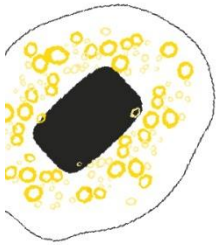




**Your Success At Work Brings Me Joy Or Depression:  
Factors Influencing The Affective Experiences Of Positive Empathy And Envy  
In Meeting Co-Worker's Success**



**UNIVERSITY OF TWENTE.**

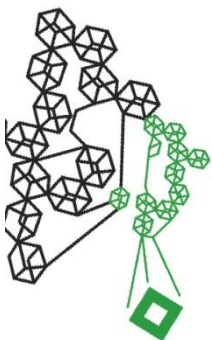
Master Thesis

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## COLOPHON

This document is a Master Thesis for the completion of the Master Organizational Communication and Reputation at the University of Twente, Enschede, The Netherlands.

Title: Your Success At Work Brings Me Joy Or Depression: Factors Influencing The Affective Experiences In Meeting Co-Worker's Success

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## PREFACE

"I have come in contact with many individuals who have achieved an incredible degree of outward success, but have found themselves struggling with an inner hunger, a deep need for personal congruency and effectiveness and for healthy, growing relationships with other people" (p. 15). This is how Stephen Covey's book "The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People: Powerful Lessons in Personal Change" began. The story aroused my curiosity. Powerful relationships are very important to me and I feel sympathy for the people who are struggling with this in private life and work life. Covey explains that some people eat their heart out when an acquaintance achieves success. They hope that the person might suffer misfortune that would keep them in their place. To Covey, it is their mentality that needs to be shifted, a self-renewal goal that is achievable for everyone. However, I was also curious about the story behind this envious mentality; the role of context, and perhaps the other side of the story. For my master thesis in Organizational Communication & Reputation, I decided to delve into the relationships at work. Wondering how people emotionally communicate with successful co-workers and what role organizations in affective experiences have. I imagined that "eating your heart out" is not the only way to respond, and that there is sometimes more to it than self-renewal. In work life, I hope to facilitate what is needed to feel happy for someone else's success and try to sustain a culture of healthy, growing work relations.

Without the support of many people in my direct and indirect surroundings, this master thesis would have never been completed. First of all, I would like to thank my first and second supervisor Mark van Vuuren and Menno de Jong. You gave so many thoughts on advancement on this piece, despite your loads of other responsibilities within this bizarre year. Mark, your support has been very useful and it was inspiring to work with you. Additionally, a special thanks to the three organizations who supported me by participating in this study in these difficult times. When it was still possible, 34 employees had the courage to sit in a room with me at a 1,5-meter distance during a pandemic crisis and, sometimes even more difficult, showed vulnerability by talking about their feelings at work. Last but not least, I am grateful for my family, boyfriend, and friends, who believed in my capacity and curiosity to learn and improve myself and perhaps the workplace.



## ABSTRACT

Envy - pain at another person's good fortune - has thus far been considered to be the primary reaction of employees in meeting co-worker's success, hampered in part by lack of empirical evidence in other affective experiences. This is the first empirical multiple case study that aimed to examine different affective experiences in meeting co-worker's success through addressing the following research question: *What factors influence employees' affective experiences to co-workers' successes in organizations?* The population central in this study are 34 employees selected from different organizational levels within three different organizations using the snowball method, collecting 90 incidents via the critical incident technique. Results show that employees can also experience positive empathy - render the happiness and joy of others necessary to you - as a significant, primary response in meeting co-worker's success. Additionally, the focus of success, contextual factors, and event factors determine the different affective pathways to malicious envy, benign envy, or positive empathy. The main contribution of this study is the integration of the intervening factors and moderators into a single model and theory grounded in data from the field, in which the three affective experiences are brought together to provide an understanding of how they affect organizations, work relations, and employees. This study builds a foundation for both additional studies and organizational management to enhance positive empathy as a strategy to increase team effectiveness, interpersonal relationships, overall wellbeing, individual thriving, and minimize the feeling of envy. In contrast, malicious envy and benign envy create either team ineffectiveness or team disengagement, ill-being or dissatisfaction, and quitting or self-renewal.

Keywords: positive empathy, critical incident technique, envy, organizational communication, work relations, success co-worker's



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*“It really was a developmental breakthrough for me when I realized the importance of celebrating and appreciating the success of others.” – Steve van Remortel, 2015*

## 1

## INTRODUCTION

Success at work involves more than a heart-pounding race to the finish line of your desires. Co-workers’ emotional reactions to your success are vital for present and future cooperative behavior in work relations and have important implications for the power of communication between all of you. Showing an understanding of another person’s feelings and care about others, has been proven to be a crucial element in strengthening these work relations (Pavlovich & Krahne, 2012; Powley, 2013). Empathy has therefore been regarded as a vital personality trait in both communication and leadership (Fuller, et al., 2018; Parks, 2015; Gentry, Weber & Sadri, 2007). Recent work shows mounting evidence that empathy for both negative and positive emotions are distinct experiences (Andreychik, 2017; Morelli, Lieberman, et al., 2015; Andreychik & Migliaccio, 2015; Morelli, Rameson & Lieberman, 2014). Yet, the vast majority of existing work on empathy focuses exclusively on negative empathy as in empathic sorrow (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019; Andreychik, 2017), empathic concern, or empathy for suffering and sadness of others (Andreychik & Migliaccio, 2015; Eisenberg, 2000; Tangney, Stuewig & Mashek, 2007). However, in contrast to the negative, empathy could also render happiness and joy of others necessary to you (Morelli, Lee, Arnn & Zaki, 2015; Telle & Pfister, 2015). This feeling of positive empathy encourages and strengthens positive relations and well-being (Morelli, Lieberman & Zaki, 2015), and may cause joy in a co-worker’s success.

Surprisingly, little is known about the nature, presence, or role of positive empathy in organizational life. While organizations assume that celebrating high-performing employees does elicit positive responses from other employees, no organizational research has investigated positive empathy in co-worker’s success (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). On the contrary, envy—defined as “pain at another person’s good fortune” (Tai, Narayanan, & McAllister, 2012, p. 107)—has thus far been considered to be the primary reaction of employees in celebrating one other’s success (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). Though it has been established that ordinary human behavior cannot be understood within purely negative parameters (Cameron, Dutton & Quinn, 2002; Luthans, 2002), this exclusive focus on envy is based on the assumption that employees are in an endless competition for limited organizational resources (e.g., Dineen, Duffy, Henle, & Lee, 2017). To clarify, envy is different than negative empathy because envy is feeling a certain hostility towards another’s’ fortune, and negative empathy is the identification of another person’s pain. Ganegoda & Bordia (2019) proposed that envy is not the only possible response to others’ positive experiences in work life. By being happy about a positive outcome or state in another person’s life (Haidt, 2003; Morelli, Lieberman, & Zaki, 2015), positive empathy could contribute as a strategy for building and improving both inter-organizational relationships and team effectiveness (Andreychik & Migliaccio, 2015; Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019).



It becomes clear that the affective experiences on co-workers' successes remains obscure, but could have crucial consequences in the workplace. Additional studies are necessary to fully understand and recognize the affective experiences in a co-worker's success to assess whether positive empathy plays a significant role in organizations (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). This is the first empirical study that aims to examine affective experiences in co-workers' successes by exploring the affective critical stories of employees via a multiple case study in three organizations (overview research objectives, appendix A). Critical stories are particularly useful in an early stage of research because it generates both exploratory information and theory and/or model-building grounded in the field (Dahlggaard-Park, 2015; Cassell & Symon, 2004). The consequences of the critical incidents can be important learning situations for employees and can thus be powerful communicators for an organization's behavioral norms and cultural values (Zwijze-Koning, 2016). Ultimately, this might provide management insight into the way a co-worker's success is affectively experienced by their employees and how they can create positive empathy to increase team effectiveness, relationships, overall wellbeing, and minimize the feeling of envy (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). Therefore, the research question is: *What factors influence employees' affective experiences to co-workers' successes in organizations?*



# 2

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this section, a theoretical framework is provided that describes success in organizations and overlap and key distinctions between positive empathy and envy and highly related constructs and concepts.

### 2.1 SUCCESSES AT WORK

The dictionary defines success as an accomplishment of an aim or purpose, a good outcome of an undertaking (Oxford Languages, 2010). Yet success, however sweet, may come at a price. Organizations are places where employees both accomplish their own career aims and must witness the successes and accomplishments of their co-workers (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). A co-worker is an individual who embraces coworking through social interaction, collaboration, and communication with other co-workers (individuals) at work, even though they have a different occupational interest or work level (Tadashi, 2013). Co-workers have a critical influence on a crucial employee's interpretation of his/her workplace, which in turn influences the employee's exchange relationships, attitudes, and behaviors (Takeuchi, Yun & Wong, 2011). When organizations use bonuses and awards to encourage superior job performance, they single out high achievers as visible targets for comparisons made by their co-workers (Henagan & Bedeian, 2009). According to Brooks et al. (2019), co-workers often feel malicious envy, a destructive interpersonal emotion, when successful employees display their success. In contrast, co-workers who experience positive empathy and thereby connect with others' positive emotions, such as success, they may serve to improve the quality of professional life and interpersonal relations at work (Andreychik & Lewis, 2017).

### 2.2 POSITIVE EMPATHY

Sallquist, Eisenberg, Spinrad, Eggum, and Gaertner (2009) defined positive empathy as “an expression of happiness or joy that results from comprehending another person's positive emotional state or condition” (p. 223). This study will use the definition of Morelli, Lieberman, et al. (2015), who invested multiple studies in positive empathy; “positive empathy is an understanding and vicariously sharing others' positive emotions,” which involves “imagining, recalling, observing, or learning of others' positive outcomes” (p. 58). Positive empathy is an other-focused emotion because it originates from an individual taking the perspective of another. However, there can be instances when a person feels joyful in response to another's positive experience for self-focused reasons, as in a mentor-student relationship (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). Perspective-taking has been defined as “an individual tries to understand another's internal states and thoughts by cognitively placing himself or herself in the other person's situation” (Eisenberg et al., 1998, p. 508). Though most studies link perspective-taking to negative empathy, more recent neuropsychological research has shown that perspective-taking underlies both



positive empathy and negative empathy because they activate the same regions in the brain associated with perspective-taking (Mitchell, 2009; Morelli et al., 2014).

In a recent review of the literature on positive empathy, Morelli, Lieberman, et al. (2015) differentiated positive empathy from the related constructs as positive affect, warm glow, and perceived positive empathy. Ganegoda and Bordia (2019) differentiated positive empathy from joy, emotional contagion, pride, negative empathy, and compassion. Sallquist, Eisenberg, Spinrad, Eggum & Gaertner (2009) focused on the difference between positive empathy and empathy/sympathy. There is no need to replicate their efforts, but it will be useful to look further into the potentials of positive empathy in organizations. The experience to be happy for someone else's positive experiences have been identified as an important individual capacity by organizational practitioners (Morelli, Lieberman, et al., 2015). For example, Klein (1975) observed that "the ability to admire another's achievements is one of the factors that make successful teamwork possible" (p. 260).

### 2.3 POSITIVE EMPATHY AND ORGANIZATIONS

Positive empathy contributes by assisting others to increase their positive emotions and approach growth and development, thereby it might improve the quality of professional life and work relations (Andreychik & Lewis, 2017). Ganegoda and Bordia (2019) proposed that positive empathy exerts a positive influence on employees' relationship quality overall. They concluded by stating that positive empathy facilitates wellbeing and teamwork, particularly in the context of increasing cooperation and cohesion. Especially, leaders who foster positivity, facilitate more innovation and creativity. In such a work environment, people have greater opportunities for self-discovery and development, which leads to greater commitment to their work (Pavlovich & Krahnke, 2012).

One explanation of encouraging positive empathy might have beneficial effects in organizations is that the feeling of being emotionally understood by others may lead people to open up themselves. People's empathy level (both positive and negative) toward specific social groups shapes their views of organizational policies that affect the welfare of themselves and others (Roberge, 2013). In particular, Andreychik (2019) found relationships that negative empathy and positive empathy each have with the professional quality of life in a caregiver-client setting; feeling negative empathy is related to increased burnout and feeling positive empathy to reduced burnout and increased compassion satisfaction.

Andreychik & Migliaccio (2015) stated that positive empathy and negative empathy are not mutually exclusive. Andreychik (2019) suggest that increasing helpers' positive empathy represents a promising strategy for improving the overall quality of work-life, one that leaves the motivating power of negative empathy to help others survive, and that positive empathy might also increase helpers' motivation to support others not only to survive, but to thrive. It is therefore important that this research on positive empathy will not substitute negative empathy, but it will complement the effects of negative empathy. Buckingham (2007) studied successful people in organizations and found that success was not attained by analyzing problems and eliminating them, and that happiness did not happen by eliminating



sadness. Many researchers showed the benefits of empathic concern in organizational life by negative empathy being inhibition of aggressive behavior towards others, and a motivation to help others in distress and subsequent helping behavior (Tangney et al., 2007).

Given the relative lack of research on positive empathy, it is also important to keep an open mind regarding its potential disadvantages. Positive empathy involves strongly connecting with others' positive emotions. Individuals high in positive empathy may feel the successes of their co-workers acutely, which could potentially lead to envy (Andreychik, 2019). It has been reported that envy-prone individuals have relatively low levels of happiness, vitality, and life satisfaction (Milfont & Gouveia, 2009). Ganegoda & Bordia (2019) argued that the experience of envy, or a tendency to experience it, can impede the emergence of positive empathy, even while envy and positive empathy are distinct constructs. Envy has thus far been considered to be the primary reaction in meeting co-worker's success (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). Improving this reaction to their co-worker's success might be effective by nurturing positive empathy to strengthening the sense of collective identity (Andreychik, 2019).

## 2.4 ENVY

Envy is a consequence of unfavorable, or upward, social comparison (Lange et al., 2018; Smith & Kim, 2007). One of the key motivations of envy is to eliminate the envier's inferiority (unfavorable), either by bringing the person down or through self-improvement (upward) (e.g., Cohen-Charash, 2009; Smith & Kim, 2007). In these terms, envy is an affective experience consisting of two primary elements, one relating to feelings of inadequacy and the other to the feelings of ill will (Salovey, 1991). The extreme form of envy, malicious envy, contains feelings of hostility toward the envied party, in addition to feelings of inferiority (Smith & Kim, 2007; Smith, Parrott, Ozer & Moniz, 1994). Equally, in its benign form, envy is a painful experience characterized by feelings of inferiority that has a depressing impact (Parrott & Smith, 1993; Smith et al., 1994). Unlike malicious envy, benign envy is associated with a willingness to learn from the object of envy and a motivation to improve (Cohen-Charash, 2009; van de Ven, Zeelenberg & Pieters, 2009). A possible key moderator determining whether an employee experiences benign or malicious envy could be the extent to which he or she perceives the positive outcome to be fair or not (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). Another moderator could be the extent to which a perceiver considers a social target's success to be within the former's power to achieve (Smith & Kim, 2007; e.g., Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). Ganegoda and Bordia (2019) differentiated the antecedents of envy. There is no need to replicate their efforts in this study.

Menon and Thompson (2010) have found that regardless of the economic climate, people at all levels of an organization are vulnerable to envy. Although envy may result in positive organizational outcomes including higher task performance by self-improvement in some cases, envy may also result in damaging organizational outcomes such as victimization (Kim & Glomb, 2014). One might argue that an organization should be particularly interested in the victimization of high performers because envy damages relationships, disrupt teams, and undermines organizational performance. Particularly



envy intensifies in times of economic crisis. As losses mount, employees worry that they are at risk and grow to resent successful colleagues (Menon & Thompson, 2010).

