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**Silent Competition among Students: How Schadenfreude and Social Envy Stimulate Achievement Motivation**

Schadenfreude and social envy have attracted human interest for thousands of years. However, there are no clear visions about how they influence achievement motivation. To overcome this problem, based on Mayer and Salovey’s (1997) motivational intelligence theory, the author develops rivals’ anticipated emotions (RAEs) and achievement-oriented model through which the envy and schadenfreude work. In the schadenfreude scenario, anticipated joyfulness (RAJs) stimulates students’ self-efficacy and performance-avoidance goals. Rivals’ anticipated distress (RADs), framed as the social envy manifestation, increases performance-approach goals. When working together, the RAJs and RADs stimulate performance-approach and performance-avoidance simultaneously. Both should have nothing to do with mastery-approach and mastery-avoidance goals. Future researches can widen their investigation into intergroup schadenfreude and social envy research domains.

*Keywords*: Social envy, schadenfreude, anticipated emotions of rivals, achievement motivation, achievement goals.

# **Introduction**

Humanity viewed social envy as a dangerous behavior for thousands of years ago, which inspired most of the initial research in this field (Aquaro, 2004). They focused mainly on the negative affective states generated by this behavior (Lange, Weidman, & Crusius, 2018; Van de Ven, 2016).

Social envy is a natural companion to schadenfreude (Hareli & Weiner, 2002; Smith et al., 1996; Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2009). However, the demarcation line between them is blurred (Hareli & Weiner, 2002; Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2009). Some researchers (e.g., Smith et al. 1996; Hareli and Weiner, 2002) see social envy as the antecedent of schadenfreude. Van Dijk, Ouwerkerk, Goslinga, Nieweg, and Gallucci (2006) agree that that notion, especially when the gender of the target is similar to that of the observers. Van de Ven and Zeelenberg (2015) sharpened this view that only malicious envy, not benign envy, influences schadenfreude. Conversely, according to Feather and Sherman (2002), resentment, not envy, is the factor that determines schadenfreude. Piskorz and Piskorz (2009) see envy and schadenfreude as two different and independent concepts determined by different situations.

This study departed from a new perspective about the relationships of envy and schadenfreude. Indonesian culture contains a trait concept called *sirik* that manifests the envy and schadenfreude perfectly. It consists of the feeling of joy or pleasure when one sees others’ fail or suffers misfortune (schadenfreude) as well as the feeling of unhappiness over others’ good fortune (envy). This perspective can resolve the debate about the relationships between social envy and schadenfreude. By seeing them as two sides of a coin, we can conclude that both are correlated (Hareli & Weiner, 2002; Smith et al., 1996; Van de Ven and Zeelenberg, 2015). However, this perspective also allows us to perceive that the situations influence envy and schadenfreude (Piskorz & Piskorz, 2009). More specifically, there may be situations where envy functions and schadenfreude do not, and *vice versa*, leading to the absence of correlation between them (Feather & Sherman, 2002).

Furthermore, this study departed from the premise that envy and schadenfreude are subjects to stimulation, especially for high *sirik* trait people. Rivals’ anticipated emotions can stimulate that trait. When stimulated, people will regulate their behavior accordingly concerning the object of envy and schadenfreude (Simamora, 2016).

Achievement is among the objects where envy and schadenfreude generally function (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001; Lange & Crusius, 2015; Lange et al. 2018; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999). Inspired by that premise, this study moves a step forward by conceptualizing how social envy and schadenfreude that is manifested as rivals’ anticipated emotions influence achievement motivation. Specifically, the objectives of this study are; first to conceptualize the RAEs. Second, to modeling how social envy and schadenfreude-related motives influence achievement motivations. The concept and model should be the original contributions of this study because of a rare discussion about them. Hopefully, this study’s results can inspire educational activists to capitalize on schadenfreude and social envy to increase student achievement motivation.

# **LITERATURE REVIEW**

## **Social Envy**

Humans are inseparable from one another. 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 (Ajzen, 1991). Rivals are people with whom an individual has openly or silently anti-social relationships (Celse, 2010). The 'enemies' existence gave birth to the social envy concept (Celse, 2010; Smith & Kim, 2007).

