Investigation of the Relationships among Narcissism, Humanity, Interpersonal Control Perception and Envy in Male and Female Employees

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Abstract

Envy is one of the most common human emotions related directly to interpersonal relationships. The aim of this study was to investigate the relationships among narcissism, common humanity and interpersonal control perception with envy. To do this, 140 male and female employees from Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz were chosen through random sampling. They completed questionnaires of Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HNS), interpersonal control perception subscales of Perceived Control Across Domains Scale (PCADS) and common humanity subscale of Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) and the Envy Assessment based on Islamic Sources. The gathered data were then analyzed by SPSS (21.0 version) and Stepwise Regression Analysis was used to analyze the research hypotheses. The results showed that narcissism and common humanity were the most important predictors of envy in female employees and interpersonal control perception and narcissism were the most important predictors of envy in male employees. These findings have practical implications for management the envy phenomenon in work environment.

Keywords: narcissism, common humanity, interpersonal control perception, envy

Introduction

Negative emotions have remarkable impact on employees and the organization (Erdil & Muceldili, 2014). For example, Envy has been historically recognized to have a great effect on human relationships in an organization (Thompson, Glaso, & Martinsen, 2015). Envy also can negatively affect the individual's levels of performance and satisfaction and sometimes (Smith & Kim, 2007).

Envy has been conceptualized in three different ways. First, it is conceptualized as situational, which the focus is on the general envy of others in an environment (Duffy, Scott, Shaw, Tepper & Aquino, 2012). Second, as dispositional, that the focus is on the general tendency to feel envious of others (Smith & Kim, 2007) and last, as specific and episodic, which involves a specific individual as a referent (Cohen-Charash, 2009).In this study, the tendency of envy is measured which corresponds to the second definition. In this definition, envy is defined as an unpleasant emotional reaction to development, possessions, or better qualities of somebody else (Smith & Kim, 2007). Research studies have indicated various factors contributing to the feeling of envy, for instance: Vecchio (2000) indicated that some factors as self-esteem, Machiavellianism, autonomy and sense of control predicted envy and jealousy.

The feeling of envy might be correlated with an increase in motivation for improving ourselves or with a change in motivation, it often accompanies the feelings of hostility and malevolence towards the one who stands to benefit. The negative aspect of envy contributes to some of the unfavorable social behaviors, for instance: a wish for someone's loss of superior fruitions which brings about his downfall, criminal behavior, group biases, and to get pleasure from the failure or suffering of the person who is envied (Delpriore, Buss & Hill, 2011).

Some scholars believe that envy is based on the individual's perception of himself. Whatever the cause of envy, the envious person cannot tolerate the superiority of someone else and thinks that he himself deserves that superiority. One of the factors can relate to the envy is narcissism. Individuals with narcissistic personality thought to be highly susceptible to envy for being superior. Also, DSM-V (APA, 2013) has counted envy as one of nine characteristic symptoms of Narcissistic Personality Disorder (NPD). In fact, envy has been described as a self-defeating characteristic of the narcissistic personality. So, the following hypothesis is phrased:

H1. Narcissism and envy positively are related.

Another factor which may be related to envy is common humanity. Common humanity is set under the self-compassion concept. In general, self-compassion represents a balanced awareness of one's emotions including the ability to encounter painful thoughts and feelings without avoidance or exaggeration as well as a feeling of sympathy towards oneself. Common humanity is the recognition

that pain and failure are unavoidable aspects of life that all people have in common (Neff, Rude & Kirkpatrik, 2007).This sense of non-individualism contradicts person's feeling of envy of others. So, the following hypothesis is phrased:

H2. Common humanity and envy negatively are related.

