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Envy in the Workplace: A Systematic Review of the Past Five Years

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Abstract

In recent years, interest in studying envy at work has grown. Based on a previous review on envy and jealousy at work, the objective of this paper is to review and systematize the knowledge about this topic provided by empirical research in the past five years. After the search in scientific databases, establishing exclusion and inclusion criteria and literature coding, 32 papers were selected. The results show researchers' growing interest in studying benign envy and its consequences and exploring new variables to explain envy in the workplace. Social comparison theory and cognitive appraisal theory are the two main theoretical frameworks used in the studies reviewed. The role of the leader is essential in envy's appearance, and envy is usually related to dysfunctional results. This study provides researchers with a basis for designing future studies and creating intervention strategies to mitigate envy at work.

Keywords: envy, workplace, systematic review.

Inveja no Local de Trabalho: Uma Revisão Sistemática dos Últimos Cinco Anos

Resumo

Nos últimos anos, cresceu o interesse em estudar a inveja no trabalho. Com base em uma revisão anterior sobre a inveja e o ciúme no trabalho, o objetivo deste artigo é revisar e sistematizar o conhecimento sobre o tema proporcionado por pesquisas empíricas nos últimos cinco anos. Após a busca nas bases de dados científicas, estabelecimento de critérios de exclusão e inclusão e codificação da literatura, foram selecionados 32 artigos. Os resultados mostram o crescente interesse dos pesquisadores em estudar a inveja benigna e suas consequências e explorar novas variáveis para explicar a inveja no local de trabalho. A teoria da comparação social e a teoria da avaliação cognitiva são os dois principais referenciais teóricos usados nos estudos revisados. O papel do líder é essencial no surgimento da inveja, e a inveja geralmente está relacionada a resultados disfuncionais. Este estudo fornece aos pesquisadores uma base para projetar estudos futuros e criar estratégias de intervenção para mitigar a inveja no trabalho.

Palavras-chave: inveja, trabalho, revisão sistemática.

Envidia en el Lugar de Trabajo: Una Revisión Sistemática de los Últimos Cinco Años

Resumen

En los últimos años ha aumentado el interés por estudiar la envidia en el trabajo. A partir de una revisión previa sobre la envidia y los celos en el trabajo, el objetivo de este trabajo es revisar y sistematizar el conocimiento sobre este tema proporcionado por la investigación empírica en los últimos cinco años. Tras la búsqueda en bases de datos científicas, estableciendo criterios de exclusión e inclusión y codificación de la literatura, se seleccionaron 32 artículos. Los resultados muestran el creciente interés de los investigadores por estudiar la envidia benigna y sus consecuencias y explorar nuevas variables para explicar la envidia en el lugar de trabajo. La teoría de la comparación social y la teoría de la evaluación cognitiva son los dos principales marcos teóricos utilizados en los estudios revisados. El papel del líder es esencial en la aparición de la envidia, y la envidia suele estar relacionada con resultados disfuncionales. Este estudio proporciona a los investigadores una base para diseñar estudios futuros y crear estrategias de intervención para mitigar la envidia en el trabajo.

Palabras clave: envidia, trabajo, revisión sistemática.

Interactions with other people at work, that is, colleagues, supervisors, or subordinates, are accompanied by an emotional charge, and employees' emotions can affect organizational life considerably. Therefore, it is important for managers to be particularly aware of the role of negative emotions at work when preventing and intervening in possible consequences of these emotions for the quality of work life. In the past few decades, it has become clear that envy is an emotion that often arises in work environments, and it has attracted the interest of many researchers (see e.g. Buunk et al., 2020; Dogan & Vecchio, 2001; Smith, Merlone, & Duffy, 2017).

Envy at work has been defined as a pattern of negative thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that result from a loss of self-esteem when someone important to the person obtains outcomes that he/she desires (Vecchio, 1995; 2000). Envy has also been defined as the tendency to respond with negative feelings to another person's advantage (Smith & Kim, 2007). Both definitions share the idea that envy is an unpleasant and painful emotion that involves feelings of inferiority, hostility, and resentment because another person enjoys something that he/she desires (Smith & Kim, 2007; Shu & Lazatkhan (2017). As Sterling and Labianca (2015) noted, ¨Envy is at its most basic level the pain felt at another´s good fortune¨ (p. 297; see also Tai et al., 2012).

Recent research on envy at work suggests that there are two qualitatively different types of envy: benign and malicious envy (see Braun et al., 2018; Celse et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2017; Li et al., 2017; Lange & Crusius, 2015; Lange et al., 2018; Navarro-Carrillo et al., 2018). Both types of envy are aimed at leveling the difference between oneself and the superior other. Benign envy leads to a moving-up motivation aimed at improving one's own position, whereas the experience of malicious envy leads to a pulling-down motivation aimed at damaging the position of the superior other.

In recent years, interest in the study of envy in organizations has grown, and, consequently, the number of publications on this topic has increased considerably (see e.g. Smith et al., 2017). A possible explanation for this growing interest would consist of socioeconomic and socio-political changes (e.g. fewer resources, more competitiveness) that have important consequences for organizations. Organizations must respond to these changes by competing in an increasingly hostile environment. In addition, increasingly frequent and complex social interactions occur with a wide variety of people (colleagues, suppliers, customers, etc.), and new demands are created that can affect interpersonal relationships at work. In this context, envy has emerged as a factor that needs to be studied due to its important repercussions for working life (Buunk et al., 2012).

In 2015, Girbés-Llácer and Martín-Julián published a literature review to discover the state of the art of the research on jealousy and envy at work in the period between 1993 and 2014. Their results showed that envy at work can be either benign or malicious. Benign envy is related to performance, job satisfaction, and group cohesion, whereas malicious envy is associated with hostility, counterproductive work behavior, and poor performance. With regard to the theoretical frameworks for the studies reviewed by these authors, their results show that the cultural perspective has been used to study envy at work. At the methodological level, Girbés-Llácer and Martín-Julián (2015) point out that most of the studies reviewed are correlational, and that it would be necessary to carry out experimental studies and use qualitative methods, such as interviews or discussion groups, in addition to quantitative methods. Regarding future research, they emphasize the need to study coping strategies when experiencing envy, as well as the moderating variables between envy and its consequences. The objective of the present paper is to carry out a systematic review of the literature on envy in the workplace from 2014 to 2020. We have included papers from the year 2014 because some studies published that year were not included in the review by Girbés-Llácer and Martín-Julián (2015). With our review, we aim to examine how empirical research on envy at work has advanced in recent years, and expand and update the knowledge on this topic. Specifically, we have reviewed the conceptualizations, theoretical approaches, and measurement instruments used in studying envy at work, the main objectives and main results from the empirical studies, and the practical implications and future directions of the research reviewed in this area.