Research on envy is relatively consistent on the idea that envy results from a negative social comparison with others who are similar to them, wherein the other has achieved a desirable outcome in a domain that is relevant to them (Lange, Weidman & Crusius, 2018; Smith & Kim, 2007). According to Henniger and Harris (2015), the strongest empirical support for the similarity theory comes from a study within the workplace; Schaubroeck & Lam (2004) found that perceived similarity with a co-worker predicted envy over that person's promotion. Hence, people are unhappier when a close person succeeds in a personally relevant domain than when a stranger does. Strangers are an abstraction, and their achievements are just facts. On the contrary, the successes of people next door seem achievable (Menon & Thompson, 2010). Most people spend a very large part of their lives at work and invest substantially in their energies and ambitions (Patient, Lawrence & Maitlis, 2003). Therefore, envy often embeds a sense of injustice in the form of an unfair advantage received by another (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). Their success could bother a person with a similar function. Additionally, most employees want to learn more about ideas that come from other companies than about ideas that originate with rivals in their own organizations. This dislike of learning from co-workers has an organizational price by investing time and money in external ideas. Consequently, the desire to remain at arm's length from successful co-workers leads to missed opportunities and organizational inefficiency (Menon & Thompson, 2010).

## 2.5 ENVY AND POSITIVE EMPATHY IN THE WORKPLACE

While no organizational research investigated both envy and positive empathy in the workplace, e.g. Ganegoda & Bordia (2019) developed a conceptual model (Figure 1, page 13) that suggests when and why employees react with positive empathy or envy in the workplace. The theory is that (i) emotions have important consequences for well-being, (ii) affective processes are defining elements of workplace relationship quality, and (iii) affective processes motivate (i.e., energize and direct) behaviors that have implications for individual job performance and team effectiveness. The social comparison pathway would lead to envy, while the perspective-taking pathway would lead to positive empathy. They suggest that the experience of envy can impede the emergence of positive empathy, even while they are distinct constructs. However, a lack of envy does not necessarily mean that an individual would experience positive empathy. More accurately, envy is negatively associated with positive empathy. From this perspective, a low level of envy is a necessary but insufficient necessity to positive empathy (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019).



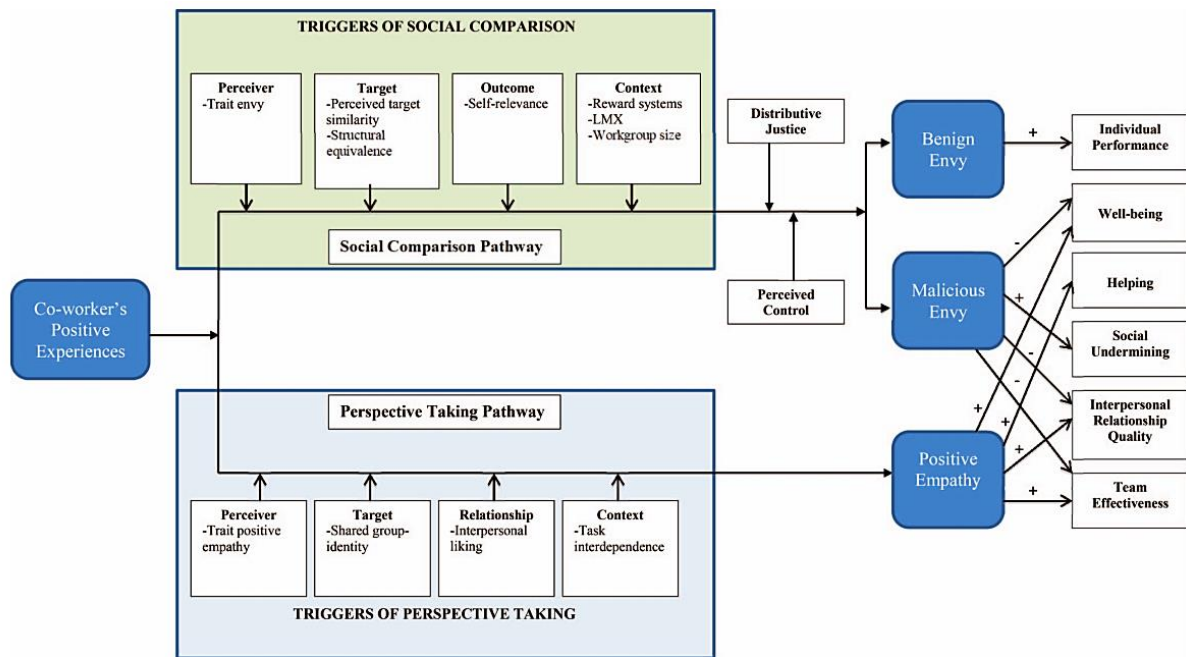


Figure 1 Conceptual model of Ganegoda & Bordia (2019) explains when and why employees react with positive empathy or envy at work.

The model of Ganegoda & Bordia (2019) clarifies triggers for envy within the social comparison pathway. First, dispositional envy implies that individuals' affective dispositions influence their emotional reactions to specific events (e.g., Cropanzano, James, & Konovsky, 1993; Staw, Bell, & Clausen, 1986). An employee with high levels of dispositional envy will experience more frequent and stronger feelings of episodic envy. Second, equivalent co-workers typically hold positions at the same level in an organizational hierarchy and are often substitutable and in competition, wherein they use each other as a basis for social comparison (Smith, Parrott, Diener, Hoyle & Kim, 1999). Third, one employee's success in a performance domain that is relevant to another's self-definition is likely to trigger feelings of envy (Salovey & Rodin, 1984). Lastly, Sterling and Labianca (2015) noted that the organizational systems and structures shape employee experience and influence employee perceptions. Ganegoda & Bordia (2019) describe three organizational contextual factors that trigger social comparison and thereby envy, that is organizational reward systems, leadership-member exchange quality, and group size. A co-worker's positive experience will lead to stronger episodic envy in exclusively individual-focused reward practices. Additionally, empirical research has indeed shown that leaders treat subordinates differently and in doing so create in-group and out-group divisions within work teams (Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007; Liden, Sparrowe, & Wayne, 1997), which triggers episodic envy in employees. Employees in smaller workgroups are more affected by the positive experiences of their co-workers than those in larger workgroups (e.g., Sterling, Shah, & Labianca, 2016).

Proceeding from the notion that perspective-taking is the main psychological process through which individuals experience positive empathy, Ganegoda & Bordia (2019) identified ways in which perspective-taking is evoked as a response to a co-worker's positive experience. First, likewise to envy, individuals tend to respond to specific events in ways that are largely coherent with their affective



predispositions (Cropanzano et al., 1993). Therefore, trait positive empathy could predict individuals' state positive empathy. A second factor is that shared group identity shifts an individual's motivational focus from self-interest to the collective welfare of the group (Brewer & Gardner, 1996), whereby the success of a fellow member of a group is more likely to be viewed positively by other members than when the emphasis is on self-interest. Third, individuals are much more motivated to take the perspective of those who they like (McPherson Frantz & Janoff-Bulman, 2000), and are also happier for in-group members, compared with out-group members (Cikara, Bruneau, Van Bavel & Saxe, 2014; Molenberghs et al., 2014). The last contextual factor is the level of task interdependence between employees, wherein they are determinant of the extent to which they interact and rely on each other.

Both positive empathy and envy have been conceptualized as taking the form of either an episodic state or a dispositional trait. Both episodic envy and episodic positive empathy are experienced by an individual in response to a specific event involving a specific referent other. In contrast, dispositional envy implies chronic feelings of ill will toward those who are better off. While dispositional feelings can contribute to episodic feelings, empirical research has distinguished the two constructs (Cohen-Charash, 2009). This study aims to assess employees' affective experiences in meeting co-workers' successes through critical incident stories. Therefore, the focus will be specifically on employees' episodic feelings in the workplace and not on long-term trait affective predispositions.

According to Ganegoda and Bordia (2019), dispositional aspects of the perceiver, characteristics of the target, characteristics of the positive outcome, the nature of the relationship between the perceiver and the target, and characteristics of the organizational context influence the experience in meeting co-worker's success, and can also be considered moderators of the relationships between an affective event and the emotion that the event evokes. It could influence well-being, individual performance, social undermining, helping behavior, team effectiveness, and interpersonal relationship quality at work. However, these factors concerning positive empathy have not been explored empirically in the workplace. By studying the affective experiences of employees within organizations, studies could show other emotions, factors, or moderators in experiencing co-workers' success since the model is conceptual. Therefore, it will be interesting to look into different organizations with different structures and emotional processes to study employees' affective experiences to co-workers' successes.



# 3

## METHOD

Specific experiences can be gathered by the critical incident technique (CIT). They capture the thought processes, the frame, and the positive or negative experiences (Zwijze-Koning, 2016). The method section will clarify the research design, data sources, and data collection.

### 3.1 RESEARCH DESIGN

In organizational communication, the study of individuals is primarily focused on the emotional aspect of their role as an employee (Keyton, 2017). The importance of communication for the effectiveness of organizations and the wellbeing of employees is undeniable (Zwijze-Koning & de Jong, 2005). CIT has great potential for studying organizational communication because the rich, qualitative character of the CIT data enables the in-depth study of the communication problems of an organization (Zwijze-Koning & De Jong, 2007). The technique is used to gather detailed accounts of important communicative occurrences, focussing on the meaning people attach to critical behaviors (Zwijze-Koning, 2016). The heterogeneity of employees indicates that smaller samples controlled for relevant aspects are likely to have greater illustrative power than could be shown by a quantitative study. In organizational behavior, understanding the detail of the process and behavior is paramount and CIT enables such an aim to be achieved. It allows the researcher to study through explorative interviews what the incident is about, why it is perceived to be significant, and what were its perceived consequences are (Cassell & Symon, 2004). Therefore, the data collection strategy in this study is through one-on-one interviews.

Several studies have stayed close to the basis of the CIT, examining behaviors and aiming to support interventions that will create an environment in which such behaviors will thrive (Zwijze-Koning, De Jong & Van Vuuren, 2015). This study uses the CIT to explore organizational environments where affective experiences will thrive in a relationship with a successful co-worker and aims to discuss strategies to understand the affective experiences. Results from the qualitative interviews can help to identify unobserved heterogeneity in quantitative data as well as misspecified models (Schwarz & Stensaker, 2016). CIT can be used as a first step to building a new theory that may be tested later using alternative research methods, developing a theory grounded in data from the field (Dahlgaard-Park, 2015). Since this study is never researched before in organizations, the data could be used in building new theories to further develop.

The key strengths of the interpretative version of CIT are as follows: (i) it gleans data from the respondent's perspective, (ii) it is explorative and theory building, (iii) it is flexible, (iv) it enables an accurate record of events and a rich data set of actual experiences (Dahlgaard-Park, 2015). One disadvantage is that the accounts are always retrospective. If possible, the researcher should interview at least one other significant person. However, the reason that the incidents are 'critical' means that



subjects usually have a good recall (Cassell & Symon, 2004). The reliability is largely built into a quality interview process in which there is consistency (Cassell & Symon, 2004). To be reliable, the information should include sufficient antecedent information to “set the scene,” a detailed description of the experience itself, and a coherent account of the outcome (Dahlgaard-Park, 2015).

When the CIT is used in a multiple case study design, the researcher can look for evidence of commonalities in themes to increase generalizability. According to Cresswell and Poth (2016), a multiple-case design explores a real-life system through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information. It enables the researcher to relate context, strategy, and outcomes, to look for repetition of patterns, and thus to build up a picture of tactics. This gives first-hand evidence of the relationship between context and outcome (Cassell & Symon, 2004). Additionally, CIT can also be used to triangulate research by interviewing three individuals involved in a particular incident who have different perspectives, to acquire a more holistic view (Chell & Pittaway, 1998).

### 3.2 DATA SOURCES

The researcher is a master’s student in Organizational Communication and Reputation at the University of Twente. This study is a master thesis supervised by two experienced professors in Organizational Communication. Due to curiosity and interest in affective communication in organizations, the researcher chose to focus on positive empathy and envy. The researcher believes in the interpretivism research view in this matter. Understanding why or how participants feel or act cannot be studied through the analysis of numbers. It requires an in-depth evaluation of actions and behaviors. Fuller et al. (2018) empirically defined empathy as one of the performance criteria to guide the development of (potentially) excellent communication professionals. Understanding of the phenomena in this study is created by focussing on this subject a half year before the start of this study. The reflexivity the researcher may bring is a lack of personal experience with malicious envy within organizational context.

#### 3.2.1 *Participants and recruitment process*

One of the challenging aspects of using the critical incident technique in judging how many incidents are needed. Flanagan (1954) points out that the number needed does depend on the complexity of the behavior under consideration. When only one or two new categories are added for every 100 incidents it can be considered that behavior has been adequately explored (Bradley, 1992). However, various researchers have reinterpreted this rule by stating that 16 to 4.000 is an adequate data set. That is, the researcher must be categorizing the reported incidents to see if new categories are appearing in interviews or not. If not, saturation is reached (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004). Consequently, the size of the sample is difficult to define in advance. A threat to the validity of this study is that the sample must not consist of persons selected for characteristics that are related in a systematic way to the activity being studied, as the CIT is focused on incidents. This is particularly crucial because the sample size may be small (Woolsey, 1986). The choice to start with twelve interviews in the first organization is based on



the findings of Guest, Bunce, and Johnson (2006), who state that saturation occurs within the first twelve interviews. The data of the second and third organization is used to examine the relationship between context and outcome and increase generalizability.

The population that will be central in this research are employees of three different organizations: health care, products, and service. Access to the organizations is retrieved by following the formal path of asking the board and/or the Human Resource Department for approval. When recruiting participants, the researcher must be sure to attract both close ties and weak ties to participating employees. In this manner, employees will be selected from all organizational levels and are not focussed on characteristics. Via the snowball method, an initial number of participants are asked for the names of others within the organization. It is useful when studying sensitive topics and when the participants are hard to reach (Boeije, 2010). Due to the corona crisis, it was hard to find participating organizations and employees, and human emotions are sensitive topics.

The interviews are focused on informing the interviewee about the theme and goal of the study (Cassell & Symon, 2004). All employees of the three organizations are sent an invite via intranet of the organization, asking them to participate in the study (example, Appendix B). Follow-up contact was made in person by the researcher. First, a short introduction and explanation of the study via a personal meeting or online meeting. Prior contact allows participants time to prepare and reminds them to look out for critical incidents (Bradley, 1992). After one day or a few days, the interview took place. Once the researcher has gained access to the organizations, the researcher should explain concisely what the nature of the critical incident interview is and outline the purposes and any possible benefits to the board (Cassell & Symon, 2004). In all cases, the researcher had close contact with Human Resource (HR) and was present at every organization for approximately six weeks in 2020 (see planning, Appendix C). The first two weeks were invested in getting to know the organization, contact person, and agreement on privacy rules with HR. This advantage prevented trouble in finding participants in every organization. The other four weeks were invested in data collection.