Social envy appears when someone witnesses that the envied persons or group have a valuable object, which produces the feeling of inferiority and resentment (Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2009; Smith & Kim, 2007). It stems from an upward comparison, in which someone (the enviers) compares himself or herself to a superior person (the envied) in terms of the ownership of the envied object (Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2009). Envy is generated not by the fact that the rival does well but does better than oneself. Such an evaluation generates a collection of emotions during its episode that may include a feeling of inferior, hatred to the situations, and bad feelings toward the envied person (Parrot & Smith, 1992).

Envy behavior involves three components: the envier, the envied person, and the envied object (Lange, Weidman, & Crusius, 2018). The envy objects can be an achievement, characteristic, or possession, with high prestige value and strongly relate to the envied social status (Henrich & Gil-White, 2001; Lange & Crusius, 2015; Lange et al. 2018; Vigneron & Johnson, 1999).

The theory of social envy still evolves these days. There are three issues as research traditions in this field. They are the categories of social envy (e.g., Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, & Pieter, 2009; Falcon, 2015), antecedents (Lange & Crusius, 2015; Lin, Van de Ven, & Utz, 2018), consequences (Van de Venn, 2016), or antecedents and consequences (Apple, Crucius, & Alexander, 2015).

The enviers have two faces. The first is a more negative face called malicious envy (Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2009). With this face, envy is a destructive feeling that harmful the envier physically, psychologically, and behaviorally. Malicious envy exists simultaneously with schadenfreude (Smith et al. 1996; Hareli and Weiner, 2002).

Social envy can generate schadenfreude (Smith et al., 1996; Hareli and Weiner, 2002). It can also produce aggressive behaviors and conﬂicts in groups (Cohen-Charash & Mueller, 2007) and willingness to bring down the other (Tai, Narayan, & McAlister, 2012), including increasing motivation to reduce or remove or damage others' prospect and advantages. However, for these reasons, one's situation may be sacrificed (Parks, Rumble, & Posey, 2002).

The second face of social envy that receives a more positive view describes that the enviers increase their motivation to work harder to get what the envied persons already have (Van de ven, 2016; Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2009). Lange, Weidman, and Crusius (2018) stated that the enviers' motivation is accompanied by positive thoughts about and admiration of the envied person in this point of view. Van de Ven (2016) noted that the antecedents of envy could be the same, but the enviers' reactions may differ because of the differences in individual characteristics. Vecchio (1995) noted that the particular tendency over envy was also determined by envied object characteristics, cultural attributes, and the situation where the envy occurred in addition to personal properties.

Lange et al. (2018) noted that envy influences consumer behavior, the social structure of an organization, the perception of one's body, virtual emotional experience, the development of stereotypes, and many aspects of human psychology. That is why, they said, some people believe that envy shapes the entire society.

## **Schadenfreude**

Schadenfreude is the joy experienced by individuals when observing others' misfortunes. It is typically happening in competitive circumstances (Smith, Powell, Combs, & Schurtz, 2009), correlates with self-esteem (Van Dijk, Van Koningsbruggen, Ouwerkerk, & Wesseling, 2011), and occurs in individual and group levels (Brambilla & Riva, 2017).

Schadenfreude can be caused by a threat to one’s self-worth (van Dick, Ouwerker, Smith, & Cikara, 2015) and others' success (Leach and Spears, 2008). Among them, self-inferiority is the strongest (Leach and Spears, 2008), especially if the object correlates with self-esteem sources (Watanabe, 2019).

At the individual level, people with low self-esteem feel thicker and more frequent schadenfreude, especially if the persons who suffer from misfortunes perceived as superiors (Van Dijk et al., 2011). At a group level, group inferiority generates group schadenfreude. It creates a feeling of joy for the misfortune of a successful outgroup (Leach & Spears, 2008). The reverse is also true. People with high self-esteem feel weaker and less frequent schadenfreude, especially if the persons who experience misfortune are from an inferior position (Van Dijk et al., 2011). Ouwerkerk and Johnson (2016) also demonstrate that strong schadenfreude is also evident in social media (e.g., Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter). They said that in media, to maintain positive evaluation, people tend to make downward social comparisons with those who have a lower social status or are less fortunate than themselves.