Method

This systematic review was performed in adherence with the quality standards for conducting and reporting meta-analyses and systematic reviews detailed in the PRISMA statement (Moher et al., 2009; Urrútia, & Bonfill, 2010) and in the best practices guidelines for conducting and reporting narrative reviews (Siddaway et al., 2019). Below, we report the literature search strategies, inclusion and exclusion criteria, and the literature coding used.

Literature Search and Inclusion and Exclusion Criteria

To identify the relevant literature, the first and most important strategy was the search carried out in scientific databases with a predefined set of keywords. We focused on databases commonly referenced in Psychology: ProQuest, Web of Science, PubPsych, Scopus, Dialnet and Psicodoc. Within the ProQuest database, we selected the following databases: ProQuest Central, PsycARTICLES, PsycINFO, Research Library; Psychology Database; Research Library: Social Sciences; Social Science Database; Sociology Database; Research Library: Business; ABI/INFORM Collection; ABI/INFORM Global; Science Database; Public Health Database; Research Library: Science & Technology; Healthcare Administration Database; Asian & European Business Collection; Australia & New Zealand Database; Continental Europe Database; East Europe, Central Europe Database.

We used the search term "envy", connected with the words "workplace" and "work" through the operator "AND". In these databases, the search criteria were the following:

1. The word envy had to appear in the title and/or abstract of the document
2. The paper had to be evaluated by experts
3. It had to be published in 2014 or later
4. Source type: books, journals, scientific journals, professional journals
5. Type of document: article, main article, book chapter, business case, book.

This search resulted in 17 documents. Subsequently, we searched other databases using the same criteria and including these keywords when the database allowed it. This search yielded a total of 31 documents in Scopus. In Dialnet, 7 papers were obtained. In Psicodoc, 3 papers were obtained. The search in PubPsych yielded 3 papers. Finally, in the Web of Science database, as an additional search criterion we stipulated that the words envy and workplace had to appear in the topic, and the result was 55 papers.

Literature Coding

After the initial identification of 116 potentially relevant studies, we established inclusion and exclusion criteria for including an article in a database (see Table 1).

Table 1
Criteria for inclusion and exclusion

Inclusion criteria	Exclusion Criteria
Published between 2014 and 2020	Published before 2014
Reports an empirical study	Working paper, dissertation, procee-dings, books, theoretical studies, and reviews
Full text available	Not being able to access the full text
Focuses on envy in the workplace	Not focused on envy in the workplace
Evaluated by experts	Not evaluated by experts
Published in English or Spanish	Not written in English or Spanish

Based on these criteria, we created a database with information about the authors, title, year, and the database where the record appeared. These data were reviewed, and we eliminated 45 duplicates.

The remaining 71 articles were checked by two expert judges in the field to screen their eligibility by reading titles and abstracts. Based on the judges' opinions, an initial decision was made about the relevance of the articles according to the inclusion and exclusion criteria established. A total of 16 articles were removed at this stage because they were not empirical. Five were books or book chapters, two were written in languages other than English or Spanish, and in one of them, full text was not available.

The full texts of the remaining 47 papers were read in detail by both judges independently to check them for eligibility. In cases of discrepancy about the relevance of a document, a consensus was reached among the authors of this systematic review. After reading the papers, 15 records were excluded for several reasons: it did not focus on the workplace (1 paper); it was a case study (2 papers); the objective of the study was not envy but rather other variables (9 papers); the sample consisted of students (1 paper); or the study involved an economic model (1 paper).

For most of the records, the reading of the full texts confirmed the initial assessment in the screening phase. The remaining 32 articles were included in this systematic review (Table 2).

Results

The results are organized according to the aims of this study: the theoretical approach, conceptualization, and measurement instruments, the main objectives and results, the practical implications, and suggestions for future research.

Theoretical Background of Envy

The literature reviewed displays two widely recognized theoretical frameworks that most authors have used in their studies: social comparison theory and cognitive appraisal theory. Both theories are present in the background of the studies reviewed. Social comparison theory (Festinger, 1954) suggests that workers use social comparisons to make self-evaluations, and that they use this information to manage their attitudes and behaviors (for a review, see Buunk & Gibbons, 2007). From this perspective, envy arises from social comparisons, usually upward social comparison with others, in different aspects of the work context (Braun et al., 2018; Brooks et al. ,2019; Celse et al., 2016; Dineen et al., 2017; Eissa & Wyland, 2016; Gan, 2019; Ghadi, 2018; Khan et al., 2017; Khan et al., 2014; Kim & Glomb, 2014; Lange et al, 2018; Lee et al., 2018; Li et al., 2017; Mao et al., 2020; Nandedkar, 2016; Navarro-Carrillo et al., 2018; Ng, 2017; Ogunfowora et al., 2019; Reh et al., 2018; Scot et al., 2015; Shkoler et al., 2019; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017; Tariq et al., 2019; Thiel et al., 2020; Thompson et al., 2016; Treadway, 2019 and Wang, 2018).

Therefore, social comparison theory provides a theoretical basis to explain why some employees become envious in their work. However, as Cohen-Charash (2009) suggests, the comparison process includes a cognitive appraisal; that is, it is a process in which individuals appraise relevant events in relation to their goals and desires. Therefore, drawing on the cognitive appraisal theory of emotion (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984), some authors state that workers' unpleasant appraisal of the work context represents the source of envy at work (Braun et al., 2018; Brooks et al., 2019; Celse et al., 2016; Demirtas et al., 2017; Dineen et al., 2017; Eissa & Wyland, 2016; Lange et al, 2018; Lee et al., 2018; Li et al., 2017; Liu et al., 2019; Mao et al., 2020; Ng, 2017; Ogunfowora et al., 2019; Reh et al., 2018; Scot et al., 2015; Shkoler et al., 2019; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017; Thiel et al., 2020; Thompson et al., 2016; Treadway, 2019 and Wilkin & Connelly (2015).

