average | CG Average | Mean Difference | T Value | Sig. (1-tailed) |
| 1. It is important to me to do better than the other participant in program (Q1) | 5.90 | 5.19 | 0.71 | 4.087 | 0.000 |
| 1. My goals in this program is to get better grade than most of the participant (Q2) | 6.10 | 4.90 | 1.20 | 7.783 | 0.000 |
| 1. I am striving to demonstrate my ability relative to others in every class where I am enrolled (Q3) | 5.23 | 4.48 | 0.75 | 3.638 | 0.000 |
| 1. I am motivated to be thought of outperforming my peers in my batch (Q4) | 5.56 | 4.98 | 0.57 | 3.005 | 0.002\* |
| 1. It is important to me to do well compared to others student during my study (Q5) | 6.06 | 5.38 | 0.68 | 4.010 | 0.000\* |
| 1. I worry about the possibility of getting a bad grade in my study (Q8) | 5.60 | 5.30 | 1.02 | 7.646 | 0.000 |
| 1. My fear of performing poorly in my study is often motivates me (Q9) | 6.24 | 5.54 | 0.70 | 3.993 | 0.000 |
| 1. I just want to avoid doing poorly in my study (Q10) | 6.34 | 5.67 | 0.67 | 5.515 | 0.000 |
| 1. My goal in my study is to avoid performing badly (Q12) | 6.40 | 5.81 | 0.59 | 4.670 | 0.000 |

\*Conducted under unequal variances presumption

The t-tests are conducted under the assumption that variance of the variable in control and experimentation groups upon which the test is conducted is equal, except for Q4 and Q5. Both variables failed to fulfill that requirement, therefore in the determination of t-values, equal variances between control and experimentation groups are not assumed for both questions.

**Using Eliot and Murayama’s (2001) 2 X 2 AGQ-R as Dependent Variable**

As an improvement of the two-goal model, in 1999, Eliot developed a three-goal model called the trichotomous goals model. This model consists of: (1) mastery-goal focused on attaining task-related skill or competence, (2) performance-approach goal focused on attaining normative competence, and (3) performance-avoidance-goal focused on avoiding normative incompetence. The first two goals are typically owned by those who have high self-efficacy and the third goal is to belong to those who have low self-efficacy.

In 2001, Eliot and McGregor added a fourth dimension called mastery-avoidance goal, a goal by which an individual avoids failure in mastering a skill or competence. The newest model is now called 2 (focus: mastery and performance) X 2 (valence: approach and avoidance) model. In detail, this model consists of mastery-approach, mastery-avoidance, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goals. This model is the most widely used (Huang and Zhang, 2011) and is better than the trichotomous model (Eliot and Murayama 2008). Moreover, it has been confirmed in many studies (e.g. Phan. 2013; Rosas, 2015; Ratsameemonthon, 2015).

As described before, social envy is a product of social comparison among members of society. In that situation, people will activate ego goals, in which success or failure is viewed in comparison with others' achievements (Kaplan and Maehr, 1999). Willingness to out-perform others is manifested in performance goals, whereas the effort to avoid being a loser is stated in performance-avoidance goals. The positive AERs stimulate willingness to outperform others, whereas the negative AERs stimulate defense mechanisms to avoid being the loser. Therefore, the hypotheses which precede the following studies are:

H3: Positive anticipated emotions of rivals increase performance-avoidance goals.

H4: Negative anticipated emotions of rivals increase performance-approach goals.

**Preliminary Research: Validity and Reliability Analysis**

To validate Eliot and Murayama’s (2001) 2 X 2 AGQ-R measurement scale, the author conducts preliminary research. This research involved 203 students of Kwik Kian Gie School of Business enrolled in six classes of Intermediate Financial Accounting courses. Among them, as many 80 participants are involved only in this preliminary research. The rest or 123 participants, besides in this research, are also involved in Study 3 (55 participants) and Study 4 (68 participants).

Confirmatory factor analysis (CFA) with LISREL reveals that all achievement goals dimensions are valid. In Table 3 we can see that all validity indicators have scored far above standard (FL>0.50, AVE>0.60, CR>0.70) specified by Hair et al. (2006). Cronbach alpha also indicates good reliability (r11>0.70) of the instrument.

Table 4. Validity and Reliability of Research Instrument

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Items | | Loading | AVE | CR | Cronbach Alpha |
| Mastery Approach | | | | | |
| Q1 | I aim to completely master the material presented in this class | 0.76 | 0.79 | 0.92 | 0.82 |
| Q3 | I am striving to understand the content of this course as thoroughly as possible | 0.99 |
| Q7 | My goal is to learn as much as possible | 0.90 |
| Mastery Avoidance | | | | | |
| Q5 | I aim to avoid learning less than I possibly could | 0.74 | 0.58 | 0.81 | 0.75 |
| Q9 | My goal is to avoid learning less than it is possible to learn | 0.74 |
| Q11 | I am striving to avoid an incomplete understanding of the course material | 0.81 |
| Performance Approach | | | | | |
| Q2 | I am striving to do well compared to other students | 0.84 | 0.78 | 0.88 | 0.87 |
| Q4 | I aim to perform relatively well relative to other students | 0.90 |
| Q8 | My goal is to perform better than the other students | 0.90 |
| Performance Avoidance | | | | | |
| Q6 | My goal is to avoid performing poorly compared to other students | 0.92 | 0.77 | 0.91 | 0.78 |
| Q10 | I am striving to avoid performing worse than other students | 0.86 |
| Q12 | I aim to avoid doing worse than other students | 0.85 |

Source: Instrument is taken from Eliot, A.J. and Nakamura, K. (2008). On the measurement of achievement goals: Critique, Illustration, and Application. Journal of Educational Psychology, 100 (3), 613-628.