Schadenfreude is a socially undesirable emotion. Individuals who express those emotions to the people around them tend to be perceived as immoral, incompetent, and heartless (Jung & Karasawa, 2016). They face the risk of deteriorating relationships with the target of schadenfreude, as well as the people around them (Watanabe, 2019). However, Watanabe (2019) noted that sharing schadenfreude with a close friend or with whom who have the same emotions is possible.

There are four conditions in which schadenfreude commonly arises. First, when the observers get gain from others' misfortune. When a rival's failure opens an opportunity or gives an observer gain, schadenfreude tends to occur (Smith et al., 2009).

Second, schadenfreude tends to occur when observers see that others deserve the misfortune because of their hypocrisy or sense of injustice over a person who suffers from the misfortune (Smith et al. 2009). In this way, the observers view the misfortune as a logical answer to that hypocrisy and injustice.

The third condition is if the misfortune is experienced by envied persons or those in a superior position. Van Dijk et al. (2011) reported that self-esteem would decrease when people suffer from misfortunes. At the same time, the observers will feel the increase in their self-esteem. Therefore, the envied persons' misfortune will bring both parties self-esteem to a more balanced comparison. The fourth condition, as Feather and Sherman (2002) said, schadenfreude is geared up by the observer’s resentment to the misfortune persons.

## **Rivals’ Anticipated Emotions**

Anticipation is a readiness to face predicted future events generated primarily by a cognitive skill (Bozinovski & Bozinovska, 2003) that can be occurred in a very short or very long time (Poli, 2010). It often deals with the consequences of behavior for the self-image and emotions in the future (Eskritt, Doucette, & Robitaille, 2014). The more experienced the individual, the more accurate the anticipation is (Bozinovski & Bozinovska, 2003).

In Indonesia, as mentioned before, people know and, to some extent, have a sirik trait. However, the most important thing is that, based on Mayer and Salovey's (1997) emotional intelligence theory, people can predict the rivals' schadenfreude and social envy with this knowledge. They can anticipate rivals' positive emotions (such as pleasure, happiness, release, satisfaction, joyfulness, and excitement) for a misfortune or beaten in a social competition they may experience. They also can anticipate rivals' negative emotions (such as dislike, unhappy, uncomfortable, scornful, jittery, and cynical) for the lucky or high position they get in social competition. The author calls those future-oriented emotions as anticipated emotion of rivals (RAEs).

As stated before, rivals’ anticipated emotions departed from Mayer and Salovey's (1997) emotional intelligence, which said that an individual could predict others' emotions and then manage their behavior to generate feelings for or prevent others from experiencing certain emotions. Mayer, Salovey, and Caruso (2004) asserted in cognitive intelligence theory that people could develop reasons to perceive, assess, and generate feelings. With such capabilities, in the context of competition for achievement, one can anticipate rivals' emotions due to their future success or failure in an achievement-related race.

Which rivals' emotions are anticipated depend on individuals' position in a social competition. Envied persons should be those who have a significant opportunity to win the competition or to beat their rivals for the feeling of win. People in this position have the advantage of superiority (Smith et al. 2009). On the other hand, people who have a high risk of failure know that they can be the target of rivals' schadenfreude and try to get rid of the risk by avoiding failure.

Beating the enviers (approach motivation) and avoiding become the target of schadenfreude (avoiding motivation) can be the goals itself. The first goal, owned by people with high self-efficacy, occurs in a downward social contrast, and the second goal, owned by people with low self-efficacy, is produced by upward social comparison. People in the average position can involve in upward and downward social comparison simultaneously. Consequently, in the context of a social relationship, people can have positive and negative RAEs and are motivated by approach, avoidance, or approach and avoidance motivation at the same time (Darnon, Dompnier, Delmas, Pulfrey, & Butera, 2009; Nikitin & Freund, 2018).

## **Achievement Motivation**

Achievement motivation consists of an effort to achieve success or avoid failure to establish a skills-related task (Nicholls, 1984). In the education context, Elliot (1999) offered the trichotomous goals to represent achievement motivation. It consists of *mastery goals (an effort to improve* task-related skill or competence), *performance-approach goals (*intended to get others’ admiration because of one’s relative high competence), and p*erformance avoidance-goals* (an effort to avoid being perceived as less competent). He believed that those who have high self-efficacy should own the first two goals, and low self-efficacy people should own the third category.