### *3.2.2 Relationship researcher participants*

The interviews are focused on informing the interviewee about the theme and goal of the study (Cassell & Symon, 2004). Before the interview, the researcher made contact with the interviewees, personal or via e-mail, for a brief introduction and shared the purpose of the study (see description interview guide, Appendix D). Participatory approval from the highest authority does not open every door, therefore every employee had to be asked for cooperation individually (Boeije, 2010). Once employees understood that more individuals were interviewed, they felt safe enough to start an open conversation about their emotions with the researcher. Central to the CIT is the trust placed in the participants to make accurate reports. This trust should work both ways, and a guarantee of anonymity for the participant is usually required (FitzGerald, Seale, Kerins & McElvaney, 2008). After coding the interviews and analysis of the organization, the researcher made final contact via e-mail with the interviewees to share



the results within an infographic. To the board or HR, an advice plan was presented. Due to anonymity, these final concepts cannot be shared in this study. However, these outcomes are the same as the results presented in chapter 4, the results section.

### 3.2.3 Organizations

Even though Ganegoda and Bordia (2019) describe organizational contextual factors that trigger envy or positive empathy, their model is not empirically tested. Therefore, the researcher will approach the affective experiences and context with an open, explorative view. It is important to clarify the organizational contexts of the participating organizations beforehand. Table 1 presents an outline of the differences between the three organizations.

Table 1 Outline organizational contexts

	Organization 1	Organization 2	Organization 3
Total Participants	12	9	13
- Female	8	2	4
- Male	4	7	9
Total Incidents	43	24	23
Branche	Health Care	Products	Service
Approx. Total Employees	2400	500	750

The first organization is a hospital with approximately 2400 employees. Hospitals are dynamic, complex, ad-hoc, and are increasingly multidisciplinary, making them interesting to analyze. Hospital activities are executed by different types of resources (physicians, nurses, technical specialists, clerks) and can vary from one organization to another (Rojas, Munoz-Gama, Sepúlveda, & Capurro, 2016). A patient's healthcare services are provided by a variety of departments and specialisms that generally function as autonomous organizations (Hulshof, Kortbeek, Boucherie, Hans & Bakker, 2012). There is always the need to reduce the cost of services and improve capabilities to meet the demand, reduce waiting times, improve productivity, and increase process transparency (Rojas et al., 2016). Additionally, job burnout is highly common among medical trainees. The qualities of medical residency are offset by high requirements, long working days, lack of independence, a high level of work-home meddling, and a lack of reciprocity in professional relationships. These factors may have damaging effects on the mental health of employees (Ripp et al., 2017; Dyrbye & Shanafelt, 2016; Prins et al., 2010). Physician burnout is viewed as being rooted in concerns related to the working environment and organizational culture and not personal problems (Panagioti et al., 2017; van Vendeloo et al., 2018). Twelve employees participated in this study and reviewed 43 incidents.

The second organization is originally a family business and over 100 years old. However, the family has no managerial position in the organization anymore and it is currently a profit organization



with more layers. The organization is transitioning to a multinational by producing in several countries, making it interesting to analyze the affective experiences on success in a growing organization. Production employees and organizational staff work separated. The product organization has approximately 500 employees and nine of them participated in this study, discussing 24 incidents. Family businesses draw unique strengths from shared history and identity. The role of the founder is essential to establishing an organization's identity, core beliefs, and purpose. A founder's influence often remains past his or her lifetime and into future managers without regard to ownership structure, location, size, or industry. This broader sense of identity and focus on values, manifested as practices in the organization often result in high-performance behaviors that naturally lead to excellent business results (Denison, Lief & Ward, 2004).

The third organization is still a family business with 750 employees focussed on travel services for government policies (for example people with a disability), transport, and holidays. The difference with the other organizations is that the service organization has no management positions except for the owner and his advisors, who are part of the family that is running the organization. It is a flat organization with 30 people in the workforce and the other 720 people are chauffeurs spread over several districts. A few years ago, the organization merged with others, resulting in a reorganization and diverse collective labor agreements among employees. Structural differences are recognized between the natures and functioning of family-managed organizations and those that are not family-controlled. Family-controlled organizations often have a more central decision-making procedure and less formal control structures, although these changes across generations (Morris, Williams, Allen & Avila, 1997). Additionally, family firms may have a greater reputation for ethical behavior and develop stronger long-term business relationships (Brice & Richardson, 2009), making it interesting to analyze the affective experiences on success in their relationships. Thirteen employees participated in this study, discussing 23 incidents.

### 3.3 DATA COLLECTION

The qualitative CIT data collection strategy within this study is through interviews, either in person or via online meetings. A one-on-one interview is a personal approach that is ideal when you need to gather highly personalized data. CIT is exploratory by nature and is appropriate to use when the researcher is interested in understanding more about little-understood incidents, factors, or psychological structures and experiences (Butterfield, Maglio, Borgen & Amundson, 2009). The technique is particularly suited to the exploration of dilemmas or looking at two sides of behavior, good and bad; effective and ineffective; avoidable and unavoidable (Bradley, 1992).

The interpretative CIT has six different elements; (i) gaining access to the organizations (ii) focusing the theme and giving an account of oneself as a researcher to the respondent (iii) introducing the CIT method (iv) controlling the interview, by probing the incidents and clarifying one's understanding (v) concluding the interview and taking care of ethical issues, and (vi) analyzing the data



(Chell & Pittaway, 1998; Cassell & Symon, 2004). It requires the interviewer to have a sound understanding of the theoretical issues involved, to understand the areas which need further probing (Chell & Pittaway, 1998). Therefore, the researcher practiced CIT with acquaintances before the start of the data collection. To stay close to the CIT procedure, the protocol overview of e.g. Butterfield et al. (2009) will be used as a foundation in this study. The data collection of the interviews was approximately four weeks per organization and spread over eight months in 2020 due to the corona crisis.

### 3.3.1 Interview procedure

The interviews were held in a private room within the organization or via an online meeting. Only the participant and the researcher were in the room during the online or offline interview. Before every interview started, the participant signs (or agrees online) an informed consent form (Appendix E) if they agree with being the subject of research and with the interview being recorded by mobile phone. Within this agreement, it will clearly state that the data will be treated confidentially and anonymously. The researcher must leave the impression that the interview was valuable and that any revelations will be treated with strict confidentiality (Cassell & Symon, 2004). 34 interviews were held for 10 to 70 minutes, with an average interview time of 29 minutes. When employees mention incidents that have happened only once and will never happen again, the results cannot be used to improve organizational processes (Zwijze-Koning, De Jong & Van Vuuren, 2015). At the beginning of the interview, the interviewee will be asked about their job in the organization because it is counterproductive to start with the CIT questions (Zwijze-Koning, 2016). Subsequently, questions will focus on the definition and the meaning of success and CIT. The interviewer will focus on CIT by starting with two open questions (see Appendix D for the interview guide)

Q1. How do you experience co-workers' successes?

Q2. Could you think of a specific, particular incident and describe the incident for me in detail?

Such an open-ended question approach is essential for the critical incident technique because data has to be categorized inductively, without reference to pre-existing theories (Bradley, 1992). To make sure the answers in the interviews are detailed and focused, these questions aim to uncover all relevant aspects of the incident: (i) What actually happened? (ii) Who was involved? (iii) What caused the event? (iv) What were the consequences of the event? (v) Do you think or know that other employees experience this as well? Several follow-up questions will be asked to explore the event systematically (Zwijze-Koning, De Jong & Van Vuuren, 2015). This procedure will be repeated until the participants were no longer able to mention new critical incidents (Zwijze-Koning & De Jong, 2014). Triggers from the interviewer include: "Can you be more specific?," and "What were you thinking?" If full and precise details are given, the incident can be assumed to be accurate (FitzGerald et al., 2008). To stimulate the interviewee in recalling incidents, a model based on the conceptual model of Ganegoda & Bordia (2019) will be shown (Appendix F). In this manner, they could recognize themselves in or recall benign envy,



malicious envy, or positive empathy. This procedure will result in underlying structural communication practices that employees considered to be sources of communication satisfaction or dissatisfaction (Zwijze-Koning, De Jong, 2007).

### 3.3.2 Alterations

The original plan was to finish data collection within five months instead of eight months. Due to the corona crisis, interviews were delayed and access to the first and second organization had to be postponed (Planning, Appendix C). Additionally, various organizations canceled their participation. The first two organizations were continually participative during the crisis. However, the third organization canceled, and the fourth as well. It took two months to find the last participating organization. Within the organizations, no participant canceled their interview. However, two interviews within organization two had to be collected via online meetings. All the other 32 interviews were collected in person with a 1,5-meter distance.

### 3.3.3 Ethics

The key ethical concerns were ensuring that all persons and details were sufficiently well disguised to guarantee anonymity. The participant characteristics are described in Appendix G. Even though some interviews may not include incidents, the researcher must leave the impression it was valuable to the study. Subjectivity and personal interpretation of matters of critical value to participants increase the possibility of ethical matters. There are confidentiality matters, which must be respected as participants may name other people and/or their organizations putting them in a light that may represent defamation. In such cases, a precise procedure for managing tape-recorded and transcripts is vital to protect participants and the integrity of the study procedure (Cassell & Symon, 2004). The documents and recordings will be removed from personal computers and phones when the research is completed.

The CIT interview is not easy to perform well. It requires a skilled and experienced researcher who can manage the participants, guiding the interview to accomplish clarity of understanding, and who can manage the expression of emotion. The researcher must try to create a relationship of trust, honesty, and open exchange (Cassell & Symon, 2004). Although CIT requires an experienced researcher, practicing dialogues was a major part of the University of Applied Science where the researcher graduated before Master Education. By getting familiar with the participants and investing time in getting to know them and their organization, the researcher tried to stimulate an open and honest conversation. Additionally, by practicing in advance with acquaintances and asking questions such as “if I understand it right, you mean...” the researcher gained a respectable knowledge on how to conduct the CIT interviews. It is known that not all participants will tell negative incidents and here the researcher must be competent to investigate sensitively and not be carried away by the wave of success, which participants may be putting across.

Another ethical procedure is the safety of contact with the participant in the corona crisis. The researcher made sure she was informed by Human Resource about the rules of the organization. In



contact with the participant, no greeting by a handshake, and the researcher stayed 1,5 meters away from the participant. The organization facilitated disinfecting gel and a safe room to conduct the interview. The researcher made sure she had no symptoms of COVID-19 and made sure she felt safe to go to the organization.

### 3.4 ANALYSIS

After conducting the interviews, the recordings of the interviews will be replayed, transcribed, and coded by the researcher in the program ATLAS.ti. CIT provides extensive data that can be subjected to narrative analysis and can be coded and categorized according to the principles of grounded theory. In grounded theory research, there are three basic types of coding: open, axial, and selective coding. In open coding, events/actions/interactions are compared with others for similarities and differences by conceptual labels to form categories and subcategories. In axial coding, categories are related to their subcategories. Lastly, selective coding is the process by which all categories are unified around a core category, and categories that need further explication are filled-in with descriptive detail (Strauss and Corbin, 1990). The coded data often provides significant insights into the cognitive, affective, and behavioral influences on the interviewee in response to an incident, into how the individual acted, the psychological prerogatives behind their actions, and an indication of how their actions affected the outcome of the incident (Chell & Pittaway, 1998).

#### 3.4.1 Analytic procedure

The group of organizations was treated as the unit of analysis and their employees were individually the units of observation. The first step was coding the first organization and compare the incidents for similarities and differences in malicious envy, benign envy, positive empathy, and perhaps other affective experiences to form categories and subcategories. Secondly, the categories were related to their subcategories to gain a full understanding of the categories that emerged from the data, which could be used to gain knowledge in organization two. The incidents were not coded per interview due to lack of time between the interviews. However, the constant comparative method was used via coding per organization to check the appearance of new categories as they emerged from the analyses.

After open coding and axial coding of the first organization were finished, the researcher collected data in organization two and the same process was repeated. The subcategories in malicious envy and benign envy shifted in the second coding process. The researcher must be categorizing the reported incidents to see if new categories are appearing in interviews or not. Using the CIT, the research cannot leave the data set to a final number of incidents, the study might find too little or far too much data to perform an acceptable analysis (DeMarrais & Lapan, 2004). In theory, sampling should continue until saturation is reached, i.e., a point at which the addition of new incidents contributes no new categories for the analysis (FitzGerald et al., 2008). Analyzing the third organization, no new categories emerged from the data.



The researcher analyzed three cases and gathered 90 incidents in three cases to provide an adequate data set. 59 incidents were the experience of positive empathy, 17 were the experience of malicious envy, and 14 incidents were the experience of benign envy. By using a cross-case analysis with an inductive approach, a broader exploration of the research question and theoretical development enables the researcher to understand the differences and similarities between the three cases studied. Lastly, Table 2 provides an overview of the final codes and concepts of the study. The codes and categories are explained in descriptive detail in chapter 4 the results section. Triangulation occurred in all organizations. To improve the validity, an inter-coder reliability test for the coding of the interviews was involved by two people with academic knowledge and reached a satisfactory Cohen's kappa of  $K = 0.82$ , with an agreement of 94.44%. The two judges criticized 18 incidents. They agreed to include 14 incidents, agreed to exclude 3, and one judge wanted to include an extra incident.

Table 2 Final codes overview

Theme (Core concept)	Category	Sub-category
<b>Organizational Context</b>	Structure	Short or long lines of communication Vision character employees
	Culture	Cooperative vs Competitive Trust
<b>Personal Context</b>	Personality	Insecurity Ability to reflect and change
	Job security	Job assurance
	Right place	Fit in team Fit in role
<b>Relation with co-worker</b>	Positive	Personal, strong Long-term
	Negative	Inferior Unfamiliar
<b>Success</b>	Happy with results	Finish something successfully
	Great teamwork	Success together
	Valuing	Right fit in team and work
<b>Positive Empathy</b>	Flourishing	Growing Crafting Passion Goals
	Great teamwork	Cooperative Good relations Trust
<b>Benign Envy</b>	Lack of appreciation	Teamwork Expertise
	Job Competition	Participating in competition
<b>Malicious Envy</b>	Job Competition	Replacement role, no say in competition
	Lack of equivalence	Respect in teamwork Job opportunities



# 4 RESULTS

Everyone has their own vision on a successful aim, goal, outcome, or undertaking. However, participants describe the essence of success within an organization as happy with results at work, participating in great teamwork, or being valuable to co-workers and the organization. Employees' interpretation of co-worker's success is seen similar to their own success; great results within winning a job competition, making valuable contributions to the team and/or organization, self-development, and getting more responsibility instead of others.

## 4.1 BUILDING THEORY AND A MODEL

It was clear that the affective experiences and their factors on co-worker's success remained obscure, but could have crucial consequences in the workplace. This study found three significant affective experiences in three organizations: positive empathy, benign envy, and malicious envy. Other emotions did not occur in the CIT-stories of the 34 participants from all organizational levels. It came to light that not only communicative events in meeting co-workers' successes are crucial in the perceiver's experience, but contextual factors are important moderators of the experiences. This chapter will clarify the findings of this study, by presenting different factors of affective experiences in meeting co-worker's success and describe them in detail to build a theory and a model (Figure 2) and will be explained in the following sections.