In addition to these two theoretical approaches, we found a series of studies that highlight the relationship between envy and leadership or supervision (Braun et al., 2018; Celse et al., 2016; Demirtas et al., 2017; Eissa & Wyland, 2016; Khan et al., 2014; Li et al., 2017; Navarro-Carrillo et al., 2018; Ng, 2017; Ogunfowora et al., 2019; Tariq et al., 2019 and Wilkin & Connelly, 2015). Mainly, Leader Member Exchange (LMX) is one of the most widely studied theories related to envy at work (Gonzalez-Navarro et al., 2018; Shkoler et al., 2019; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017; Treadway, 2019). In this regard, some results show, for example, that the dynamics of the supervisor-subordinate relationship have consequences for envy, such that low LMX can lead to envious feelings among employees (Nandedkar, 2016). Employees who have higher-quality LMX relationships are more likely to be envied by other team members (Wang & Li, 2018).

Other studies highlight justice or equity as the theoretical approach to study envy (Celse et al., 2016; Eissa & Wyland, 2016; Khan et al., 2014; Li et al., 2017; Ng, 2017 and Wilkin & Connelly, 2015). For instance, perceptions of injustice mediate the effect of malicious envy on the inclination to express counterproductive work behavior (Navarro-Carrillo et al., 2018).

According to equity theory (Adams, 1963, 1965), people usually compare their input–output ratio with that of their peers in order to assess the fairness or unfairness of a situation. In these studies, the authors have used the role of justice perceptions or equity perceptions to reach a better understanding of envy.

Therefore, this literature highlights that envy is entwined with leadership, the perception of justice, and the perception of equity in a number of complex ways.

Conceptualization and Evaluation of Envy

Regarding the envy conceptualization, we found four different approaches to envy: situational, episodic, typological, and dispositional.

Situational Approach to Envy. A first group of authors (14 studies) follow the definition of Vecchio (1995; 2000), who states that envy is a pattern of thoughts, emotions, and behaviors that result from a loss of self-esteem when someone important to the person obtains desired outcomes. Thus, the emotion comes from the desire to have another's possessions, whether they are material objects or personal attributes (Demirtas et al., 2017; Eissa, & Wyland, 2016; Erdil, & Muceldili, 2014; Ghadi, 2018; Gonzalez-Navarro et al., 2018; Thompson et al., 2016; Ogunfowora et al. 2019 and Reh et al. 2000). On the other hand, Vecchio (2005) makes a distinction between two aspects of envy at work: feeling envied by others and feeling envy toward others. We identified other authors who were also interested in studying these aspects of envy (Lee et al., 2018; Liu et al., 2019; Mao et al., 2020; Ng,

Table 2
Articles about Envy in the Workplace between 2014 and 2020

Authors	Title	Database
Braun, S., Aydin, N., Frey, D., & Peus, C. (2018)	Leader Narcissism Predicts Malicious Envy and Supervisor-Targeted Counterproductive Work Behavior: Evidence from Field and Experimental Research	Web of Science
Brooks, A. W., Huang, K., Abi-Esber, N., Buell, R. W., Huang, L., & Hall, B. (2019)	Mitigating malicious envy: Why successful individuals should reveal their failures	Scopus PubPsych
Celse, J., Chang, K., Sylvain, M., & Quinton, S. (2016)	The reduction of employee lying behavior. Inspiration from a study of envy in part-time employees	ProQuest Web of Science Scopus
Demirtas, O., Hannah, S. T., Gok, K., Arslan, A., & Capar, N. (2017)	The moderated influence of ethical leadership, via meaningful work, on followers' engagement, organizational identification, and envy.	ProQuest PsycINFO Web of Science
Dineen, B. R., Duffy, M. K., Henle, C. A., & Lee, K. (2017)	Green by comparison: Deviant and normative transmutations of job search envy in a temporal context	ProQuest Web of Science
Eissa, G., & Wyland, R. (2016)	Keeping up with the Joneses: The role of envy, relationship conflict, and job performance in social undermining.	ProQuest PsycINFO Web of Science Scopus
Erdil, O., & Müceldili, B. (2014)	The Effects of Envy on Job Engagement and Turnover Intention	Web of Science
Gan, I. (2020)	Social comparison and perceived envy-motivated communication involving travel nurses: A qualitative study.	Web of Science
Ghadi, M. Y. (2018)	Empirical examination of theoretical model of workplace envy: evidence from Jordan	Web of Science ProQuest Scopus
González-Navarro, P., Zurriaga-Llorens, R., Olateju, A. T., & Llinares-Insa, L. I. (2018)	Envy and Counterproductive Work Behavior: The Moderation Role of Leadership in Public and Private Organizations	Web of Science Scopus
Khan, A. K., Bell, C. M., & Quratulain, S. (2017)	The two faces of envy: Perceived opportunity to perform as a moderator of envy manifestation.	ProQuest
Khan, A. K., Quratulain, S., & Bell, C. M. (2014)	Episodic envy and counterproductive work behaviors: Is more justice always good?	Web of Science Scopus
Kim, E., & Glomb, T. M. (2014)	Victimization of high performers: The roles of envy and work group identification	PubPsych
Lange, J., Paulhus, D. L., & Crusius, J. (2018)	Elucidating the dark side of envy: Distinctive links of benign and malicious envy with dark personalities	Web of Science ProQuest PsycINFO Scopus
Lee, K., Duffy, M. K., Scott, K. L., & Schippers, M. C. (2018)	The experience of being envied at work: How being envied shapes employee feelings and motivation	Web of Science
Liu, F., Liu, D., Zhang, J., & Ma, J. (2019)	The relationship between being envied and workplace ostracism: The moderating role of neuroticism and the need to belong.	ProQuest PsycINFO Web of Science Scopus
Mao, Y., He, J., & Yang, D. (2020)	The dark sides of engaging in creative processes: Coworker envy, workplace ostracism, and incivility	Scopus
Nandedkar, A. (2016)	Investigating leader-member exchange and employee envy: An evidence from the information technology industry.	ProQuest
Navarro-Carrillo, G., Beltrán-Morillas, A. M., Valor-Segura, I., & Expósito, F. (2018)	The pernicious effects of malicious versus benign envy: perceived injustice, emotional hostility and counterproductive behaviors in the workplace	Web of Science Psicodoc
Ng, T. W. H. (2017)	Can idiosyncratic deals promote perceptions of competitive climate, felt ostracism, and turnover?	ProQuest PsycINFO Web of Science Scopus
Ogunfowora, B., Weinhardt, J. M., & Hwang, C. C. (2019)	Abusive Supervision Differentiation and Employee Outcomes: The Roles of Envy, Resentment, and Insecure Group Attachment	Web of Science
Reh, S., Troster, C Van Quaquebeke, N. (2018)	Keeping (Future) Rivals Down: Temporal Social Comparison Predicts Coworker Social Undermining via Future Status Threat and Envy	Web of Science
Scott, K. L., Tams, S., Schippers, M. C., & Lee, K. (2015)	Opening the black box: Why and when workplace exclusion affects social reconnection behaviour, health, and attitudes	Web of Science
Shkoler, O., Rabenu, E., Tabak, F., & Lebron, M. J. (2019)	Leader-and Team-Member Exchanges and Their Relationships with Organizational and Interpersonal Counterproductive Work Behaviors: Moderation by Envy and Group Size in Israel and USA	Psicodoc Dialnet Web of science
Shu, C. Y., & Lazatkhan, J. (2017)	Effect of leader-member exchange on employee envy and work behavior moderated by self-esteem and neuroticism	Psicodoc Dialnet PsycINFO Web of Science Scopus