In 2001, Elliot and McGregor added the fourth dimension called mastery avoidance, in which an individual thought to avoid failure in mastering a skill or competence. With this additional goal, the new model is called the 2X2 model that consists of a mastery-approach, mastery-avoidance, performance-approach, and performance-avoidance goals. Many studies confirm the validation of this model (Huang & Zhang, 2011; Rosas, 2015).

# **CONCEPTUAL MODEL AND PROPOSITIONS**

In responding to future schadenfreude and envy, the author postulates that an individual involves in a non-static but in dynamic goal-directed behavior. Because, with future-oriented thinking, people can predict their behavior's desired and undesired outcomes (Ajzen & Madden, 1986; Eskritt, Doucettea, & Robitaillea, 2014). When an individual wants to get or avoid them, the desired or undesired outcomes become goals (Ajzen & Madden, 1986).

The aspect of demonstration places achievement motivation as one of the envy objects (Lange et al., 2018; Van de Ven and Zeelenberg, 2018). The general premise is that rivals' anticipated emotions positively influence achievement motivation (Figure 1). Precisely, in a social competition where the sirik trait works, willingness to avoid becoming the target of schadenfreude (Figure 1A) and desire to be envied (Figure 1B) are manifested in rivals’ anticipated joyfulness and distress that stimulate achievement subsequently.



As stated before, people are aware of and anticipate rivals' enjoyment when they fail to reach the achievement they deserve or fall below the rivals' grade (Figure 1A). Being a loser is an uncomfortable position (Kaplan and Maehr, 1999). People will regulate their behavior to avoid failure to hinder being the object of rivals' feelings of pleasure. The author believes that the stronger is the rivals' feeling of pleasure, the higher is the individuals’ motivation to avoid failure, as formalized in the following propositions:

P1: Positive anticipated emotions of rivals increase performance-avoidance goals.

People are also aware of rivals' distress when they succeed in getting the achievement they deserve or climb above the rivals' grade (Figure 1B). The willingness to envy rivals or create rivals feeling of pain because of the envied achievement can drive motivation to beat rivals or to win the competition, as stated as follows:

P2: Negative anticipated emotions of rivals increase performance-approach goals.

Kaplan and Maehr (1999) outlined that task and ego goals trigger different behavior, coping, and emotion. People with ego goals view success in social comparison terms. On the other hand, people who have mastery goals improve their understanding and competence for a task by devoting high effort regardless of whether they are better or worse than relevant references. Consequently, they are not impacted by the rivals’ anticipated emotions, as stated in the following propositions:

P3: Rivals’ joyfulness, anticipated as a response to student's failure, has no effect on mastery-approach, mastery avoidance goals, and performance-approach goals.

P4: Rivals’ distress, anticipated as a response to student's success, has no effect on mastery-approach, mastery avoidance goals, and performance-approach goals.

Grant and Wrzesniewski (2010) indicated that positive and negative emotions could exist simultaneously in a social context. Performance-approach and performance-avoidance goals can also appear at once (Darnon et al., 2009). Their dominations could vary over time or in different contexts (Harackiewizc, Barron, Printich, Eliot, & Thrash, 2002; Van Yveren, 2006). They may interact to achieve single outcomes (Harackiewizc et al., 2002). Similarly, needs to avoid the position of being the misfortune (reflected by rivals’ anticipated joyfulness) and to beat others (reflected by rivals’ anticipated distress) can be stimulated simultaneously, as stated as follows:

P5: Rivals’ anticipated joyfulness and distress influence performance approach and avoidance motivation.

**Rivals’ Anticipated Emotions and Self-Efficacy**

**In the gain and lose scenario, schadenfreude can be viewed as lose and the being envied situation as gain. Bosone and Martinez (2017) revealed that the framing of individuals with loss increases self-efficacy. It means that in students’ rivalry, anticipated failure that followed by schadenfreude, will increases self-efficacy as mechanism to protect the self, as stated in the following proposition:**

**P6: Rivals' joyfulness, anticipated as a response to student's failure, increase self-efficacy.**

Furthermore, Bosone and Martinez (2017) also stated that framing with gain has a weak effect on efficacy belief. The scenario of being envied position students as the winner or high efficacy people that requires no additional effort to cover the weakness. In other words, an anticipated success that generates a feeling of being envied does not affect self-efficacy, as stated as follows:

P7: Rivals' distress, anticipated as a response to student's success, does not affect self-efficacy.