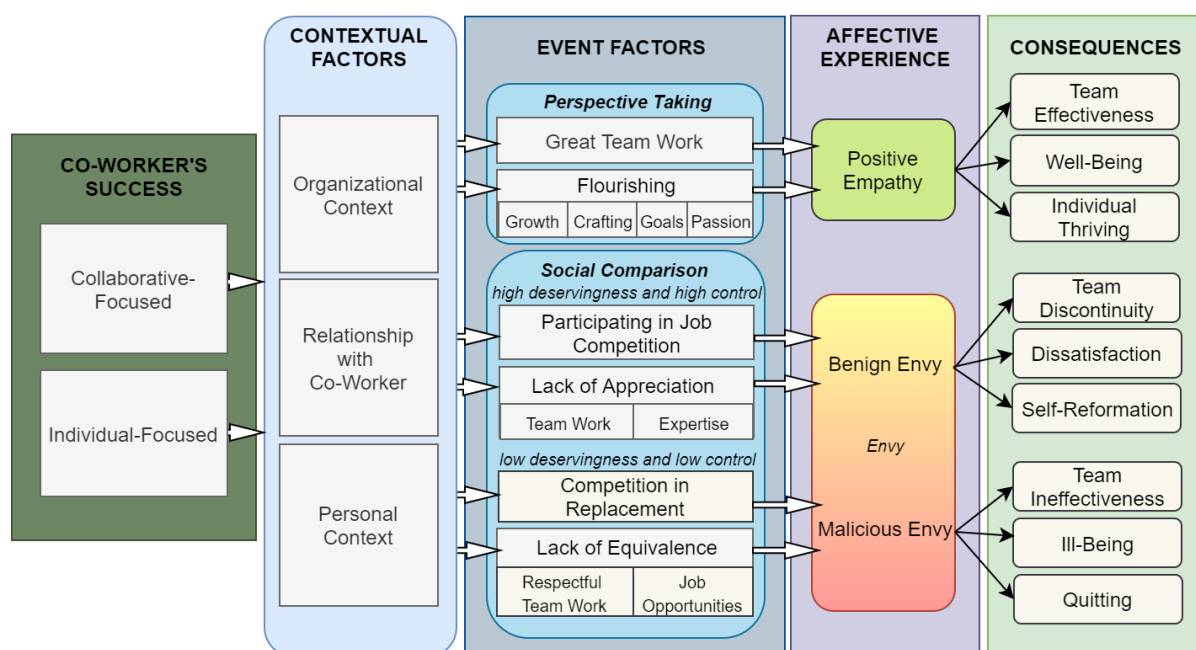


Figure 2 Model factors and consequences affective experiences in meeting co-worker's success



#### 4.2 CO-WORKER'S SUCCESS

What success entails varies from one organization to another and depends on aspects such as management vision and the context of the operation. Different perceptions and motivations to achieve success are created by organizations. Individuals who are primed with an interdependent self-understanding (i.e., viewing the self in terms of relations with others) experience more positive empathy than those who are primed with an independent self-understanding (i.e., viewing the self as autonomous) (Varnum, Shi, Chen, Qiu & Han, 2014). Therefore, motivational behavior in the workplace can be enriched by considering the possibility that the self can be defined in different ways. When the situation encourages the self in individual terms, individual considerations are crucial factors of work motivation. Employees who identify themselves as parts of a collective are more likely to be concerned with the enhancement and success of their group. Consequently, there is no reason to privilege one form of identification over another. The organization embodies an appropriate level of inclusiveness at which identification (or lack of it) should be considered (Ellemers, De Gilder & Haslam, 2004).

**Sales Manager:** *“An organization is about working together, so you have to take the organization to a higher level. Your success should also contribute to the success of the organization.”*

#### 4.3 CONTEXTUAL FACTORS AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCES

Table 3 provides an overview of the contextual factors that were found in meeting co-workers' successes: organizational context, relationship with the co-worker, and personal context.

Table 3 Contextual Factors Affective experiences

Organizational Context	Relation with co-worker	Personal Context
<b>Structure</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Lines of communication</li> <li>- Vision character employees</li> </ul>	<b>Positive</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Personal and strong</li> <li>- Long-term</li> </ul>	<b>Personality</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Insecurity</li> <li>- Ability to reflect and change</li> </ul>
<b>Culture</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Cooperative vs Competitive</li> <li>- Trust</li> </ul>	<b>Negative</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inferior</li> <li>- Unfamiliar</li> </ul>	<b>Job security</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Job assurance in role and organization</li> </ul>
		<b>Right place at work</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Fit in team</li> <li>- Fit in role</li> </ul>

##### 4.3.1 Organizational Context

**Structure, Lines of Communication:** Organizational systems and structures shape employee experience and influence employee perceptions (Sterling & Labianca, 2015). Communication cues play an important role in the growth of satisfaction within an organization. By having informal communication, employees can talk about their problems, attitudes, and whatever they like, which then leads to satisfaction (Kandlousi, Ali & Abdollahi, 2010). If participants experience the organizations' lines of communication to be short and informal, they tend to build better relations and feel more comfortable in their team and organization. The more formality and layers in lines of communication participants experience, the more distanced they feel from their co-workers. Vague, unclear communication structures create negative, unfamiliar/inferior relations that could cause malicious envy:



**Debtor Consultant:** *“If people think something of the situation, they will say so. Have the idea that that is what counts. It is so informal and flat here, walking around in daily clutter. At another organisation where I worked, it was all. I did not feel at home.”*

**Project Manager Products:** *“I can only speak for my department, but there is no envy with us. That means there is respect, it is already an open organization. You can get along well informally. With us, it is so informal that it is easy to talk to each other about behavior. if I notice situations like this (malicious envy), I do a one-on-one chat with someone to reflect, and then it is good.”*

**Structure, Vision employee characteristics:** Participants want leaders to have a clear vision of employee characteristics and manage the process of finding the right person for the team and organization. Leaders set the tone for the culture and need to analyze the developments of beliefs and values, and change them if the conditions call for adjustment. The culture can affect how decisions are made within areas as recruitment and positioning within the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1993). According to participants, a clear vision of employee character demands by the organization can influence the culture and thereby the affective experiences of employees on co-workers’ success. Organizational leaders need to carefully manage the recruitment and the development of team structures:

**Medical Doctor:** *“I think that if you work in a pleasant working environment and you work at a nice department where there is an approachable atmosphere between nurses and specialists, then I think that people feel more comfortable in their work and therefore can be happier for others. I have also heard stories about hospitals where that is not the case, where it is dirty tricks. That they see co-workers as competitors instead of co-workers. I think that that is also very much related to who you hire. A hospital where the atmosphere is pleasant, where they also hire people who fit into the group, where systems are maintained.”*

**Competitive or cooperative culture:** An organization's vision on employee's characters affects other factors as well. If organizational leaders are eager to hire highly competitive employees, this trait will also be a major part of the organizational culture. Organizations often hire people who have similar values to those dominant in the organizational culture (Bass & Avolio, 1993). The Medical Doctor explained the differences between the two hospitals and their cooperative or competitive cultural environment. Hiring highly competitive employees will create a competitive environment, which is a factor in experiencing benign envy and malicious envy (see 4.4). Participants who experience positive empathy describe great teamwork in a cooperative environment as a factor in their positive experience. Creating a cooperative environment with less competition will facilitate positive empathy. For example, leaders could focus on directing and motivating the achievement of cooperative performances instead of individual performance. Organizational reward systems consist of methods through which behaviors are directed and motivated to achieve individual and cooperative performances, including goal setting, evaluating performance, rewards, and communicating feedback (Jansen & Von Glinow, 1985).

The organizational reward system and shared group identity described by Ganegoda and Bordia (2019) are closely related to differences between a cooperative and competitive environment. Reward and appreciation are consistently recognized by organizations as an important element in motivating



individuals to be successful. “Employee of the month”, profit sharing, increased income for higher productivity is widely used (Cacioppe, 1999). However, a co-worker’s success will lead to stronger feelings of envy in exclusively individual-focused reward practices instead of collaborative-focused. A shared group identity shifts an individual’s motivational focus from self-interest to the collective welfare of the group (Brewer & Gardner, 1996), whereby the success of a fellow member of a group is more likely to be viewed positively by other members than when the emphasis is on self-interest.

**Culture of Trust:** Another cultural factor is trust within the organization. Organizations with high levels of trust have, more effective leadership and better cooperation at all levels of the organization (Hitch, 2012). Especially credibility, respect, and fair treatment (regardless of position) are crucial in experiencing trust in organizations (Lyman, 2003). An organization that provides trusted and open connections will make employees feel at home and sustaining positive relations, which is a key ingredient of positive empathy. For example, the Debtor Consultant on the previous page explained that her co-workers can say anything to each other and be truly themselves in their work environment. Employees want to rely on the organization and its employees. Participants indicate that when they cannot take control of their own work and feel a certain unfairness at work, the organization provokes benign envy and even malicious envy:

**HR Business Partner:** *“Many people still want to be in control... before corona, we even discussed whether we should not turn back the policy working from home, because people felt that if you are not visible people cannot control what you are doing.”*

**Quality Officer/Bus Driver:** *“You have people from different groups and we all have different labor agreements. Some things it is better not to say and share with others. For example, breaks in public transport are not paid for. That is not the case with us, I just get all my hours.”*

#### 4.3.2 Relation with a co-worker

Participants indicate that the relationship between the employees is crucial in experiencing positive empathy, benign envy, or malicious envy. According to Ganegoda and Bordia (2019), individuals are much more motivated to take the perspective of those who they like (McPherson Frantz & Janoff-Bulman, 2000), and are also happier for in-group members, compared with out-group members (Cikara, Bruneau, Van Bavel & Saxe, 2014; Molenberghs et al., 2014). A positive relationship is a key ingredient for experiencing positive empathy. These relationships are personal, strong, and/or long-term. The more personal the employees are and work together often, the better the relationship. However, this study does not indicate the differences between in-group and out-group experiences and the differences between smaller and larger workgroups ( Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019):

**ICU Secretary:** *“Someone I am crazier with, or if I get along better with someone, I will react more enthusiastically... and that does not mean that I do not like that for the other person. Then I say congratulations, but that is it. That is not something I take home with me. The feeling is more intense for people I have more contact with.”*



Participants also explained that the relationship is positive when experiencing benign envy. They learned from the envious incident that took place and remains to like the co-worker. Though, if benign envy occurs too much in their experiences, some participants' experiences evolve into malicious envy. Malicious envy is experienced when the relation is negative, unfamiliar, or inferior. Participants who did experience malicious envy are considering to leave or already left the team or organization. For example, a nurse consultant and one former nurse consultant worked at the same department in the same organization and both wished that their co-workers would show more appreciation and see them as equals. It started as a positive relationship between them and their co-workers, though it changed to negative due to feelings of unfairly replaced, lack of appreciation, and eventually lack of equivalence in their team (explained in 4.4). Triangulation occurs in this case:

**SEH Nurse:** *"In this department, I have the feeling that you are getting the job done together. Each from their own profession, from their own expertise. I did not have that feeling at the previous department as a nurse consultant. The relationship with my immediate co-workers was great, but not with the specialists as co-workers. Not the feeling that we have to get the job done together. We have a job and they have a job. Not that it is a job. Maybe it is because I did not meet their standards? I got the feeling from some specialists that they treat me as if I were an assistant-doctor or a nurse specialist, but I was not and I do not want to be. Be what I am."*

**Nurse Consultant:** *"At first, I had something like: yes good these are the modern developments. That is what is going to happen anyway, and give them the space they need. But health care is about money. Because of their diploma, they are allowed to do consulting hours and they are allowed to ask for money for that. So what they do in tasks, what we did before, is now also rewarded in money. That is the difference now, and that is why doctors wanted the nursing specialists to join us. I find it shocking how specialists look at it. They look at it from wow she is a nurse specialist and they do not see the person behind it. And that does give me dissatisfaction in my work and towards the specialists. They see that title nurse specialist, so they know more than you do. Anyhow, that's a development and then it's up to me to leave the clinic. One of us is already gone."*

In this case, the participants think that their co-worker's success is more related to self-interest (money, change in hierarchy, lack of trust, competition) and less on teamwork (cooperative, trust, vision team structures). The difference between the consultants is that one already left the team and the other is still reflecting on her options. The one who is still working as a consultant experiences low control and more unfairness and is therefore still experiencing malicious envy, while the one that left is now more at ease with the events that happened. The consultant that left took control of the event and decided that leaving was her best option to be happy at work again. This brings us to the personal context of an employee, and their ability to reflect and change the situation by mirroring and taking control.

#### 4.3.3 Personal Context

**Personality, Ability to reflect, and change:** To others who do not experience envy, experiencing malicious envy or not has also to do with your ability to reflect on yourself and change. To them, it is your call to reflect and actively change the (affective) situation. Several participants mentioned that you need to be happy with yourself at work before you can be happy for others. In other words, employees



need to be happy with their context. Manager Digital Experiences explained that if you can reflect, you can choose to change the experience of malicious envy into benign envy or you do not experience envy at all. The ICU Nurse explained the same, although he thinks it is important to get an opportunity to develop along with the changes in organizational structures, an element of control in the matter. Additionally, the Sales Manager thinks it has something to do with your personality. If he would have experienced unfairness and no respect in an event, then he might have felt malicious envy too:

**Manager Digital Experience:** *“You can almost always turn this emotion over to the other one (malicious envy to benign envy), not everyone does that actively, unfortunately. By dealing with change.”*

**ICU Nurse:** *“It also has to do with being able to reflect more on yourself. I do see a difference in that, that there are certain groups of people who find it more difficult to reflect on their own process. Or on their own work, concerning the overall process. And I think that is very important. At the moment that a certain process is going to change and you have to adjust your own work process, and if it feels as if something is being taken away and that you have to do something, then it is more difficult for someone to see the final goal. Even more, are you allowed to develop along with it, or that you are allowed to think along with it.”*

**Manager Sales:** *“It is also a piece of personality, this absolutely does not suit me. Well look it gets annoying at a time when someone... things happen because people lie or people manipulate things and no honesty... yes then I would find it annoying. But if that happens in the organization and that is not seen or it is seen not being done... then I start to wonder if that is the right organization for me. I don't want anything to do with that.”*

Taking the stories above and the stories of the Consultants in 4.3.2 in mind, organizations need to be careful in creating a feeling of unfairness and lack of control. Create possibilities to reflect, take employees with you in the development of changing structures, and facilitate trust. However, the personal context of an employee is of influence in this matter as well. There is a thin line between the ability to reflect and change yourself, and the organization facilitating the growth of employees and trust in changing structures. Both have a share in this matter and the key is to complement each other. If not, malicious envy will rise due to a lack of control and the feeling of unfairness.

**Right place at work:** However, coping with changes and reflectivity is hard when you already did found your right place at work. Participants describe the importance of the right fit in a team and a role. A satisfying role is important, wherein they are the expert and valued by their team members. They want to feel like they belong in the group and culture and expect leaders to facilitate these opportunities. Leaders can affect how decisions are made within areas as recruitment and positioning within the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1993). Maintaining ties with the right people with the right resources can affect individual outcomes such as performance, organizational integration, and job satisfaction (Balkundi, & Harrison, 2006; Flap & Völker, 2001; Morrison, 2002):

**Online Content Specialist:** *“If someone feels happy in the role they have or what they have achieved. That also means indirectly a compliment for him and the team. I think that contributes something to the whole team.”*



**ServiceDesk Employee:** *“We are all super important. We feel more dignified than inferior haha. And that is what the director says. It starts with you.”*

**Personality, Insecurity:** Individuals tend to respond to specific events in ways that are largely coherent with their affective predispositions (Cropanzano et al., 1993). As this study aims to assess employees’ affective experiences in meeting co-workers’ successes through critical incident stories, the focus is specifically on employees’ episodic feelings in the workplace and not on long-term trait affective predispositions. However, participants indicate that insecurity in their personality influences their experiences at work. Some participants tend to be insecure in, for example, their expertise in a competitive environment, where you have to prove yourself over and over. This could be related to the competitive culture in the organization and another crucial factor: job security.