Table 2
Articles about Envy in the Workplace between 2014 and 2020 (continued)

Authors	Title	Database
Tariq, H., Weng, Q., Ilies, R., & Khan, A. K. (2019)	Supervisory abuse of high performers: A social comparison perspective	PsycINFO Web of Science
Thiel, C. E., Bonner, J., Bush, J. T., Welsh, D. T., & Pati, R. (2020)	Rationalize or reappraise? How envy and cognitive reappraisal shape unethical contagion	Web of Science
Thompson, G., Glasø, L., & Martinsen, Ø. (2016)	Antecedents and consequences of envy.	ProQuest PsycINFO Web of Science Scopus
Treadway, D. C., Yang, J., Bentley, J. R., Williams, L. V., & Reeves, M. (2019)	The impact of follower narcissism and LMX perceptions on feeling envied and job performance	Web of Science Scopus
Wang, Z., & Li, G., (2018)	You don't actually want to get closer to the star: How LMX leads to workplace ostracism	Web of Science
Wilkin, C. L., & Connelly, C. E. (2015)	Green with envy and nerves of steel: Moderated mediation between distributive justice and theft	Web of Science

2017; Scott et al., 2015 and Treadway et al., 2019). In this group of studies, Vecchio's scale (1995; 2000) is used as an instrument to measure envy.

Episodic Approach to Envy. Second, a group of envy conceptualizations follow the Cohen-Charash (2009) studies and include 10 papers from the reviewed literature. This author focuses on "episodic envy", that is, envy about a specific event. According to this author, episodic envy includes both the negative feeling itself and the social comparison component that can cause this feeling. Envy is considered an emotional reaction to a specific event triggered by upward social comparison. In this comparison, the envious person feels inferior to the envied person due to not having what the envied person has. The studies reviewed in relation to this conceptualization of envy are the ones by Brooks et al. (2019), Dineen et al. (2017), Gan (2019), Khan et al. (2014), Nandedkar (2016), Navarro-Carrillo et al. (2018), Shu & Lazatkhan (2017), Tariq et al. (2019), Thiel et al. (2020), and Wilkin & Connelly (2015). In all these studies, Cohen-Charash's (2009) scale is used as an instrument to measure envy.

Typological Approach to Envy. A third group of eight studies are based on Van de Ven, et al.´s (2009) conceptualization of envy as painful emotion caused by the good fortune of others. This conceptualization is more recent and extends the distinction between two qualitatively different types of envy: benign and malicious envy. Both types of envy are aimed at leveling the difference between oneself and the superior other. Benign envy leads to a moving-up motivation aimed at improving one's own position, whereas malicious envy leads to a pulling-down motivation aimed at damaging the position of the superior other. Thus, benign and malicious envy mainly differ in their elicited thoughts, feelings, and action tendencies. The studies reviewed using this conceptualization of envy are those by Braun et al. (2018), Celse et al. (2016), Khan et al. (2017), Li et al. (2017), Lange et al. (2018), Navarro-Carrillo et a. (2018), and Wang, & Li (2018). In this group of studies, the Van de Ven, et al (2009) or Kim and Glomb (2014) scales are used to measure envy.

Dispositional Approach to Envy. The fourth group of authors (3 studies) use the conceptualization of envy proposed by Smith, et al. (1999) and Smith & Kim (2007). Envy is conceptualized as an unpleasant and painful emotion that involves feelings of inferiority, hostility, and resentment related to someone else's pleasure about obtained something desired. Envy is considered the generalized tendency across all situations of responding with negative feelings to another person's advantage. In this regard, there are individual differences in the tendency toward envy. The studies reviewed that use this conceptualization of envy are those by Shkoler et al. (2019), Shu & Lazatkhan (2017), and Ng (2017).

In this group of studies, Smith & Kim's (2007) scale is used to measure envy.

In sum, most of the studies reviewed are based on a conceptualization of situational envy, followed by an episodic and dispositional conceptualization of envy. The most recent conceptualization used is the typological one.

Objectives of the Reviewed Research

One of the research questions in this systematic review was to examine the objectives of the reviewed research. On the one hand, twelve studies investigated envy by relating it to dysfunctional outcomes for both individuals and the organization, as has traditionally been done when studying envy. The dysfunctional results studied included: social undermining behaviors (Eissa & Wyland, 2016; Reh et al., 2018; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017); counterproductive work behaviors (Khan et al., 2014); workplace exclusion and health problems (Scott et al., 2015); lying behavior (Celse et al., 2016); communication problems (Gan, 2019); turnover (Erdil & Muceldili, 2014; Ng, 2017); coworker ostracism and incivility (Mao et al., 2020); social loafing (Thompson et al., 2016); or victimization of high performers (Kim & Glomb, 2014).

On the other hand, some studies linked envy to positive effects, such as job engagement and prosocial behavior (Li et al.,2017). In this line, Erdil and Muceldili (2014) studied both negative and positive consequences of envy, and Lee et al. (2018) analyzed the effect of being envied on motivation and job performance.