# **RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

This study proposes the conceptual validity of rivals' anticipated emotions (RAEs) expected to influence ego-related achievement goals. The RAEs indicate the existence of future-oriented social envy and schadenfreude among peers in a competitive situation. The most important thing is, this study describes how people anticipate the RAEs and use that knowledge to cope with social envy and schadenfreude through achievement motivation. Indirectly, this study's results also enrich our knowledge of two new motives that drive achievement motivation; they are a motive to worst others and avoid being the target of schadenfreude.

Positive and negative RAEs are not two poles of emotion, but two different categories of emotions that do not negate each other, as outlined by Roseman (1991). Automatically, the needs to be envied and avoided being the schadenfreude target are two different and independent motives. According to Piskorz and Piskorz (2009), social envy and schadenfreude as their roots are also two different and independent concepts determined by different situations.

This study confirms the sole and mutual influence of the RAEs and the social envy and schadenfreude that underlie them. Specifically, positive RAEs as the manifestation of schadenfreude, increase performance-avoidance goals, and negative RAEs as the reflection of envy stimulate performance-approach goals. Finally, positive and negative RAEs influence both performance goals simultaneously.

Previous studies (e.g., Grant & Wrzesniewski, 2010; Nikitin & Freund, 2018) outlined the co-existence of approach and avoidance motivation. However, van Yperen (2006) stated that most people prefer a particular achievement goal, a dominant achievement goal that could vary over time and be activated by different contexts. Therefore, achievement motivation is not static, but the dynamic concept as found in this study.

This study asserts that the RAEs influence ego-oriented goals but not mastery-oriented goals. It means that concerning achievement motivation, social envy, and schadenfreude only cares for relative performance among peers, not the skills, knowledge, or competencies generated in task accomplishment. This result strengthens the notion that social envy and schadenfreude are related to a social comparison of self-esteem linked with material possessions (Van Dijk et al., 2011; Van de Ven, Zeelenberg, & Pieters, 2009).

There is a debate about the relationships between self-efficacy and achievement motivation. Some researchers found a positive relationship (Darnon et al. 2009; Middleton & Midgley 1997; Pajares, Britner, & Valiante 2000) between them; others found no correlation (Anderman & Midgley 1997; Middleton & Midgley 1997) between them. This study proposes a new challenge to investigate whether, in the loose scenario**,** self-efficacy mediates the influence of rivals' anticipated joyfulness on achievement motivation. It is also interesting to verify that when people focus on the gain generated by a feeling of being envied, self-efficacy is not needed to increase performance-approach goals.

Tian, Yu, and Huebner (2017) found that performance-avoidance goal orientations correlate negatively with well-being. Tuominen-Soini, Salmela-Aro, and Niemivirta (2008) uncover that goals purposed to demonstrate one’s performance (i.e., performance-approach goals) correlates negatively with well-being. It is exciting for further research to investigate the correlation of RAEs with well-being.

This study is still limited to the individual level of RAEs. Since the social envy and schadenfreude also work on group level (Brambilla & Riva, 2017; Leach & Spears, 2008; Watanabe, 2016), further research is suggested to study the influence of RAEs to group motivation.

In this study, which departed from the Indonesian cultural concept called *sirik*, the author proposes that social envy and schadenfreude are the dimensions of a personality trait. This concept is a challenging area of investigation for further research.

# **CONCLUSION**

# This study conceptualizes the efficacy of rivals’ anticipated emotions as the manifestation of social envy and schadenfreude. The model specifies that willingness to envy others and avoid being the target of schadenfreude are manifested in rivals' anticipated emotions. Rivals’ anticipated joyfulness as the manifestation of schadenfreude upon subjects' failure increase self-efficacy and performance-avoidance goals. Moreover, rivals' anticipated distress, anticipated as an unconscious response to students' success, stimulates performance-approach goals and does not affect self-efficacy. Both emotions do not influence the mastery approach and avoidance goals.

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