**Job security:** Participants indicate that job security is a crucial factor in not experiencing envy. Job insecurity refers to subjective dangers to an employee’s work status. The danger is usually derived from an employee’s perception of objective danger. As a result, job insecurity affects employee attitudes and behaviors (Hur & Perry, 2020). Some participants explained that one of the reasons they experience envy is because they do not have a secure job and/or role in the organization. Others who do not experience envy also think job security is a part of their happiness at work, and therefore they can experience positive empathy:

**Medical Doctor:** *“The stupid thing is, if you are already in training, that someone achieves your goal after you then you can be happy about that. That is the way I feel about it: at least I am safe. Maybe for your own goal, for your own positive empathy, if you are indeed hired and the other one after you, that you first have to have your own happiness in order. It is a relief for me when you are in training. That you do not have to worry anymore to get in training and then you can focus on your own development.”*

**Taxi Driver:** *“You have to have fun, but security is important in these times. I have been lucky that I have never been out of work. I have always had work. I have never had to fear a contract or anything. That might make a difference.”*

#### 4.4 EVENT FACTORS AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCES

Organizational context, relationships, and personal context are crucial contextual factors that influence the affective experiences in meeting co-worker’s success as moderators. Besides contextual factors, event factors are specific, critical accounts of important communicative occurrences in meeting co-workers’ successes. Event factors focus on the meaning people attach to the critical behaviors, leading to the different affective experiences of positive empathy, benign envy, and malicious envy. The event factors are explained by an outline per situation and an example of the communicative occurrences from the interviews (Table 4, page 31-33).



Table 4 Incidental Factors within the three Affective experiences

Benign Envy Factors	Situation outline	Example incident
<b>Lack of appreciation</b>	Participants indicate they feel benign envy when the successful co-worker shows a lack of appreciation in expertise or teamwork. Employees want to feel valued and be respected in their work together. They do experience the relationship positively and see this as a learning opportunity by taking control. They do think the co-worker deserves success. Additionally, individuals pursue goals because of recognition by important others (Ryan & Deci, 2000).	
- In teamwork	Participants indicate that they experience benign envy when there is a shortcoming of involvement in teamwork. They feel a lack of appreciation in the teamwork with their co-worker by being their underdog because the successful co-worker does not make enough time or provides not enough time to work together.	<i>"The way you worked together as before is different now that he has a different function. It was together and he has a different role now. He got that other role then and there is another structure. There is a different work relationship now, less time and then it comes under tension. You started something together but now you cannot finish it together."</i>
- In expertise	Benign envy rises when there is a feeling of lack of appreciation in expertise by a successful co-worker. In all cases, the successful co-worker is higher in the hierarchy. A co-worker who has more power in the relationship and gives the employee the feeling that he/she is not appreciated in their expertise within decision processes. The employee who experiences benign envy feels that he/she is not trusted in expertise and is not seen or heard enough by a successful co-worker.	<i>"At first everyone looked at me because I am the oldest. I had done that before and I did not like it and was not very good at it, so now my colleague is the person with the final responsibility. So the agreement was I will be your right hand. And yet at the moment that... we implemented a code that was my project, we implemented it and it was very successful. But he has the exposure for that with the directors. It also makes sense, because he's the one who presents it, but still, I think it is shit. I can learn from that, how he does that. Not that I begrudge him, but more that I would like to be able to do it. I should say more often, look at what I have accomplished with these people. I also know that his intentions are not wrong, but it bothers me sometimes. However, from him, I can accept it. He has consulted well with me about the career path and the organization of the team. We do it together, but it is also how other people react to that, right? At first, the general manager thought I was going to do it, to be the person with final responsibility. Then I said no and then it feels like you are becoming less full because you're choosing a different path than most people in the company would choose. If you do not have final responsibility, people do not assume that success is because of you. Then they automatically think that the person with final responsibility arranges everything."</i>
<b>Job competition</b>	One employee's success in a performance domain that is relevant to another's self-definition, is likely to trigger feelings of envy (Salovey & Rodin, 1984). Participants indicate that when there is job competition with another co-worker, employees tend to feel benign envy. Benign envy rises when employees are insecure about career prospects and job security, by entering a job competition with a co-worker who has the potential to win. The employees feel pressure to prove themselves, but with the motivation to learn from the successful co-worker. The relationship between the employee and the successful co-worker is positive.	<i>"If you have just started as a medical doctor and there is a medical doctor who has been working for a year who has been hired for the program, then I do experience benign envy because this is actually what I want. It does motivate me to do my best for the rest of the year because then I think yes, right now I am not at that point to apply, but I do know I have it in me. However, you have a job and you have income and some see you as a doctor so basically, you are already there, but you do not feel that way. You still have 5/6 years of education ahead of you. You still have to secure your place. Suppose you had no specialists but only medical doctors, then you just want to become good at what you do now. Your task is clear, you make sure you do your job well and have nice co-workers around you, but that is not yet the case. You still have a long way to go. If I know that someone who is going to be in training, with whom you have built up a good relationship and who you also found sympathetic, of course, then you will be happy if they are hired for the training they want."</i>

\*Table goes on next page\*



Malicious Envy Factors	Situation outline	Example incident
<b>Competition Replacement in role</b>	Employees experience malicious envy in cases where they are replaced by a successful co-worker and without having control in the situation. The role division in the team is experienced as unclear/unfair. Their job/role is not secure anymore. A co-worker's success will lead to stronger feelings of envy in exclusively individual-focused reward practices instead of collaborative-focused in goal setting, evaluating performance, rewards, and communicating feedback (Jansen & Von Glinow, 1985).	<i>"These are new developments in health care that bother me. The hierarchy has been changed lately and we cannot do the same job anymore. We should not see it that way they say, but they take over tasks from... things we did as nurse consultants before the new jobs came. I find that difficult because I have that knowledge and I have done the work before... Because of their diploma, they are allowed to do consulting hours and they are allowed to ask for money for that. So what they do in tasks, what we did before, is now also rewarded in money. That is the difference now, and that is why specialists wanted these extra jobs and people to join us. I sometimes find that a skewed growth and that bothers me. They earn more for the same job."</i>
<b>Lack of equivalence</b>	Envy lowers one's organization-based self-esteem, characterized as an employee's perception of adequacy and worthiness within an organization (Gardner & Pierce, 1998). Participants indicate that they feel malicious envy when the successful co-worker shows a lack of equivalence in job opportunities and respectful teamwork. Employees need an equal, collegial relationship with the co-worker. They experience unfairness and a lack of control.	
- In job opportunities	Participants feel malicious when they experience a lack of equivalence in opportunities at work. The successful co-worker(s) has/have in their eyes an unfair advantage in job opportunities.	<i>"Yeah, sometimes you do not have a good connection with someone or somebody who does his/her work badly, and that person gets hired for training anyway. That is where I can really feel this. Why you because I work hard too. I do things besides my job as well. And if that is a person you think... you just know people or you have somehow managed to get things done, then sometimes I can lose faith in the system. These are people whose parents can get them a job somewhere. Do not underestimate that. A phone call or reference is easily done. And unfortunately, that is how it works. Whose father is still old study buddies with the trainer, then that is a phone call that can have a lot of consequences."</i>
- In respectful Teamwork	Malicious envy rises when a successful co-worker does not acknowledge equivalence as in respectful relations. When a successful co-worker is not collegial/appreciative repeatedly and treats the team in a bad way (criticizing work or lying), employees start to feel malicious envy. They feel a lack of equivalence as human beings and are undervalued in the team. They expect more respect and great teamwork.	<i>"Someone said she set up that test team over the weekend, while the person did not do that at all. At that time she was not as strong in her job, within the corona period, so in that time she has shifted back a bit and some people moved forward. She attributed things to herself while she was not involved at all. If my other co-worker is successful and I know that she does this consciously to profile herself and at the expense of others, then I have feelings of hostility."</i>
Positive empathy Factors	Situation outline	Example incident
<b>Flourishing</b>	Positive empathy contributes by assisting others to increase their positive emotions and approach growth and development (Andreychik & Lewis, 2017). Participants also indicate they feel positive empathy when a successful co-worker is developing in their work and bring positive social functioning in different ways; growing in their job, job crafting, passion, or/and achieving personal goals. The relationship with the co-worker is positive and personal.	
- Passion in work	Positive empathy is experienced by employees when a successful co-worker is fully committed to their job, team, and the organization, wherein they are really passionate about the organization and its employees.	<i>"Yes for the general manager I am happy. He does it with a lot of passion. And all the knobs he is turning are successful this year. All the changes that have been set in motion, a new way of working and organizational structure, are now all falling into place. That is also a success that I really want him to have. You can tell by looking at him that it is really something emotional to him."</i>

\*Table goes on next page\*



- <i>Growth in job</i>	Participants experience positive empathy when a successful co-worker learns, improves, or grows in their job.	<i>"When I came here, she had just started on payroll and that was all new to her. I do notice in the year that things are going easier for her, that things are going faster and that calms her down. She was always tense at first because it is an important thing. Supplying a row of data every month, but you have to ensure that the hours are right, the salaries, the names. She thought it was very exciting, but I think it easier for her now and that gives me a good feeling for her, of being able to do that now and learn."</i>
- <i>Job crafting</i>	Participants indicate the feel positive empathy when co-workers crafts their jobs and take new opportunities to modify their job and interactions with others at work.	<i>"Another co-worker has been working on *name school*.. after that, he was very different in his presentation. If we have a training day he is now the chairman. He has to present all that, and he is doing a great job! When I look at myself I like direct patient care the most. I do not have to be in all those workgroups, let me take care of the patient, I really like that. Others do that for a few years and then they want a little more. They can indulge themselves in these workgroups. That way everyone has their own thing they like and can grow. I do admire that."</i>
- <i>personal goals achieved</i>	Positive empathy is experienced when a successful co-worker works really hard to finish a personal work goal and achieves it. A goal that makes the successful co-worker flourish in work life and the goal is a benefit for themselves and the organization.	<i>"In the financial world, we have a profit and loss account, turnover cost and you have an operational cost: the wage costs. And at the bottom of the line, you hope that a nice black number will appear, in other words, a profit. Red is a loss. We do not even have that in our system. It has to do with converting an old system to a new one. So I indicated: well I would like to know where I stand per country. And I actually want to have it in a way that you see it clearly, a balance sheet and the profit and loss account. Somebody has been working on that, together with me. His project was over and then he left right away. Then we find out it was still not quite right, and I did ask a co-worker: can you solve that for me it is your goal. Tune in and get it right. He did that and helped me to prepare what I really needed. I think that is great, and now all the countries are using this system. It has had so much impact."</i>
<b>Great teamwork</b>	Positive empathy for a successful co-worker when they nurture great teamwork and are committed to the improvement and goals of the team. They value the team, have personal relations, and are very cooperative. By fostering cooperation, interpersonal relationships, and cohesiveness, team effectiveness is created. Team effectiveness is the team's performance and its ability to sustain its membership and existence (Bell & Marentette, 2011).	<i>"My co-worker who provides training had three people who had no experience as a professional driver and he explained and learned them everything in 1.5 days. There are other systems in there. On-board computers, so they have to understand several systems, learn the routes. He then explains this very calmly and is very busy with it, but he is always available for questions in the first period. Recently there were a few who found it very difficult and then 3 weeks later they are independent, then I think yes, how nice for him. Well done."</i>

#### 4.4.1 Social comparison

The similarity to a target has been found to accentuate the experience of envy. Nevertheless, there are two ways to interpret similarity. The findings of this study agree with the subjective concept of similarity; Similarity that has been theorized in terms of work experience, work attitudes, personality, and opinions (Schaubroeck & Lam, 2004). From this perspective, the similarity is rooted in the perceiver's evaluations of a social target, relatable to the organizational, relational, and personal context of the participant. Outcomes of this study disagree with the objective similarity of structural equivalence. Ganegoda and Bordia (2019) stated that equivalent co-workers hold positions at the same level in an organizational hierarchy and are often substitutable and in competition, wherein they use each other as a basis for social comparison (Smith et al., 1999). Though envy may appear in employees' experiences with successful co-workers on the same level in the hierarchy, structural equivalence is not one of the crucial factors that facilitates envy. In fact, this study found the opposite; Lack of equivalence facilitates malicious envy.



#### 4.4.2 *Being trusted as a valuable member*

Lack of equivalence is noted as a crucial factor in experiencing malicious envy or not. Interesting is that lack of equivalence is relatable to lack of appreciation (benign envy) and flourishing (positive empathy). All three factors apply to the level of being trusted as a valuable team member in the interactions with the co-worker. Envy lowers one's organization-based self-esteem, characterized as an employee's perception of adequacy and worthiness within an organization (Gardner & Pierce, 1998). This feeling is formed, maintained, and changed in part based on interpretations of external cues from the work environment (Duffy, Shaw & Schaubroeck, 2008). When participants experience positive empathy and no envy at all, they experience great balance and acceptance between flourishing on their own and great teamwork. In other words, the degree of task interdependence between employees, wherein the extent to which they interact and rely on each other is determinant (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019).

#### 4.4.3 *Perspective taking*

A competitive environment that is focused on self-interest, could be related to the lack of individuals' perspective-taking ability. As discussed before, Varnum et al. (2014) found that individuals who were viewing the self in terms of relations with others experienced more positive empathy than those who were viewing the self as autonomous. Close cooperation and interaction among co-workers increase their perspective-taking capacity (Parker and Axtell, 2001). Participants indicate that positive empathy is experienced stronger when they have a good relationship with the co-worker and often work as a team with them. Group membership and a good relationship are other aspects that contribute to perspective-taking (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). Individuals are better able to assume the perspective of in-group members and those who are similar to them than that of out-group members (Adams et al., 2010). Working often together in the same team is experienced by participants as being part of the same group.

#### 4.4.4 *Great teamwork or in competition*

Like a thread through the interaction of the employee and the co-worker is the way they work together; does the participant think the co-worker's success is great teamwork or are they in competition? Participants also explained that they do not experience envy at all due to the focus on the collective welfare of the group, informal communication, and job security. When the contextual factors fall into place positively and the co-worker facilitates great teamwork, positive empathy rises. However, one employee's success in a performance domain that is relevant to another's self-definition, is likely to trigger feelings of envy (Salovey & Rodin, 1984)(Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). Participants indicate they feel envy when they are participating in a competition or when they feel replaced and experience that they do not have a say in the competition. The contextual and incidental factors influence the way envy is experienced; either benign or malicious.

### 4.5 MODERATORS BENIGN ENVY AND MALICIOUS ENVY

As you may notice, the concepts of unfairness and control are appearing repeatedly within the contextual and event factors. Unfairness and control are the moderators of experiencing benign or malicious envy.



Determining whether an employee experiences benign or malicious envy is the extent to which he or she perceives the successful outcome to be fair. Ganegoda and Bordia (2019) refer to distributive justice, which is the extent to which a decision outcome is perceived as conforming to such implicit norms of allocation as equity, equality, or need (Colquitt, 2001). Individuals often experience moral outrage when they perceive a violation of these norms. If the envied co-worker's success is found to be deserving, benign envy results. If success is found to be undeserving, malicious envy arises (Andiappan & Dufour, 2020). Although the employee may have originally experienced benign envy towards a co-worker, due to unfair conditions discovered, it will enable benign envy to turn malicious.