In some studies, the effects of benign envy versus malicious envy were investigated (Braun et al., 2018; Celse et al., 2016; Khan et al., 2017; Li et al., 2017; Lange et al., 2018; Navarro-Carrillo et al.,2018 and Wang & Li, 2018).

The way the leadership or supervisory style influences workers' envy has also been studied (Braun et al., 2018; Celse et al., 2016; Demirtas et al., 2017; Eissa & Wyland, 2016; Gonzalez-Navarro et al., 2018; Khan et al., 2014; Li et al., 2017; Nandedkar, 2016; Navarro-Carrillo et al., 2018; Ng, 2017; Ogunfowora et al., 2019; Shkoler et al., 2019; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017; Tariq et al., 2019; Treadway, 2019; Wang, 2018 and Wilkin & Connelly, 2015).

In addition, several personality variables have been studied in relation to envy, including neuroticism, conscientiousness, and competitiveness (Ghadi, 2018). In a similar vein, the functions of envy have been examined by linking it to the Dark Triad of personality characteristics (Lange et al., 2018).

In sum, most of the studies reviewed related workplace envy to dysfunctional outcomes for both individuals and organizations. However, a few studies related envy to positive outcomes. The relationships between envy and leadership and between envy and

personality traits have been investigated, and only recently has benign envy received attention from researchers.

Main Results Related to Envy in the Reviewed Research

Another question in this systematic review has to do with the main results of the research carried out on envy at work (see Table 3).

The studies that have investigated dysfunctional outcomes of envy for both individuals and organizations revealed that envy is directly related to behavior aimed at harming others (e.g. CWB, Ghadi, 2018; social loafing, Thompson et al., 2016). Likewise, envy promotes the perception of a more competitive climate in the workplace (Ng, 2017). Moreover, most of the research reviewed studied the moderating or mediating variables in the relationship between envy and these harmful behaviors (e.g. relationship conflict, Eissa & Wyland, 2016; neuroticism, Shu and Lazatkhan, 2017; high perceptions of procedural justice, Khan et al., 2014; LMX, González-Navarro et al., 2018; mood and anxiety, Lee et al., 2018). However, Celse et al., (2016) found that envy can act as a psychological barrier that reduces the tendency to lie, and Brooks et al., (2019) found that revealing both successes and failures decreases observers' malicious envy.

Envy was also found to be a mediator between several variables. Thiel et al., (2020) showed that envy is a mediator variable in the relationship between observed unethical behavior and moral disengagement, and that both cognitive reappraisal orientation and cognitive reappraisal attenuate this mediated effect. Wilkin and Connelly (2015) found that envy mediates the relationship between distributive justice and theft behavior. Coworker envy mediated the effect of creative process engagement and helping behaviors on coworker workplace ostracism and the focal employee's incivility (Mao et al., 2020). Moreover, the perception of being envied mediated the relationship between co-worker exclusion and psychological health or intent to leave the organization (Scott et al., 2015). The positive relationship between envy and propensity to leave has been found by other authors (Erdil & Muceldili, 2014; Ng, 2017), as well as the relationship between group members' envy and victimization of high performers (Kim & Glomb 2014). Furthermore, anticipating a future status threat provokes envy and, subsequently, undermines behavior toward coworkers (Reh et al., 2018). Likewise, envy is a moderator in the relationships between LMX or TMX and CWB (Shkoler, et al., 2029).

Some research has focused on the effects of benign envy versus malicious envy. Khan et al. (2017) showed that both types of envy have a common goal that involves leveling the difference between oneself and the envied person. However, they differ in their motivations: the motivation of benign envy is to improve, whereas in the case of malicious envy, it is to bring down the envied other. In this line, Li et al., (2017) found that different types of envy have different effects on prosocial behavior. However, the results obtained by Lange et al., (2018) suggest that both forms of envy can be malevolent. In turn, Navarro-Carrillo et al., (2018) found that the perception of injustice and negative emotions mediate the effect of malicious envy (vs. benign) on counterproductive work behaviors.

Regarding the influence of the leadership and /or supervision style on envy, research has shown that a bad relationship with the manager or supervisor (Ogunfowora et al., 2019; Thompson et al., 2016; Tariq et al., 2019) and the leader's narcissism (Braun et al., (2018) may result in envious feelings among employees. Mainly, the quality of the relationship with the leader (low LMX) has been investigated. In turn, low LMX leads to CWB (González-Navarro et al., 2018; Shkoler et al., 2019), workplace incivility (Nandedkar,

2016), low work engagement (Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017), bad job performance (Treadway et al., 2019), and workplace ostracism (Wang et al., 2018). Moreover, ethical leadership has a significant negative direct effect on workplace envy (Demirtas et al., 2017).

In addition, some personality variables have been incorporated into the research on envy at work. In this regard, Ghadi (2018) states that neuroticism, conscientiousness, and perceived competitiveness significantly predict workplace envy. Moreover, related to neuroticism, Liu et al., (2019) concluded that being envied had a positive effect on workplace ostracism, and this relationship was stronger when neuroticism was higher. Finally, Lange et al., (2018) found that malicious envy was associated with both Machiavellian and psychopathic behaviors.

In sum, most of the studies reviewed relate workplace envy to dysfunctional outcomes for both individuals and organizations. Furthermore, other studies have demonstrated the moderating or mediating role of several variables (e.g. perception of justice, relationship conflict) in the relationship between envy and its dysfunctional outcomes. Envy has also been shown to be a moderating or mediating variable. In addition, research has shown that a bad relationship with the leader or supervisor may result in envious feelings among employees, and that some personality traits (e.g. neuroticism, anxiety) predict workplace envy.

Practical Implications of the Reviewed Research

Most of the studies reviewed offer practical implications for organizations, managers, and employees in trying to avoid or minimize envy and its negative consequences.

With regard to organizations, studies suggest that envy can be reduced or prevented by training employees to handle adversities at work (Ogunfowora et al., 2019), reinforcing a cooperative climate and communication (Reh et al., 2018; Scott et al., 2015; Thompson et al., 2016; Wang et al., 2018), and creating a culture that minimizes social comparison and fosters equity (Tariq et al., 2019; Wilkin & Connelly, 2015) and team spirit (Lee et al., 2018). Likewise, implementing transparent and fair organizational policies and benefit systems is recommended (Erdil & Muceldili (2014; Gonzalez-Navarro, et al., 2018; Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017).