Perceived control or control perception is counted as one of the factors contributing to health maintenance (Davis, 2004). As demonstrated by Peterson & Stunkard (1992) a fundamental aspect of human nature is the motivation of dominating and controlling the environment. Seligman (1973) theorized that a lack of perceived control "learned helplessness" was a factor in human depression. Perceived control compared to real control may prove more useful to human positive compatibility. The mere perception of control is sufficient to reduce stress, increase motivation, encourage performance and so forth (Peterson & Stunkard, 1992). Relationship control refers to an exchanging process in interpersonal relationships and represents the distribution of power in relationships, dominance and obedience. In other words, control in interpersonal relationships refers to an individual's endeavor to put others under pressure and to interfere in and influence their will and determination. Interpersonal control not only involves apparent control for example tangible awards and punishments, but also includes smarter forms of control such as the use of conditioned attention (Davis, 2004).This study hypothesizes that persons get annoyed with someone else's superiority over themselves and envy of them because they feel that they have lost their control in their interpersonal relationship and that their influence on others has decreased. There for:

H3. Interpersonal control perception and envy negatively are related.

According to the review of literature mentioned above, this study aims at investigating simple and multiple relationships of narcissism, interpersonal control perception and common humanity with envy and tries to provide an answer to the question whether there is any difference between males and females in terms of predictors of envy.

This research has put together factors to explain envy that have not considered in other studies or have not been seen together as explanatory factors. Also, the study of a personality factor along

with interchangeable interpersonal factors can examine envy from an interactive point of view and emphasize its environmental nature.Another noteworthy point is that we have finally addressed the differences in the priority of envy factors in men and women.This study examines envy in the workplace, but not necessarily job envy.

Method

Participants

The population consisted of all the married employees in Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz from which 155 persons were selected through random sampling. To determination of minimum sample size requirement for Multiple Regression method, a rule of thumb was $8 \times m + 50$, that m = predictor variables number (Tabachnick & Fidell, 2013). In this study, we had 3 predictor variables. Therefor, 140 can be suitable size for analyzing with regression method. 155 questionnaires were distributed and 140 questionnaires (=90%) were completed. The study sample consisted of 70 married females and 70 married male employees.

Measures

Hypersensitive Narcissism Scale (HNS), Perceived Control Across Domains Scale (PCADS), common humanity subscale of Self-Compassion Scale (SCS) and first testing of Envy Assessment based on Islamic Sources were used in this study for gathering data.

Envy

The envy assessment test which is based on Islamic sources, designed by Valizade & Azarbayejani (2010) in order to assess envy in adults, was given to the subjects. The test has 40 5-degree items (from 1=completely agree to 5=completely disagree) and two subscales: cognitive/emotional (28 items, for example: I wish I had the blessings of others/ I am harsh and cruel in taking revenge) and behavioral (12 items, for example: if my colleague fails, I blame her). The developers examined the psychometric features of the questionnaire. Cronbach's coefficients for cognitive, behavioral, and emotional aspects and the total score connected to envy were reported as 0.55, 0/75, 0.85, and 0.91, respectively. In order to calculate test validity, confirmatory factor analysis was adopted and its validity was acknowledged. Furthermore, Cronbach's coefficients for the total questionnaire and behavioral and cognitive/emotional aspects of envy in the present study were obtained as 0.91,

0.75, and 0.89 which again confirmed the reliability of the questionnaire. The results of confirmatory factor analysis also showed that all the items of the questionnaire except for items 1, 6, 21, 31, 34, and 36, had acceptable factor loadings (over 0.3).

Common humanity

Self-compassion scale is developed by Neff (2003). This scale consists of 26 items and 6 subscales of self-kindness, self-judgment, common humanity, withdrawal, mind-awareness and over-awareness ranging from 1=never to 5=always. The present study has only made use of common humanity subscale (4 items, for example: I try to see my failings as part of the human condition/ When I feel inadequate in some way, I try to remind myself that feelings of inadequacy are shared by most people.).According to Neff's report, the scale enjoys reliability (Cronbach's =0.92). Moreover, in this study, Cronbach's coefficient for common humanity subscale was 0.79 which again confirms the reliability of the questionnaire. The results of confirmatory factor analysis also showed that all the items of the subscale had acceptable factor loadings (over 0.3).