The second moderator is the extent to which a perceiver considers a social target's success to be within the former's power to achieve (Smith & Kim, 2007). The ill will inherent in malicious envy is often attributed to a sense of frustration arising from a perceiver's belief that the advantage enjoyed by a target is unattainable (e.g., Elster, 1998). Conversely, when the advantage does seem to be attainable by the perceiver, the latter tends to feel motivated to improve (i.e., benign envy). An example of the Medical Doctor speaking about becoming a specialist in training:

**Medical Doctor, Malicious Envy:** *"Yeah, sometimes you do not have a good connection or somebody who works really bad, who gets hired for training anyway. That is where I can really feel the feelings of the first one (malicious envy). Why you and not I? Because I work hard too. I do extra things besides work. And if that is a person... just know people or somehow managed to get things done, then sometimes I can lose faith in the system. These are people whose parents are also often doctors. Do not underestimate that. A phone call or reference is easily done. And unfortunately, that is how it works. Whose father is still old study buddies with the trainer, then that is a phone call that can have a lot of consequences, then you are going to begrudge that."*

**Medical Doctor, Benign envy:** *"If you have just started as an assistant doctor and you have just been working for a few months and there is someone who has been working for a year who has been hired, then I do experience envy. Because this is actually what I want, but it does motivate me to do my best for the rest of the year because then I think yes, I'm not at that point to apply, but I do know I have it in me. We talk about being in training all the time, but that is one side of the story. You can always... if you just have a nice co-worker, who is passionate about work and who achieves that success... whether you are in training or not, you can be happy for them. I think it is the first (malicious envy) when something is squeezing."*

#### 4.6 CONSEQUENCES AFFECTIVE EXPERIENCES

CIT allows the researcher to study through explorative interviews what the incident is about, why it is perceived to be significant, and what its perceived consequences are (Cassell & Symon, 2004). Therefore, the perceived consequences of organizations will be explained per affective experience.

##### 4.6.1 Consequences positive empathy

This study states that positive empathy has a significant effect on well-being at work and organizational consequences such as team effectiveness, and individual productivity. In contrast with malicious envy, positive empathy has been proven to increase individual well-being. The experience of positive empathy arouses the emotional experience of happiness, which is in itself a desirable outcome for an individual



(Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). Participants indicate that when they experience happiness at work, they enjoy going to the organization and it feels like being at home. Additionally, when individuals experiencing a positive emotion, people are unlikely to be experiencing a negative emotion at the same event (Smith & Kim, 2007). The many benefits of positive affect in the workplace include improved job satisfaction as well as informal environments that contribute to an overall sense of well-being (Sonnentag & Grant, 2012).

Positive empathy increases team effectiveness by fostering cooperation, interpersonal relationships, and cohesiveness. Team effectiveness is a construct including a team's performance and sustainability, its ability to sustain its membership and existence (Bell & Marentette, 2011). Contextual components are extensive maintenance activities as ensuring clarity concerning a team's vision, mission, and goals, specific task-related activities as monitoring progress, cooperation, and coordination, and the third component involves interpersonal relations including conflict and affect management. All three are tightly interrelated with one another and with team effectiveness (LePine, Piccolo, Jackson, Mathieu, & Saul, 2008). These components are similar to the contextual factors of this study and are comparable to the environments where employees did not experience envy at all. The teams performed well together and sustain long, personal relations with their co-workers and organization. Mastery in dynamic work relationships will be the distinguishing feature of organizations (Smith & Senge, 2011).

However, positive empathy not only facilitates collaboration but enables a balance between team effectiveness and individual thriving. In these environments, personal growth is aligned with teamwork. Individual thriving is seen as an advantage for the team and organization and the focus lies on being valuable to the group and less on the self. Spreitzer, Sutcliffe, Dutton, Sonenshein, and Grant (2005) describe thriving as a psychological state in which individuals experience both positive energy and a sense of applying knowledge and skills. Facilitating positive empathy makes room to thrive and, thereby, contribute to health, performance, and well-being (Spreitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007).

#### 4.6.2 Consequences benign envy

Benign envy is characterized by seeking success for oneself (van de Ven, 2016). Crusius and Lange (2014) explain that an individual's experience of benign envy can direct his or her attention toward performance improvement. Benign envy is similarly related to hope for success as opposed to fear of failure. In this study, benign envy is found in similar incidents: participating in a competition (hope for success) and lack of appreciation (fear of failure). Given the relatively positive effects of benign envy within self-reformation, organizational scholars have supported creating situations in which employees feel benign envy rather than malicious envy (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). However, while self-reformation by benign envy can be motivated to benefit organizations, positive empathy can be more beneficial in terms of collaboration and well-being. Participants indicate that even though they learn from the experience of benign envy, they experience dissatisfaction in their work and disengagement with team members. Employee disengagement is harmful to the organization and individuals.



Disengagement also appears to be maximized under conditions of poor leadership and when levels of trust between managers and subordinates are low (Pech & Slade, 2006).

#### 4.6.3 *Consequences malicious envy*

The damaging effects of malicious envy on individual well-being have been well known in the literature (Smith & Kim, 2007). This kind of envy is defined by feelings of shortcomings, inferiority, deprivation, and ill will (Schaubroeck & Lam, 2004) and is positively related to depressive moods and other negative emotions, including hostility, depression, and resentment (Smith & Kim, 2007). Participants that experience malicious envy indicate that they are considering resigning or already started the process or want to stop interacting with the co-worker. These feelings cause team ineffectiveness by bad relations, impact team effectiveness negatively by increasing conflict, and reducing trust and cohesion (Duffy & Shaw, 2000; Kim & Glomb, 2014). Empirical research has indeed shown envy to be negatively related to team cohesion, potency, performance, and satisfaction (Duffy & Shaw, 2000; Thompson, Glasø & Martinsen, 2015). Consequently, the hostility inherent in malicious envy has been shown to lead individuals to undermine the reputations and performance of their targets by quitting the team or communication and cooperation. In contrast with the findings of Cohen-Charash (2009) and Smith & Kim (2007), who stated that individuals undermine the reputation of a successful co-worker, participants indicate that they felt malicious envy because their co-worker was engaged in deviant actions such as providing misleading information and therefore the co-worker achieved success unfairly.

#### 4.7 PARTICIPATING ORGANIZATIONS

The nature of many work environments places challenges on employees, which often increases the range and intensity of emotions invested in work relations (Patient, Lawrence & Maitlis, 2003). The effectiveness of the organization depends on knowing and anticipating employees' experiences and perspectives (Zwijze-Koning, 2016). Employees experience their environment within organizations very differently. In all three organizations, some employees could not be happier with their environment, and some employees were really unhappy and hoping for change. Consequently, there are great differences in experiencing co-worker's success at work. Every employee has their own perspective on their organizational context, personal context, and relations at work, therefore the confrontation with co-worker's success results in different affective experiences of positive empathy, benign envy, or malicious envy. This study presents differences between the organizations and their statistics in experiencing envy and positive empathy (Figure 3, page 38). Participants can experience both envy and positive empathy, although not in the same event. Every participant experienced positive empathy in their organization.



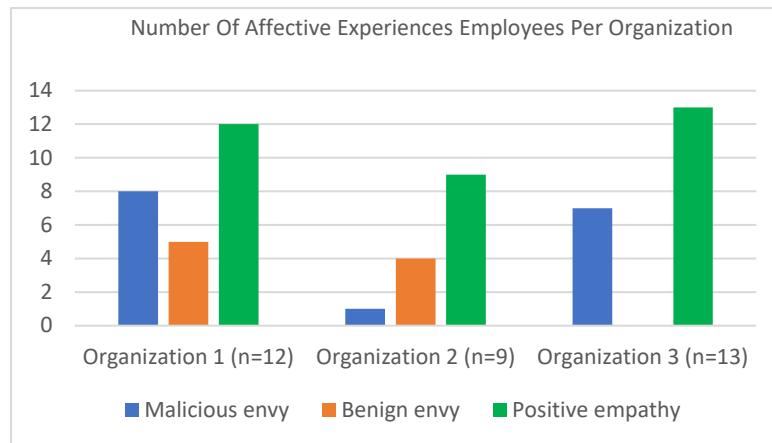


Figure 3 Number of employees experiencing benign envy, malicious envy, positive empathy

**Organization 1, Health Care:** Organization one is a health care organization with many organizational layers, and a variety of departments and specialisms that generally function as autonomous organizations (Hulshof et al., 2012). Department managers coordinate their own communication, job opportunities, and team structures, therefore the experiences within the organization are very different. For example, both Nurse Consultants in 4.3.2 were experiencing envy in their department, while employees in the ICU did not experience envy in success at all. Health Care is a very competitive environment with lots of job opportunities and competition. Especially doctors are expected to be extremely competitive. However, when participants compare this hospital to others, they think a competitive culture here is less than elsewhere and more friendly. Recently, new functions are developed to meet the demand and costs, resulting in several job changes. Some diplomas are now less worth than before, creating competition, lack of appreciation, distrust in the organization, and lack of equivalence. Overall, employees think it is a pleasant organization to work in. The positive relations they have are very personal, and often long-term.

**ICU Nurse:** “Everyone remains the same nurse. Only everyone has their own tasks. Extra duties. There is nothing wrong with that or anything.”

**ICU Secretary:** “Equivalence, that is definitely in our department. I do not have the idea, not even with the intensivists or with my boss, that I have to deal with them differently.”

**Organization 2, Products:** The second organization is smaller than the other two. The lines of communication are very short and several employees know everyone by name. HR is focused on a culture program to structure teams well and try to find the right fit for employees in teams and roles. Most employees are very happy to work here and are very cooperative and supportive of each other. The organization is doing very well, thereby creating almost too many opportunities to flourish. On the next page in Figure 4, it is evident that within organization two less envy is experienced. This could be because they perform better in the contextual factors of this study. However, the lines of communication with the directors are long and old-fashioned and little communication between production and office is



facilitated. This is a point of attention because the difference between production and office causes a lack of equivalence since they work in different buildings and work very separately. Employees experience too much control and distrust in expertise and teamwork from directors, therefore they feel a lack of appreciation in expertise.

**Manager Digital Experience:** *“I sometimes think of... I wish I was in a position where people actually listened to my advice. That they can really trust me that I am the expert in this field.”*

**Category Manager:** *“Do not think that you have to do things better or that you can do things better yourself. It is just fine, that person thinks it's his thing, he has the most knowledge and we do not hire stupid people. You just have to trust them and be happy for them.”*

**Organization 3, Service:** The interviews in organization three (service) were conducted a year after a merger with another service organization. Employees who merged in the participating service organization distrusted the arrangements of their new labor agreements, felt like they did not fit in (yet), and experienced a lack of equivalence towards employees who already worked in the service organization. It is a flat organization with no management positions and, consequently, the organization offers fewer job competitions to participate in. This is perhaps the reason that participants do not experience benign envy. However, there is competition in remaining to stay in their current jobs. Due to the corona crisis and new developments in their field, the service work had become insecure and they could be easily replaced or fired via reorganization. Additionally, the organization has almost no communication lines between the employees, and most jobs are very independent. There is a big difference between the experiences of employees who are not much in the office and the employees with office jobs. The office employees do not experience envy at all and are close. They are cooperative and flourish in their role and team. In contrast, several taxi drivers do not have personal connections.

**Taxi Driver:** *“I just miss personal contact here... I would like that to be different.”*

**Service Desk Employee:** *“I get along very well with them. That is wonderful.”*



Figure 4 The experience of envy and the absence of envy in three organizations



# 5

## DISCUSSION

This study developed both model and theory-building to explain employees' responses to their co-workers' successes. Consequently, establishing the concept of positive empathy as an alternative emotion to benign envy and malicious envy. In this chapter, significant implications for management research and practice will be discussed.

### 5.1 THEORETICAL IMPLICATIONS

Organizational communication in today's organizations has not only become far more complex and varied but more important to overall organizational functioning and success. While research used to focus on understanding how organizational communication varied by organizational type and structure, the emphasis has increasingly turned to understand employees' experiences and their relations; to create the emotional heart of the organization (Weymes, 2002). Within this study, there is no doubt that emotions exist in the workplace and it is clear that emotions matter. Answering the call to need a better understanding of emotional communications by employees when they are more strictly related to other organizational circumstances (Keyton, 2017).

One of the main contributions of this study is the integration of potential intervening variables and moderators that give direction to the complex paths of affective experiences in meeting co-worker's success. By establishing a single model and theory, this study was able to bring together the experience of malicious envy, benign envy, and positive empathy to provide an understanding of how they affect organizations, work relations, and employees. It has helped to explain when and why employees react to a given emotion and its organizational consequences. Consequently, the focus of success, contextual factors, and event factors clarify the pathways of affective experience in meeting co-worker's success.

#### 5.1.1 *Emotions in the workplace*

This study addressed a longstanding asymmetry in the organizational literature, namely the singular focus on envy as employees' primary response to their co-workers' positive experiences. According to Brooks et al. (2019), co-workers often feel malicious envy, a destructive interpersonal emotion, when successful employees display their success. In contrast to their findings, this study found that positive empathy is also often experienced in meeting co-worker's success. By stating positive empathy as an alternative response to envy, this study has expanded the current parameters for understanding employees' reactions to co-workers' success by being the first empirical study that examined the workplace affective experiences. Our findings provide a valuable contribution to a better theoretical understanding of the phenomenon of positive empathy in the workplace, stating that positive empathy has a significant effect on individual well-being, interpersonal relationships, and organizational consequences. Employees feel the need to be trusted, valuable members of their organizations.



### 5.1.2 Individual performance

While envy discourages individuals from starting new projects and thriving (Kirkwood, 2007) and harms team efficiency, no empirical research has examined how positive empathy can improve team performance, interpersonal relationships, and individual thriving and well-being at work. When individuals' attempts to grow and succeed have been impeded by envy, they, in contrast, put in the greater effort when others cheer at their success. Research has indicated that individuals pursue goals because of extrinsic rewards, including recognition by important others (Ryan & Deci, 2000). Consequently, positive empathy could serve as an extrinsic driving force for employees to achieve personal and organizational goals. While improvements in individual performance that benefit organizations can be motivated by benign envy, positive empathy can be more beneficial in terms of collaboration, well-being, and individual accomplishments.

### 5.1.3 Work relations

Ferris et al., (2009) and Ganegoda & Bordia (2019) have called for more research on factors affecting the quality and formation of workplace relationships since work teams and individual performance in teams have important implications for organizational performance (De Dreu & Weingart, 2003). By taking into account both positive and negative affective experiences and examining the affecting factors, this study has provided a basis for further examination into the nature and roles of interpersonal relationships in organizations. Individuals are indeed much more motivated to take the perspective of those who they like (McPherson Frantz & Janoff-Bulman, 2000) and have a connection with, in which positive empathy exerts a positive influence on employees' relationship quality overall by facilitating wellbeing and teamwork, particularly in the context of increasing cooperation and cohesion.

Employees who identify themselves as parts of a collective are more likely to be concerned with the enhancement and success of their group and increases team effectiveness. Consequently, there is no reason to privilege one form of identification over another (Ellemers, De Gilder & Haslam, 2004), and the possibility of the feeling of envy appearing will decrease due to the focus on the welfare of the group instead of self-interest. Therefore, the findings conclude the suggestions of Andreychik & Lewis (2017), the experience of positive empathy, connecting with others' positive emotions such as success, improves the quality of professional life and interpersonal relations at work. Positive empathy not only facilitates collaboration but enables a balance between team effectiveness and individual thriving.

### 5.1.4 Organizational constructions

Sterling and Labianca (2015) noted that the organizational systems and structures shape employee experience and influence employee perceptions. The consequences of envy and positive empathy have been researched before, but not concerning the organizational factors and consequences of positive empathy. Another contribution of this study is introducing several organizational factors that influence the affective experiences in meeting co-worker's success. Additionally, it was examined that the



organizational environments where employees did not experience envy at all were focused on the collective welfare of the group, managed informal communication, and provided job security.