Some authors indicate the importance of intervening in selection and recruitment processes in order to hire leaders with certain characteristics such as compassion or ethical leadership (Braun et al.; 2018 Brooks et al., 2019; Demirtas et al., 2017; Dineen et al., 2017;Wilkin & Connelly, 2015).

Training and counseling for workers are also proposed. Thus, Eissa and Wyland (2016) suggested training employees in how to handle relationship conflict. Scott et al., (2015) proposed training programs that assist workers in dealing with their negative feelings or relationships, and Khan et al., (2014) suggested helping workers to manage disparity. Nandedkar (2016) and Thompson et al., (2016) emphasize the need to give employees personal guidance and counseling, coaching, and feedback.

Furthermore, measures that affect work processes have also been suggested. Gonzalez-Navarro, et al., (2018) argued that it would be effective to establish clear performance objectives and informal meetings or social activities with managers and workers. Khan et al., (2017) suggested providing employees with a sense of control by empowering them. Likewise, good relationships between work group members and team-building activities have been suggested to enhance positive affect among members (Kim & Glomb, 2014; Shkoler et al., 2019 and Treadway et al., 2019).

On the other hand, Liu et al., (2019) indicate that is necessary to pay attention not only to the envious employees, but also to the envied employees, and Erdil and Muceldili (2014) and Li et al.,

Table 3
Main Research Results Related to Workplace Envy

Authors	Main Results
Braun, S., Aydin, N., Frey, D., & Peus, C. (2018)	Leader narcissism is positively related to malicious envy, and malicious envy, in turn, results in supervisor-targeted CWB.
Brooks, A. W., Huang, K., Abi-Esber, N., Buell, R. W., Huang, L., & Hall, B. (2019)	Revealing both successes and failures encountered on the path to success decreases observers' malicious envy.
Celse, J., Chang, K., Sylvain, M., & Quinton, S. (2016)	Envy may act as a psychological barrier that reduces the tendency to lie.
Demirtas, O., Hannah, S. T., Gok, K., Arslan, A., & Capar, N. (2017)	Ethical leadership has a significant negative direct effect on workplace envy.
Dineen, B. R., Duffy, M. K., Henle, C. A., & Lee, K. (2017)	Job search envy transmutes differently depending on temporal and market-based contingencies.
Eissa, G., & Wyland, R. (2016)	Relationship conflict mediates the relationship between envy and social undermining behavior
Erdil, O., & Müceldili, B. (2014)	Feelings of envy influence emotional engagement and affect propensity to leave.
Gan, I. (2019)	Envy can trigger both constructive reciprocity and destructive tactics that undermine others.
Ghadi, M. Y. (2018)	Neuroticism, conscientiousness, and perceived competitiveness significantly predict workplace envy. Workplace envy significantly predicts CWB and OCB.
González-Navarro, P., Zurriaga-Llorens, R., Olateju, A. T., & Llinares-Insa, L. I. (2018)	Envy was positively related to CWB, and LMX was a moderator in the relationship between envy and CWB in public organizations, but not in private ones.
Khan, A. K., Bell, C. M., & Quratulain, S. (2017)	The primary motivation of benign envy was to bring oneself up by improving performance in the comparison dimension, whereas the primary motive of malicious envy was to pull the envied other down.
Khan, A. K., Quratulain, S., & Bell, C. M. (2014)	Episodic envy significantly predicted CWB, especially if there was a perception of high procedural justice.
Kim, E., & Glomb, T. M. (2014)	High performers are more likely to be targets of victimization because of fellow group members' envy, and work group identification mitigates the relationship.
Lange, J., Paulhus, D. L., & Crusius, J. (2018)	Benign envy is associated with Machiavellian behaviors, whereas malicious envy is associated with both Machiavellian and psychopathic behaviors.
Lee, K., Duffy, M. K., Scott, K. L., & Schippers, M. C. (2018)	Envied employees experience negative moods and feel anxious about the relational damage that being envied may bring.
Li, X., Su, Y., Liu, X., Shi, W., & Shi, K. (2017)	Different types of envy have different effects on prosocial behavior.
Liu, F., Liu, D., Zhang, J., & Ma, J. (2019)	Being envied had a positive effect on workplace ostracism, and the positive relationship was stronger when neuroticism was higher or the need to belong was lower.
Mao, Y., He, J., & Yang, D. (2020)	Helping coworkers moderates the relationship between the focal employee's creative process engagement and coworker envy. Coworker envy leads to coworker workplace ostracism.
Nandedkar, A. (2016)	Low LMX can lead to envious feelings among employees, which inhibits their knowledge-sharing behaviors and enhances workplace incivility.
Navarro-Carrillo, G., Beltrán-Morillas, A. M., Valor-Segura, I., & Expósito, F. (2018)	Malicious envy (vs. benign envy) leads to increased perceived injustice and higher levels of negative emotions and harmful behaviors toward the envied co-worker. Perceptions of injustice and negative emotions mediate the effect of malicious (vs. benign) envy on the inclination to express CWB.
Ng, T. W. H. (2017)	Receiving developmental i-deals and witnessing coworkers' developmental i-deals were related to being envied and to envy, respectively. Being envied and envy promoted the perception of a more competitive climate, which in turn was related to greater felt ostracism and turnover.
Ogunfowora, B., Weinhardt, J. M., & Hwang, C. C. (2019)	Controlling for own abusive supervision, resentment, and envy towards other group members explains why abusive supervision differentiation (ASD) perceptions lead to specific group attachment patterns and related outcomes.
Reh, S., Troster, C Van Quaquebeke, N. (2018)	Employees anticipate a future status threat when they perceive that their own past development trajectory is less favorable than a coworker's. In response, the respective employees feel envy and subsequently undermine the coworker.
Scott, K. L., Tams, S., Schippers, M. C., & Lee, K. (2015)	Perceptions of being envied are detrimental to workers' psychological health and work-related attitudes. These relationships are stronger among employees with high positive effect.
Shkoler, O., Rabenu, E., Tabak, F., & Lebron, M. J. (2019)	Envy moderates the relationships between LMX or TMX and CWB, but only in the USA sample, and no such effects were found in the Israeli sample.
Shu, C. Y., & Lazatkhan, J. (2017)	LMX is negatively related to employee envy in the workplace. Employee envy mediates the relationship between LMX and work engagement. Self-esteem boosts the relationship between envy and work engagement, but it decreases the relationship between envy and social undermining. Neuroticism exacerbates the relationship between envy and social undermining.
Tariq, H., Weng, Q., Ilies, R., & Khan, A. K. (2019)	Positive indirect effect of employee performance on abusive supervision through supervisor envy. The indirect effect was statistically significant for supervisors with a high social comparison orientation (SCO).
Thiel, C. E., Bonner, J., Bush, J. T., Welsh, D. T., & Pati, R. (2020)	Envy mediates the relationship between observed unethical behavior and moral disengagement, with downstream consequences in the form of unethical behavior. Cognitive reappraisal attenuates this mediated effect.
Thompson, G., Glasø, L., & Martinsen, Ø. (2016)	Envy is indirectly and negatively related to self-esteem via distress, and directly related to social loafing. Span of supervision serves as an important antecedent of envy.
Treadway, D. C., Yang, J., Bentley, J. R., Williams, L. V., & Reeves, M. (2019)	High narcissism and high LMX result in the highest levels of feeling envied, whereas low narcissism and high LMX result in the lowest levels of feeling envied.
Wang, Z., & Li, G., (2018)	Those who have higher-quality LMX relationships are more likely to be envied by other team members, which in turn leads to workplace ostracism.
Wilkin, C. L., & Connelly, C. E. (2015)	Envy mediates the relationship between distributive justice and theft, and there is a moderating effect of emotionality on distributive justice and envy, and envy and theft.