Interpersonal control perception

Perceived control across domains scale is designed by Davis (2004) and has 30 items and 3 interpersonal, personal, and social-political perception subscales. The present study has utilized interpersonal perception subscale (for example: In my personal relationships, the other person usually has more control than I do/ I can usually develop a personal relationship with someone I find appealing/ I can usually steer a conversation toward the topics I want to talk about). This subscale has 10 items that form a 7-degree ranging from 1=disagree to 7= agree. The scale developer has confirmed its validity and reliability. Furthermore, Cronbach's coefficient for the scale in the present study was obtained as0.70. The results of confirmatory factor analysis also showed that all the items of the subscale except for items 6, 9, and 10 had acceptable factor loading (over 0.3).

Narcissism

Hypersensitive narcissism scale was developed by Arble (2008). The scale has 10 items (for example: I feel that I am temperamentally different from most people/ I often interpret the remarks of others in a personal way/ I dislike sharing the credit of an achievement with others) each ranging from 1=completely false to 5=completely true, and its score domain is from 1 to 50. As reported by Arble, Cronbach's coefficients for the total questionnaire are from 0.72 and 0.76. By

correlating the scale with the narcissist character disorder scale, he has further confirmed its validity (r=0.50). Cronbach's coefficient for the scale in the present study was obtained as 0.60 and the results of confirmatory factor analysis showed that all the items of the subscale except for items 4 and 9 had acceptable factor loadings (over 0.3).

Ethical considerations

In relation to the ethics of research, we obtained the informed consent of each respondent prior to the implementation of the research, and it has been pointed out that anyone who does not want to participate in our research can refuse to answer questions. It was also argued that the information provided in the questionnaires was kept secret and that the principle of confidentiality was respected.

Results

The present study is descriptive-correlative. The gathered data were analyzed by SPSS software. Also, descriptive statistical measures, (mean and standard deviation) and inferential statistics (Pearson correlation coefficient and R-Square coefficient for multiple correlation and independent-groups t-test) were calculated. In the present study, the relationships between 5 variables were investigated. Descriptive results related to mean, standard deviation, minimum and maximum scores of testable variables are shown in table 1. Table 2 shows the correlation matrix of the model variables.

Table 1
Descriptive results and correlation matrix of the study variables for all the testable variables

Variables	Mean	SD	Minimum	Maximum	1	2	3	4
Narcissism	23/57	5/51	10	35	1			
Common humanity	13/14	3/46	6	20	0/12	1		
Interpersonal perceived control	36/30	7/78	13	49	-0/01	0/27**	1	
Envy	67/29	20/44	41	121	0/29**	-0/22*	-0/33**	1

Based on table 1, all of the predictors are significantly correlated with envy at = 0.05. Among the study variables, the highest correlation is observed between interpersonal control perception with envy (r=0.33).

The multiple variable regression analysis is used in order to investigate multiple relationships between predictors and criterion variable. To this end, stepwise regression analysis is used to do multiple regression calculations. Table 2 presents the results of multiple variable regression analysis of common humanity, interpersonal control perception and narcissism predictors with criterion variable, envy in female employees.

Table 2
Stepwise multiple correlation coefficients of predictors and criteria in female employees

Variables	R	R^2	F P	β B	
Narcissism	0/38	0/14	F= 11/29 P < 0/001	β= 0/38 B= 1/22	
Common humanity	0/50	0/25	F= 10/90 P < 0/001	β= 0/39 B= 1/24	β= -0/32 B= -1/60

It can be observed in table 2 that narcissism and common humanity can predict envy in the sample of female employees. Generally, there is a 0.50 multiple correlation between all of the predictors with envy in this sample. Table 3 shows the results of multiple regression analysis of common humanity, interpersonal control perception, and narcissism predictors with the criterion predictor, envy, in male employees.

Table 3
Stepwise multiple correlation coefficients of predictors and criteria in male employees

Variables	R	R^2	F P	β B	
Interpersonal control perception	0/37	0/14	F= 10/95 P< 0/001	β= -0/37 B= -1/00	
narcissism	0/47	0/22	F= 9/40 P< 0/001	β= -0/43 B= -1/14	β= 0/29 B= 1/17

It can be observed in table 3 that interpersonal control perception and narcissism can predict envy in male-employees sample. Generally, there is a 0.47 multiple correlations between all of the predictors with envy in this sample.