Ganegoda & Bordia (2019) proposed three organizational contextual factors that trigger social comparison and thereby envy: organizational reward systems, leadership-member exchange quality (LMX), and group size. Even though reward systems are part of this study, the results presented us with additional and other organizational factors than group size and LMX. While the organizational circumstances were discussed, participants did not indicate group size as a factor in their experience. This study focuses on the relations between co-workers from different levels, but it could be the case that some higher-ranked leaders are not seen as direct co-workers. Furthermore, LMX has been criticized for limiting the focus to the vertical dyad and leaving horizontal and network relations aside (Hamrin, Johansson & Jahn, 2016), which are key in collaborative-focused cultures or equivalent relationships.

The findings of this study specified reward systems as an element of other factors found in the field: a culture of competition or cooperation and vision of leaders on employee characteristics. Leaders direct and motivate behaviors to achieve individual and cooperative performances and set the tone for the culture. The culture can affect how decisions are made within areas as recruitment (Bass & Avolio, 1993). If organizational leaders are eager to sustain a competitive culture and hire highly competitive employees, consequently, this will affect the reward systems as well. A co-worker's success will lead to stronger feelings of envy in a competitive individual-focused culture instead of collaborative-focused.

Ganegoda and Bordia (2019) stated that equivalent co-workers hold positions at the same level in an organizational hierarchy and are often substitutable and in competition, wherein they use each other as a basis for social comparison (Smith et al., 1999). However, the outcomes of this study differ from the objective similarity of structural equivalence. Though envy may appear in employees' experiences with successful co-workers on the same level in the hierarchy, structural equivalence is not one of the crucial factors that facilitates envy. In fact, this study found the opposite; Lack of equivalence facilitates malicious envy. In contrast with the findings of Cohen-Charash (2009) and Smith & Kim (2007), participants indicate that they felt malicious envy because their co-worker was engaged in deviant actions such as providing misleading information and therefore the co-worker achieved success unfairly. Employees' undermining is a reaction to experiencing deviant behavior of the co-worker or the unfairness act of the organization.

## 5.2 PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

It has been shown that feelings of either envy or positive empathy in others can provoke employees to behave in very different ways. The effectiveness of the organization depends on knowing and anticipating employees' experiences and perspectives (Zwijze-Koning, 2016). To ensure an environment where everyone can thrive and work together most efficiently, managers need to understand envy and positive empathy and the circumstances that nurture and prevent these different affective experiences. This study maps the different paths of affective experiences in meeting co-



worker's success, concluding that organizations can influence the affective experience by improvements on the organizational level, relational level, and personal level of employees.

#### *5.2.1 Organizational level*

There are various steps that organizations can take to manage envy in the workplace. At first, they can avoid reward systems that are focused exclusively on individuals. The main focus should be cooperation instead of competition. A competitive environment that is focused on self-interest, could be related to the lack of individuals' perspective-taking ability. Individuals who were primed to view the self in terms of relations with others experienced more positive empathy than those who were primed with viewing the self as autonomous (Varnum et al., 2014). Close cooperation and interaction among co-workers increase their perspective-taking capacity (Parker and Axtell, 2001) and therefore positive empathy, resulting in team effectiveness. Organizations can create a cooperative environment where employees are trained to view the self in terms of relations with others and create a shared-group identity to shift an individual's motivational focus from self-interest to the collective welfare of the group (Brewer & Gardner, 1996).

Second, organizations must strive for a culture of trust, equivalence, and appreciation. Outcomes of envy are employee disengagement and team ineffectiveness, which are both harmful to the organization and individuals. Disengagement also appears to be maximized under conditions of poor leadership (Pech & Slade, 2006) and reduces trust and cohesion (Duffy & Shaw, 2000; Kim & Glomb, 2014). Envy lowers one's organization-based self-esteem, characterized as an employee's perception of adequacy and worthiness within an organization (Gardner & Pierce, 1998). This feeling is formed, maintained, and changed in part based on interpretations of external cues from the work environment (Duffy, Shaw & Schaubroeck, 2008). Organizations need to foster trusting and open connections that will make employees feel valued and need to sustain positive relations, which are all key ingredients of positive empathy. Organizations with high levels of trust have, more effective leadership and better cooperation at all levels of the organization (Hitch, 2012). Especially credibility, respect, and fair treatment (regardless of position) are crucial in experiencing trust in organizations (Lyman, 2003).

Third, employees want to rely on the organization and its employees. Participants indicate that when they cannot take control of their own work and feel a certain unfairness at work, the organization provokes benign envy and even malicious envy. Consequently, when rewarding and celebrating the successes of employees, managers should be sure to maintain the norms of fairness and control and communicate to others why it is fair to celebrate the co-worker's success. Proactive management of employees' perceptions of fairness and appreciation in this way could enhance any resentment toward those who receive special recognition. Additionally, managers should encourage a sense of control in others, for example by fostering equal opportunities and providing development programs. While some level of differentiation may be unavoidable, it is important to keep in mind that favored treatment can trigger envy in others.



Fourth, Employees who experience benign and/or malicious envy require credibility and interaction and are dissatisfied with the communication, coordination, and cooperation within the organization. Credibility and cooperation are already discussed, but organizations should also facilitate short lines of communication and coordinate a clear vision. Communication cues play an important role in the growth of satisfaction within an organization. Vague, unclear communication structures create negative, unfamiliar/inferior relations that could cause malicious envy. By having informal communication, employees can talk about their problems, attitudes, and whatever they like, which then leads to satisfaction (Kandlousi, Ali & Abdollahi, 2010). Additionally, leaders should have a clear vision of employee characteristics and manage the process of finding the right person for the team and organization. Leaders need to analyze the development of culture, beliefs, and values and change them if the conditions call for adjustment. The culture can affect how decisions are made within areas as recruitment and placement within the organization (Bass & Avolio, 1993).

### 5.2.2 Relational level

Individuals are much more motivated to take the perspective of those who they like (McPherson Frantz & Janoff-Bulman, 2000). By fostering cooperation, coordinating great teamwork, and having a vision on team membership by recruitment, personal relations will develop. Group membership and a good relationship are aspects that contribute to positive empathy (Ganegoda & Bordia, 2019). Individuals are better able to assume the perspective of in-group members and those who are similar to them than that of out-group members (Adams et al., 2010). Organizations have to invest in relation-building by creating possibilities to connect and interact. Maintaining ties with the right people with the right resources can affect individual outcomes such as performance, organizational integration, and job satisfaction (Balkundi, & Harrison, 2006; Flap & Völker, 2001; Morrison, 2002).

### 5.2.3 Individual level

Positive empathy not only facilitates collaboration but enables a balance between team effectiveness and individual thriving. In these environments, personal growth is aligned with teamwork. Individual thriving is seen as an advantage for the team and organization. Therefore, the focus lies on being valuable to the group and less on the self, which is also related to organizations fostering cooperation instead of competition. Organizations can enable employees to thrive via facilitating positive empathy and thereby contribute to their health, performance, and well-being (Spreitzer & Sutcliffe, 2007). A satisfying role is important, wherein can be the expert and be valued by their team members and organization. They want to feel like they belong in the group and culture and expect leaders to facilitate these opportunities.

Organizations have to facilitate a feeling of job security to make employees feel safe to thrive and grow. However, there is a thin line between the organization facilitating the growth of employees, and the ability to reflect and change yourself. Both have a share in this matter and the key is to complement each other. If not, malicious envy will rise due to a lack of control and the feeling of



unfairness. Therefore, organizations have to create possibilities to reflect and learn to mirror yourself, take employees with you in the development of changing structures.

### 5.3 LIMITATIONS

This study focused only on literature directly relevant to episodic organizational behavior. Therefore, the choice was made to leave the levels of trait positive empathy and envy out of this study due to the psychophysiological bases and time-consuming focus of long-term trait predispositions. Additionally, the main focus of this study was the experience of positive empathy and envy. Even though this study incorporated the chance to find an alternative affective experience to envy and positive empathy, this study did not find it. During the interviews, it was noticeable that employees had a hard time to think about an alternative experience and some found it hard to admit to negative feelings. This might be because organizations are still often considered as places where feelings have been managed or removed (Patient, Lawrence & Maitlis, 2003). For this reason, it could be that some additional factors and outcomes were not discussed in this thesis.

Another limitation is the fact that this study was conducted during a very bizarre time: during the corona crisis. This could be of influence on the emotions and contextual factors occurring in the organizations, such as job security and competition. The interviews were conducted at a 1,5-meter distance with an as little personal contact as possible. Familiarity and understanding of emotion are important for people to be open within the interviews (Cassell & Symon, 2004), therefore the researcher tried to be noticeable online and offline, tried to create a relationship of trust, honest and open exchange, and practiced the interviews in advance. Lastly, the emotions were translated from English to Dutch, which could influence the interpretation of the emotions.

### 5.4 FUTURE RESEARCH

Even though the validity of positive empathy, both state and trait, has already been empirically established in the social psychology literature (Morelli, Lieberman, et al., 2015), the nature of positive empathy in organizational contexts represents a potentially fruitful opportunity for research. Until now, no studies investigated positive empathy, empirically, within organizations. As this study aims to assess how employees' affective experiences in meeting co-workers' successes through critical incident stories, the focus is specifically on employees' episodic feelings in the workplace and not on long-term trait predispositions. Additionally, it might be that there is another affective response to a co-worker's success when including trait predispositions. Future studies should focus on the influence of trait positive empathy at work and the possibilities of alternative experiences.

Ganegoda & Bordia (2019) proposed that leaders could create social comparison by treating employees with a high degree of variability. Empirical research has indeed shown that leaders treat subordinates differently and in doing so create in-group and out-group divisions within work teams (Ilies, Nahrgang, & Morgeson, 2007) Even though participants mentioned lack of appreciation of leaders



and informal contact as necessary, this study did not find answers on these subjects. Future research should focus on the influence of managers on positive empathy by their acts in team structures and reward systems. Additionally, in contrast with the findings of Cohen-Charash (2009) and Smith & Kim (2007), participants indicate that they felt malicious envy because their co-worker was engaged in deviant actions such as providing misleading information and therefore the co-worker achieved success unfairly. Future research should focus more critically on managing perceptions of unfairness and control in organizations related to affective experiences.

Lastly, Ganegoda & Bordia (2019) proposed that group-size could influence positive empathy. Employees in smaller workgroups are more affected by the positive experiences of their co-workers than those in larger workgroups. Even though participants indicate they feel more positive empathy for someone they are closer to, participants did not mention group-size as a factor in their affective experience. Future research should focus on the influence of group-size on positive empathy to perhaps create more team effectiveness. As a result, this study has pointed the way for future research to explore organizational practices in ways that decrease employees' tendency to experience malicious envy and enhance their tendency to experience positive empathy, stating that the dynamics of affective communications between employees should be better understood.

## 5.5 CONCLUSION

Employees' emotional reactions to co-workers' successes have proven to be important implications for work relations, well-being, as well as both individual and team performance within organizations. This is the first empirical multiple case study that examined the affective experiences in co-worker's success by exploring the affective critical stories of employees in three different organizations. These findings show that envy cannot be considered as the only primary reaction of employees in praising one other's success in organizations any longer because positive empathy is another significant, primary response. This study provided new information grounded in the field by answering the following research question: *What factors influence employees' affective experiences to co-workers' successes in organizations?* By integrating the focus of success, contextual factors as moderators, and event factors into a single model and theory, we determined the different affective pathways to malicious envy, benign envy, or positive empathy. This study builds a foundation for both additional studies and organizational management to enhance positive empathy as a strategy to increase team effectiveness, interpersonal relationships, overall wellbeing, individual thriving, and minimize the feeling of envy. In contrast, malicious envy and benign envy create, either team ineffectiveness or team disengagement, ill-being or dissatisfaction, and quitting or self-renewal. Future research and organizational practices should consider the various factors influencing the affective response to co-worker's successes to be either joyful or (extremely) depressing.



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## APPENDIX A OVERVIEW RESEARCH QUESTION, AIM, RESEARCH OBJECTIVES

Research Question	Aim
What factors influence employees' affective experiences to co-workers' successes in organizations?	This is the first study that aims to examine the possibility to experience positive empathy as an alternative to envy in co-workers' success.

Research objectives	Research (sub) question	Data source	Methods	Example questions CIT
Exploring the affective critical incident stories and the factors of employees in three organizations.	What factors influence employees' affective experiences to co-workers' successes in organizations?	Various employees in organization 1, 2, and 3	Critical Incident technique appendix D	Could you think of a specific, particular incident and describe the incident for me in detail?
Assess whether positive empathy plays a significant role in three organizations.	Does positive empathy play a significant role in organizations?	Various employees in organization 1, 2, and 3	Critical Incident technique appendix D	Is the event typical of the way organizational employees communicate?
By developing a theory grounded in data from the field, providing management insight into the way co-workers' success is affectively experienced by their employees and alter them.	How can organizations alter employees' affective experiences to co-workers' successes?	Various employees in organization 1, 2, and 3	Critical Incident technique appendix D	What were the consequences of the event?



## APPENDIX B EXAMPLE INVITE PARTICIPANTS INTRANET

<b>Van:</b>	<b>PZ</b>	<b>Kenmerk:</b>	<b>DM/200xxxx</b>
<b>Aan:</b>	<b>Alle medewerkers</b>	<b>Datum:</b>	<b>xx-xx-2020</b>
<b>Betreft:</b>	<b>Scriptie masterstudente</b>		

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Emma Jansen is masterstudente Organisatiecommunicatie aan de Universiteit van Twente en zal ten behoeve van haar scriptie interviews gaan houden bij verschillende bedrijven waaronder (*naam organisatie*).

Emma onderzoekt de organisatiestructuren en teamrelaties in grote bedrijven. Haar scriptie gaat over “het geluk delen van collega’s in hun successen op het werk”. Bijv. wat zijn de basisbehoeften om successen te delen, hoe kan het verbeterd worden en hoe voorkom je dat werknemers successen van collega’s gaan misgunnen.

Ze zal interviews van ca. 30 min. houden (via skype of op locatie op 1,5 meter) met verscheidende werknemers. Vervolgens zal ze voor onze organisatie een adviesplan schrijven, waarin ze de bevindingen en aandachtspunten toelicht.

We zouden het op prijs stellen als jullie je medewerking hieraan willen verlenen.

Zowel onze organisatie als de werknemers blijven natuurlijk volledig anoniem.

Op de volgende dagen tref je Emma aan:

(*data*).