(2017) emphasize the benign role of envy at work.

Finally, because social comparison lies at the base of envy, Reh et al., (2018) and Treadway et al., (2019) proposed minimizing social comparisons and, thus, enhancing perceptions of uniqueness and avoiding envy at work.

In sum, most of the studies reviewed highlight the role of organizations and managers in reducing workplace envy by creating a good workplace climate, transparent and fair organizational policies, counseling, coaching, and feedback for employees, and a culture that minimizes social comparisons.

Proposals for Future Research from the Reviewed Research

We will focus on suggestions for future research that may shed light on understanding envy at work.

The most frequent proposal refers to researching the role

of context and culture by conducting cross-cultural studies. The twelve studies that make this proposal are those by: Eissa & Wyland, (2016); González-Navarro et al., (2018); Li et al., (2017); Liu et al., (2019); Mao et al., (2020); Navarro-Carrillo et al., (2018); Shkoler et al., (2019); Shkoler et al., (2019); Shu & Lazatkhan, (2017); Tariq et al., (2019; Thiel et al., (2020); and Thompson et al., (2016). Nine of the studies reviewed highlight the importance of investigating envy through longitudinal studies (Braun et al., 2018; Eissa & Wyland, 2016; Ghadi, 2018; González-Navarro et al., 2018; Lange et al., 2018; Lee et al., 2018; Ogunfowora et al., 2019; Wilkin & Connelly, 2015). Likewise, three studies suggest collecting larger samples of more diverse populations in future research (Braun et al., 2018; Ghadi, 2018; Reh et al., 2018).

Regarding data collection sources that could be used in future studies, the suggestions include using more than one source in collecting data, such as managers' assessments of employees' levels of workplace envy (Ghadi, 2018); collecting data from the perspective of both the enviers and the envied (Liu et al., 2019); collecting data on objective performance metrics in organizational contexts (Khan et al., 2017); surveying employees about envy separately from the rest of the questionnaire (Shu et al., 2017); using cross-lagged data (Lee et al., 2018); measuring abusive supervision at the team level (Tariq et al., 2019), and adopting an experience sampling method (ESM). Moreover, three studies point out the desirability of examining reverse causality (Kim & Glomb, 2014; Lee et al., 2018; Scott et al., 2015).

Regarding the instruments used to measure the variables, suggestions include the use of multi-item scales (Khan et al., 2017; Wilkin & Connelly, 2015) or other rater scores, rather than only self-report data (Shkoler et al., 2019); or assessing independent, specific manifestations of dark personality (Lange et al., 2018). In addition, Tariq et al., (2019) and Wang & Li, (2018) indicate that it would be interesting to use experimental designs in future research.

In ten papers, the authors indicate the importance of studying different moderating or mediating variables between envy and its effects (Braun et al., 2018; Demirtas et al., 2017; Dineen et al., 2017; Eissa & Wyland, 2016; Scott et al., 2015; Shkoler et al., 2019). Thus, Ghadi (2018) states that it would be interesting to study mediating and moderating variables such as self-efficacy or organizational ethical climate. Liu et al., (2019) suggest exploring potential mediators as perceived threats to enviers, and Navarro-Carrillo et al., (2018) indicate the importance of studying the possible moderating role of variables related to self-concept (e.g., self-esteem) or to personality factors. Nandedkar (2016) suggests examining dispositional envy as a moderator between LMX and employee envy.

Other suggested variables that could be studied in future research on envy at work are: type of contract (González-Navarro et al., 2018); organizational support and narcissism (Liu et al., (2019); transformational leadership and personality traits (Mao et al., 2020); perceived organizational support (Nandedkar, 2016); upward social comparisons (Shu & Lazatkhan, 2017); the supervisor's downward comparisons (Tariq et al., 2019); and ways to reduce relationship conflict and social undermining (Eissa & Wyland, 2016).

Moreover, competitive reward structures or personality traits can be relevant variables when examining the antecedents and impact of envy (Thompson et al., 2016). Treadway et al., (2019) suggest looking at the personal characteristics of the leader, and Lee et al., (2018) propose focusing on specific triggers of envy, such as higher job performance.

Some of the authors also consider it necessary to continue to investigate the negative consequences of envy at work, such

as retaliation, revenge, sabotage, theft (Erdil & Müceldili, 2014), or counterproductive work behaviors (Khan et al., (2014). Finally, Erdil & Müceldili (2014) also recommend studying the positive consequences of envy.

In sum, the studies reviewed highlight the relevance of conducting cross-cultural and longitudinal studies, collecting larger samples with more diverse populations, in order to examine negative and positive consequences of envy at work and consider different moderating or mediating variables in the research.