Discussion

The present study intends to investigate the relationship between narcissism, common humanity and interpersonal control perception with envy in male and female employees. The results showed that narcissism, common humanity and interpersonal control perception related significantly with envy. Also, interpersonal control perception and narcissism can predict envy in male employees, and narcissism and common humanity can predict envy in female employees. In total, the predictors predicted 25% of envy in female employees and 22% of envy in male employees. A previous study also has demonstrated a correlation between envy and narcissism (Krizan & Johar, 2012). Narcissistic individuals have an exaggerated sense of self-importance and fantasies of unlimited success or power (Blair, Hoffman, & Helland, 2008). A person who considers himself to be too big and has exceptional qualities, has a fragile self-esteem and reacts to the smallest cues that threatens his self-esteem (Crocker & Wolfe, 2001; Bosson, Lakey, Campbell, Zeigler-Hill, Jordan, & Kernis, 2008). When the narcissism person is exposed to the superior qualities of others, he compares him with other people more than ordinary people (Kernis, 2003). Malone & Daly (2012) demonstrated that self-affirmation significantly relates to envy toward an advantaged rival relative to controls, particularly for students with elevated dispositional envy or low dispositional self-compassion.

Self-compassion contributes to better processing of negative emotions (Leary et al. 2007) and common humanity as one of its dimensions that assesses an understanding that pain and suffering are shared human experiences, has such an effect. A person who deeply feels that others also have similar feelings and problems like himself and does not know his problems and deficiencies as unique, less personalizing such issues and not affecting his self-esteem by this way. As a result, the person is less engage in envy.

Also, the present research has shown that the interpersonal control perception has a negative relationship with envy. Interpersonal control interpreted as control through others who have power and control (Smith et al., 2000). Perceived interpersonal control can be the result of the instrumental use of relationships (Smith, et al., 2000). This kind of control may be important to coping with stress. The researchers showed that Within-person variability in controlling perceptions of social environments has shown effect on need thwarting and subsequent ill-being (Bartholomew, Ntoumanis, Ryan, Bosch &Thogersen-Ntoumani, 2011).

Implications

Envy such as other negative emotions has the important effects in work environment. The predictors that was introduced in this study are changeable. For example, some believe that personality traits can change (Roberts, Luo, Briley, Chow, Su, & Hill, 2017; Kiken, Garland, Bluth, Palsson, & Gaylord, 2015). As a result, we believe that narcissism trait can be change. Also, we can enhance the common humanity and interpersonal control perception with educating the person and social environment.

The major point illustrated in this study is that individuals' characteristic features and interpersonal control perception, irrespective of the object of envy, can influence the experience of envy. It might contribute to the reason why envy is mostly reported to exist in relatives, friends, and acquaintances and why they are significantly correlated. If people truly seek and are in need of the best advantages, they must not express envy at people who are close to them and who might not even enjoy an insignificant portion of the object of envy. The present study also proved that the feeling of control, effectiveness, and significance in interpersonal relationships is of importance especially to men. However, as for women, low level of common humanity can be a predictor of envy.

Limitations and suggestions

Regarding the limitations of the study, one is the fact that the results obtained from the study are confined only to the married employees of Shahid Chamran University of Ahvaz. Then, the results should be taken cautiously and the study should be conducted with other samples in order to achieve generalization. Moreover, due to the use of the correlation method, it was not possible to infer a causal relationship between the predictors and the variable of envy. Implementing

experimental research in this area, can help to provide more accurate explanation. In addition, the use of self-reporting tools for the assessment of the variables is also a threat to the construct validity of the study which must be taken into consideration in succeeding research studies. Therefore, subsequent researchers can use other information collection methods such as behavioral observations to complete information from questionnaires.

Conclusion

In this paper, we tried to identify some of the predictions and consequences of envy in a sample of employees. The results of this study confirm that narcissism, common humanity and interpersonal control perception can account envy variance for25% in female employees and 22% in male employees. These findings show that it can be reduce the envy and its outcomes in the workplace by increasing the perception of interpersonal control, human intervention, and narcissism.

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