**Study 2**

**Context of the Study**

Relevant assignment in this study is a task whose positive outcomes are viewed as a gift to the proponents or have prestige value for an individual who has it (Simamora 2016). Something can be considered as a gift as long as it gives positive emotions to the receiver (Belk 1977; Goodman and Lim 2018). Achievement in a university can fulfill these prerequisites as it influences significant others' well-being (Chen et al. 2009). It also has prestige value as long as it can be envied by the enviers (Douglas and Isherwood, 1979; Smith and Kim, 2007). For these reasons, this study is conducted among students of Kwik Kian Gie School of Business and Informatics, a private college in North Jakarta, Indonesia.

The data are collected in the first week of November 2018 or two weeks before the mid-test. This timing was intentionally chosen to avoid the intervening effect of the result of the mid-test on the result of the study.

**Objectives**

Besides to further investigate the influence of positive AEOps, in the study, the influence of negative AEOps on achievement goals is also investigated. It’s expected that positive and negative AEOps influence mastery approach, mastery avoidance, performance approach, and performance-avoidance goals positively.

**The Influence of Positive AEOps on Achievement Goals**

***If you fail – non significant decreasing in SE, but increasing in performance avoidance***

Students from the management department are involved in this experimentation. They are grouped into two quasi group experiments: 1 control group (33 participants) + 1 experimentation groups (22 participants, framed with positive AEOps), between-groups design. ANOVA test revealed that those groups have no different age (F=1.37, sig.=0.26) and GPA (F=1.29, sig.=0.28) (Table 3).

Table 3. The Description of Participants from the Management Department

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Properties | | Control Group (N=33) | Experimentation Group (N=22) | Total  (N=55) | Anova |
| Age (years) | Average | 19.49 | 19.78 | 19.45 | F=1.37, Sig.=0.26 |
| S.dev | 0.96 | 0.66 | 1.21 |
| GPA | Average | 3.12 | 3.18 | 3.11 | F=1.29, Sig.=0.28 |
| S.Dev | 0.08 | 0.50 | 0.47 |

Experimentation group is conditioned by the way applied in Study 2. No treatment conducted on control group. Dependent variables are taken from Eliot and Murayama (2001) 2 X 2 AGQ-R (Achievement Goal Questionnaire-Revised) measurement scale.

**Result**

If you are success

Table 4. The Influence of Positive AEOps on Achievement Goals

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Dependent Variable | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | Mean | | Mean Difference | T-test for Equality of Means | |
| F | Sig. | Experimentation group (N=33) | Control Group (N=22) | t | Sig. (1-tailed) |
| Mastery approach | 8.660 | 0.004 | 14.897 | 14.333 | 0.564 | 0.729 | 0.235 |
| Mastery avoidance | 0.019 | 0.890 | 12.871 | 12.788 | 0.083 | 0.137 | 0.445 |
| Performance approach | 1.399 | 0.241 | 14.487 | 14.333 | 0.154 | 0.234 | 0.408 |
| Performance avoidance | 0.087 | 0.769 | 16.146 | 14.849 | 1.297 | 2.037 | 0.023\* |

\*Significant at α<0.05

**Study 3: The Influence of Negative AEOps on Achievement Goals**

***If you are success - management***

As many 68 participants enrolled in *the Intermediate Financial Accounting* course from the accounting department are involved in this investigation. They are grouped into two quasi group experiments: control group (40 students, no experimentation) + 1 experimental group (28 students, stimulated with positive AEOps). F test ensures that those groups have the same average of age (F=0.26, sig.=0.78) as well as GPA (F=2.22, sig.=0.11) (Table 2).

Table 3. The Description of Participants from the Accounting Department

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Properties | | Control Group (N=40) | Experimentation Group (N=28) | Total  (N=68) | Anova |
| Age (years) | Average | 19.45 | 19.34 | 19.41 | F=0.26  Sig.=0.78 |
| S.dev | 0.49 | 0.49 | 0.65 |
| GPA | Average | 3.31 | 3.27 | 3.35 | F=2.22  Sig.=0.11 |
| S.Dev | 0.37 | 0.37 | 0.37 |

The experimentation group is made by stressing the existence of evil people in anybody's life. Those people hate individual success openly or silently. The participants are framed with negative emotions the will be experienced by evil people (negative AEOps) if they are successful in the future. The items of negative AEOps are taken from Simamora (2016).

The participants read: *"If you are successful in your study, people that envy or hate you openly or silently will feel dislike, unhappy, uncomfortable, scornful, jittery, cynical, sad, and despicable.* Cynical face caricature is embedded to strengthening the intended framing.The participants in experimentation group are asked to highlight the items of each emotion with highlighter pen. Next, they are demanded to respond 12 statements from Eliot and Murayama (2001) 2 X 2 AGQ-R (Achievement Goal Questionnaire-Revised) measurement scale using five level Likert scale (1=strongly disagree, 5=strongly agree).

**Result**

Table 5. The Influence of Negative AEOps on Achievement Goals

|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Dependent Variable | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances | | Mean | | Mean Difference | T-test for Equality of Means | |
| F | Sig. | Experimentation group  (N=40) | Control Group (N=28) | t | Sig. (1-tailed) |
| Mastery approach | 0.630 | 0.430 | 17.286 | 16.575 | 0.711 | 1.246 | 0.109 |
| Mastery avoidance | 0.053 | 0.819 | 14.286 | 13.650 | 0.833 | 0.636 | 0.204 |
| Performance approach | 0.003 | 0.959 | 15.821 | 14.500 | 1.321 | 2.049 | 0.022\* |
| Performance avoidance | 0.369 | 0.546 | 15.607 | 15.125 | 0.696 | 0.482 | 0.245 |

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