Discussion

The objective of this paper was to find out how empirical research on envy at work has advanced in recent years and systematize the knowledge on this topic. For this purpose, we carried out a systematic review of studies on envy in the workplace published from 2014 to 2020. Specifically, we organized the information by identifying the main conceptualizations of envy, the theoretical approaches to studying envy, the instruments used to measure envy in the workplace, the main objectives and results of the different empirical studies, and the practical implications and future proposals of the reviewed research.

The first aspect we want to highlight is the sharp increase in research on envy in the past five years. In the review published by Girbés-Llácer and Martín-Julián (2015) on jealousy and envy at work, the authors selected 17 articles on envy published between 1993 and 2014. However, in this study we have selected 32 relevant papers on envy at work, which suggests an important increase in researchers' interest in studying emotions at work and, specifically, in studying envy.

The main results reveal that social comparison theory and cognitive appraisal theory are the two main theoretical frameworks used in envy studies in the past five years. Upward social comparison with others and unpleasant appraisal are especially described as precursors of envy. Moreover, leadership, justice, and equity are theoretical approaches entwined with envy. There has been an increase in theoretical frameworks on which to base the research on envy at work in the past five years, compared to previous research (see, Girbés-Llácer and Martín-Julián, 2015). Therefore, we can assume that envy is an emotion that is present in the labor context. As different authors pointed out (e.g. Wilkin and Connelly, 2015), its management can guarantee equity and justice and reduce its possible negative effects and increase the positive ones.

Regarding the envy conceptualization, we have taken a step forward with regard to the previous review (see Girbés-Llácer and Martín-Julián, 2015) by systematizing envy conceptualizations in four different approaches. The first conceptualization represents a situational approach to envy, i.e. widespread envy towards the work context, whereas the second approach views envy as episodic, i.e. towards a specific referent. The third approach is more recent and extends the conceptualization of envy by distinguishing between two qualitatively different types, benign and malicious envy, as found in Girbés-Llácer and Martín-Julián's (2015) review. The last approach views envy as a dispositional variable where there are individual differences in the tendency towards envy. We think that the advances in the research on envy that differentiate between benign and malicious envy are the direction to follow in future research. As different authors point out (e.g. Braun et al., 2018), positive envy can be a motivating force in the workplace to increase the efforts involved in achieving what others already have.

With regard to the objectives of the research reviewed, most of the papers relate envy in the workplace to dysfunctional outcomes for both individuals and the organization, as has traditionally been

found in envy studies. Few studies link envy to positive results such as job engagement or prosocial behavior, not even benign envy. However, as Erdil & Muceldili (2014) pointed out, envy is also associated with positive results such as engagement. Therefore, we think it is necessary to continue to study the positive side of envy because, as Seligman and Csikszentmihalyi (2014) pointed out, studying positive aspects at work is what allows organizations to prosper.

The role of the leader is essential in the appearance of envy at work. In this regard, supervision and leadership have been studied, and mainly the quality of the relationship with the leader (LMX), as antecedents to envy. In addition, some personality variables and the role of cognitive appraisal have been included in research on envy.

The results of the studies reviewed show that envy is directly related to behavior aimed at harming others and the intent to leave. Moreover, envy fosters the perception of a more competitive climate in the workplace. These results had already been found in the previous review by Girbés-Llácer and Martín-Julián (2015). Likewise, most of the research reviewed studied the moderating or mediating variables in the relationship between envy and these harmful behaviors (e.g. conflict, perceptions of procedural justice, LMX). The mediating role of envy has also been shown. The study of new moderating or mediating variables was already proposed in the review carried out by Girbés-Llácer and Martín-Julián (2015). As these authors pointed out, knowing what these variables are makes it possible to design intervention strategies to mitigate the negative effects of envy in the workplace.

Regarding the results obtained for the effects of benign envy versus malicious envy, research has shown that they differ in their motivations (improvement versus bringing the other person down). Nevertheless, other authors suggest that both forms of envy can be malevolent (see Lange et al., 2018).

The relationship between employees and the leader was found to be a trigger for envy at work. Moreover, personality variables such as neuroticism, Machiavellianism, and psychopathic behaviors affect the relationship between envy and other variables.

The practical implications of the studies reviewed emphasize the creation of an organizational climate in which cooperation, communication, and the perception of justice should be fostered. Likewise, organizations need to create a culture where social comparison is minimized and equity is sought, in addition to implementing transparent and fair organizational policies. Other suggested practical implications are: giving employees personal guidance and counseling, coaching, and feedback to handle negative emotions at work and providing them with a sense of control. Finally, team-building activities are proposed to enhance positive affect among employees. We consider that the key to the success of all these intervention proposals is the recognition that emotions are part of the work context and, particularly, that envy is a frequent emotion at work. Therefore, any intervention proposal should start with the explicit recognition of envy in order to create prevention strategies.

In terms of suggestions for future studies, the research reviewed points out the need to conduct cross-cultural and longitudinal studies to obtain information about the dynamics of the studied relationship. In addition, collecting larger samples of more diverse populations and using several sources in collecting data are other recommendations. Examining reverse causality and using multi-item scales, instead of self-report data alone, are other important suggestions. Moreover, according to some of the reviewed studies, it is necessary to continue to investigate the negative and positive consequences of envy at work. Regarding other moderating or mediating variables that could be considered

in future studies, the suggestions stemming from this research refer to organizational, supervisory, and personality variables.

This study has some limitations that should be noted. Despite the rigorous systematic review process, the searches only included articles published in English or Spanish. However, most of the scientific literature is published in English. In addition, we have only included empirical studies because we wanted to provide researchers on this topic with an overview of recent investigations, so that they can serve as a basis for designing future studies.

In summary, in this study we have verified the existence of studies with common research objectives and theoretical frameworks, but also studies where the theoretical framework is not clear. In our opinion, this situation makes it more difficult to advance the knowledge on this topic. We noted that researchers are also interested in incorporating new variables into the studies that may explain envy in the workplace and its consequences for the individual and the organization. In general terms, the studies reviewed have good methodological rigor and quality, which allows their recommendations and proposals to be considered in the research on envy at work. In conclusion, the results of this study highlight the importance of conducting systematic reviews to advance the knowledge about envy at work.

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