## APPENDIX C PLANNING

## PLANNING 2020

## FEBRUARY

WK	
6	Receiving grade proposal
7	Supervisor assigned Finish planning + Work on method Contact with supervisor
8	Work on method section, CIT and Improve proposal Appointment supervisor?
9	Appointment supervisor? Improve proposal, framework,

## APRIL

14	CORONA Can't start interviews
15	CORONA
16	CORONA
17	CORONA
18	CORONA
	OTHER THINGS: 2 Subjects Master

## JUNE

23	Interviews org. 1 + Transcribe
24	Interviews org. 1 + Transcribe
25	Interviews org. 1 + Transcribe Meeting supervisor
26	Transcribing + coding Meeting organization 2

## MARCH

WK	
10	Contact businesses Framework
11	Improving proposal
12	<b>DEADLINE: concept proposal done</b> Pre-test interview technique and
13	Meeting supervisor (online feedback) Meeting organization 1 Improve final things proposal <b>DEADLINE: proposal done</b>

## MAY

19	CORONA
20	CORONA
21	Meeting organization 1
22	Pre-test interview technique and Interviews planning organization 1 Interviews org. 1 + Transcribe

## JULY

27	Moving/holiday
28	Transcribing + coding
29	Meeting organization 2
30	Reread everything and rewrite parts Interviews org. 2 + Transcribe
31	Transcribing + coding Interviews org. 2 + Transcribe



## PLANNING 2020

## AUGUST

- 32 Interviews org. 2 + Transcribe
- 33 Corona
- 34 Corona
- 35 Corona
- Coding
- Rewriting

## SEPTEMBER

- 36 Corona
- 37 Corona
- Meeting supervisor
- 38 Interviews org. 2 + Transcribe + coding
- 39 Meeting organization 3 + proposal
- 40 Transcribing + coding
- Corona

## OCTOBER

- 41 Coding + models
- Corona, Reschedule interviews
- 42 Models + rewriting parts
- 43 Presentation organization 2 + infographic
- Meeting supervisors
- 44 **Feedback**
- Presentation organization 1
- Data sources

## NOVEMBER

- 45 Meeting organization 3
- 46 Interviews org. 3 + Transcribe + coding
- 47 Interviews org. 3 + Transcribe + coding
- 48 Interviews org. 3 + Transcribe + coding
- Results + analyses
- Conclusion
- Meeting supervisor + feedback

## DECEMBER

- 49 Results + analyses
- Presentation organization 3
- 50 Discussion
- 51 Results
- 52 Finalizing
- 53 Thesis concept deadline

## JANUARY

- 1 Discussing concept
- 2 DEADLINE THESIS
- 3
- 4 Colloquium



## APPENDIX D INTERVIEW GUIDE

Participant: male/female

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

*A. Contextual Component*

As you know, I am investigating the ways how organizations can alter employees' affective experiences to others' successes by exploring critical incident stories concerning employees' experiences with one another's success. Its purpose is to collect information about how you experience the successes of co-workers, by explaining the incidents in very detail. This interview will be anonymous, and it will be recorded to transcribe later. If you feel like some of the questions are difficult to comprehend, please ask me to explain them better. Taking part in the study involves quotations of your opinion, situations, and feelings in your work environment. The information collected about you that can identify you specifically (names, birth date) will not be shared beyond the study team. The remaining information will be archived in the University of Twente database, so it can be used for future research and learning.

*Signing informed consent*

- a. As a way of getting started, perhaps you could tell me a bit about yourself and your work situation.
- b. You participate in this study because you have experience with co-workers' success in the workplace. What does 'success' mean to you?
- c. Is success for everyone the same?
- d. Did you experience success yourself?
- e. When is a co-worker successful?

*B. Critical Incident Component*

1. How do you experience co-workers' success?
2. Could you think of a specific, particular incident and describe the incident for me in detail?
  - (i) What actually happened?
  - (ii) Who was involved?
  - (iii) What caused the event?
  - (iv) What were the consequences of the event?
  - (v) Do you think or know that other employees experience this as well?

*Summarize what has been discussed up to this point as a transition to the next incident. If the incident was negative, ask for a positive experience. If it was positive, ask for a negative incident.*

*Show model (appendix C) and ask if they recognize themselves in benign envy, malicious envy, or positive empathy.*

*C. Demographics Component*

- i. Occupation
- ii. Length of service in this company

*The interview ends when no new incidents will be addressed, also thank the participant*

Interview End Time: \_\_\_\_\_ Length of interview: \_\_\_\_\_



## INTERVIEW GUIDE – DUTCH

Participant: man/vrouw

Datum: \_\_\_\_\_

*A. Context*

Zoals u weet onderzoek ik de manieren waarop organisaties de emotionele ervaringen van het personeel met successen van collega's kunnen veranderen door kritische, gedetailleerde verhalen van medewerkers te onderzoeken. Het doel is om informatie te verzamelen over hoe u successen van collega's ervaart, zowel positieve als negatieve gevolgen, door de incidenten zeer gedetailleerd uit te leggen. Dit interview is anoniem en het gesprek wordt opgenomen om later te transcriberen. Als u sommige vragen moeilijk te begrijpen vindt, vraag mij dan om het beter uit te leggen. Deelname aan het onderzoek houdt in dat uw mening, situaties en gevoelens betreft uw werkomgeving geciteerd en beschreven worden in dit onderzoek. De informatie die specifiek u kan identificeren (namen, geboortedatum) wordt niet gedeeld buiten het onderzoeksteam. De overige informatie die u verstrekt, wordt gearchiveerd in de database van de Universiteit Twente. Deze informatie draagt bij aan kennisdeling en toekomstig onderzoek. *Geïnformeerde toestemming ondertekenen*

- a. Om te beginnen, kunt u me misschien iets vertellen over uzelf en uw werksituatie.
- b. U doet mee aan dit onderzoek omdat u ervaringen heeft met het succes van anderen. Wat betekent 'succes hebben' voor u?
- c. Is succes hebben voor iedereen hetzelfde?
- d. Heeft u zelf succes ervaren?
- e. Wanneer is een collega succesvol?

*B. Kritische incidenten*

1. Hoe ervaart u het succes van collega's, welke gevoelens roept succes van anderen op?
2. Zou u een specifiek incident kunnen bedenken en het incident gedetailleerd beschrijven?

- (i) Wat is er precies gebeurd?
- (ii) Wie was erbij betrokken?
- (iii) Wat was de oorzaak van het incident?
- (iv) Wat waren de consequenties van het incident?
- (v) Komt deze ervaring vaker voor bij jou of anderen?

*Samenvatten wat tot nu toe besproken is als een overgang naar het volgende incident. Als het incident negatief was, vraag naar een positief ervaring. Als het incident positief was, vraag naar negatieve ervaringen.*

*Toon model (Bijlage C) en vraag of zij zichzelf in goedaardige afgunst (benign envy), kwaadaardige afgunst (malicious envy), of positieve empathie kunnen verplaatsen of dat ze deze gevoelens ook hebben ervaren in het succes van anderen. .*

*C. Demografisch*

- i. Beroep
- iv. Hoeveel jaar werkzaam in dit bedrijf

*Interview eindigt wanneer er geen nieuwe incidenten meer benoemd worden en bedank participant*

Interview eindtijd: \_\_\_\_\_ Lengte interview: \_\_\_\_\_



## APPENDIX E CONSENT FORM

### Using the Critical Incident Technique to Explore Employees' Affective Experiences to Co-workers' Successes

You will be given a copy of this informed consent form

Yes No

*Please tick the appropriate boxes*

#### Taking part in the study

- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| I have read and understood the study information, or it has been read to me. I have been able to ask questions about the study and my questions have been answered to my satisfaction.       | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I consent voluntarily to be a participant in this study and understand that I can refuse to answer questions and I can withdraw from the study at any time, without having to give a reason. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand that taking part in the study involves sharing private conversations anonymously.   | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

#### Risks associated with participating in the study

- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| I understand that taking part in the study involves the following risks: quotation of my opinion, situations, and feelings in my work environment. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|

#### Use of the information in the study

- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| I understand that the information I provide will be used for knowledge sharing at the University of Twente.                                  | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| I understand that personal information collected about me that can identify me (names, birth date) will not be shared beyond the study team. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

#### Future use and reuse of the information by others

- |  |                          |                          |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| I give permission for the interviews that I provide to be archived in the University of Twente database, so it can be used for future research and learning. | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
|--|--------------------------|--------------------------|

#### Contact Information for Questions about Your Rights as a Research Participant

If you have questions about your rights as a research participant or wish to obtain information, ask questions, or discuss any concerns about this study with someone other than the researcher(s), please contact the Secretary of the Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Behavioural, Management and Social Sciences at the University of Twente by [ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl](mailto:ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl)

#### Signatures

_____	_____	_____
Name participant	Signature	Date

I have accurately read out the information sheet to the potential participant and, to the best of my ability, ensured that the participant understands what they are freely consenting.

_____	_____	_____
Researcher name	Signature	Date



## CONSENT FORM - DUTCH

**Kritische incidenten techniek om de emotionele reacties op succesvolle collega's te onderzoeken***U krijgt een kopie van deze geïnformeerde toestemmingsverklaring***Kruis het juiste antwoord aan:****Ja      Nee****Deelnemen aan dit onderzoek**

Ik heb de informatie over dit onderzoek begrepen en gelezen, of de informatie is voorgelezen. Ik heb vragen kunnen stellen over dit onderzoek en mijn vragen zijn voldoende beantwoord. ☐ ☐

Ik doe vrijwillig mee aan dit onderzoek en begrijp dat ik niet overall antwoord op hoe te geven. Ik kan stoppen met dit interview wanneer ik wil, op elk moment en zonder reden. ☐ ☐

Ik begrijp dat meedoen aan dit onderzoek inhoudt dat ik privéinformatie anoniem deel. ☐ ☐

**Risico's van deelname aan dit onderzoek**

Ik begrijp dat meedoen aan dit onderzoek de volgende risico's met zich meebrengt: quotaties en beschrijvingen van mijn mening, situaties en gevoelens die ik heb ervaren in mijn werkomgeving. ☐ ☐

**Gebruik van informatie van dit onderzoek**

Ik begrijp dat de informatie die ik deel ook zichtbaar is en gebruikt kan worden voor en door andere studenten en professoren van de universiteit van Twente. ☐ ☐

Ik begrijp dat de persoonlijke informatie die mij kan identificeren (naam, leeftijd) niet gedeeld wordt buiten mij studieteam. ☐ ☐

**Toekomstig gebruik door anderen en archivering**

Ik geef toestemming aan de onderzoeker dat mijn interview in het archief van de Universiteit van Twente opgeslagen mag worden voor het gebruik van toekomstig onderzoek en als bijdrage aan een toekomstige leeromgeving. ☐ ☐

**Contact informatie voor vragen over rechten als participant**

Als u vragen heeft over uw rechten als participant, extra informatie wil verkrijgen, vragen wil stellen of eventuele zorgen over dit onderzoek en dit met iemand anders dan de onderzoeker(s) wil bespreken, neem dan contact op met de secretaris van de commissie voor ethiek van de faculteit Gedrags-, Management- en Sociale Wetenschappen aan de Universiteit Twente door te mailen naar [ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl](mailto:ethicscommittee-bms@utwente.nl)

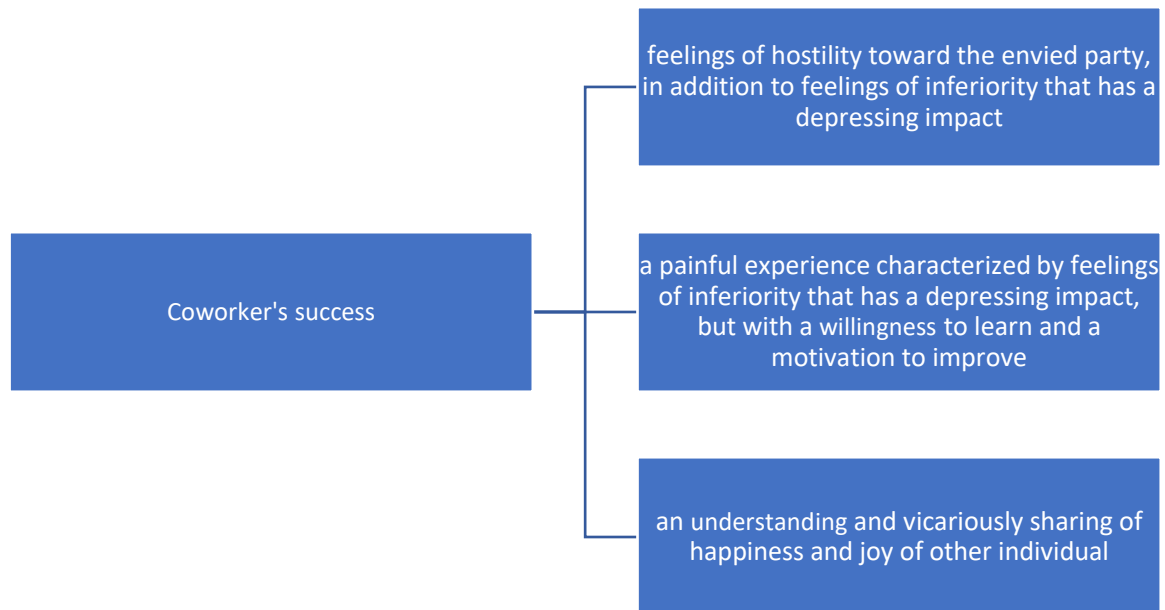
**Handtekeningen**\_\_\_\_\_  
Naam participant\_\_\_\_\_  
Handtekening\_\_\_\_\_  
Datum

Ik heb het informatieblad nauwkeurig voorgelezen aan de potentiële deelnemer en, voor zover ik kan, ervoor gezorgd dat de deelnemer begrijpt waar zij vrijwillig mee instemmen.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Naam onderzoeker\_\_\_\_\_  
Handtekening\_\_\_\_\_  
Datum



## APPENDIX F MODEL BASED ON THE CONCEPTUAL MODEL OF GANEGODA & BORDIA (2019)



### DUTCH VERSION





## APPENDIX G PARTICIPANTS INFORMATION

ORGANIZATION 1	WORK	WORK LENGTH ORGANIZATION	DATE INTERVIEW
PARTICIPANT 1	Nurse consultant	37 years	25-05-2020
PARTICIPANT 2	Secretary ICU	13 years	26-05-2020
PARTICIPANT 3	Secretary Inpatient	21 years	28-05-2020
PARTICIPANT 4	Nurse SEH	29 years	03-06-2020
PARTICIPANT 5	Nurse ICU	35 years	04-06-2020
PARTICIPANT 6	Manager Oncology/Nurse ICU	20 years	05-06-2020
PARTICIPANT 7	Business Manager	25 years	05-06-2020
PARTICIPANT 8	Secretary Inpatient	2 years	08-06-2020
PARTICIPANT 9	Project Officer Surgery	3 years	08-06-2020
PARTICIPANT 10	Clinical Hospital Doctor	1 year	09-06-2020
PARTICIPANT 11	Content Specialist	2 years	11-06-2020
PARTICIPANT 12	Medical Doctor ICU	2 years	17-06-2020

ORGANIZATION 2	WORK	WORK LENGTH ORGANIZATION	DATE INTERVIEW
PARTICIPANT 1	Team leader Process	4 years	20-07-2020
PARTICIPANT 2	Manager Digital	2 years	20-07-2020
PARTICIPANT 3*	Project Manager Products	25 years	20-07-2020
PARTICIPANT 4	Risk Manager	2 years	21-07-2020
PARTICIPANT 5*	Online Marketer	2 years	27-07-2020
PARTICIPANT 6	HR Business Partner	3 years	04-08-2020
PARTICIPANT 7	Category Manager	7 years	04-08-2020
PARTICIPANT 8	Interim Finance	6 months	22-09-2020
PARTICIPANT 9	Manager Sales	5 years	23-09-2020

\*Interview via online meeting due to corona crisis

ORGANIZATION 3	WORK	WORK LENGTH ORGANIZATION	DATE INTERVIEW
PARTICIPANT 1	Taxidriver	12 years	13-11-2020
PARTICIPANT 2	Human Resource	2 years	19-11-2020
PARTICIPANT 3	Debtor consultant	1 year	19-11-2020
PARTICIPANT 4	Taxidriver	2 years	19-11-2020
PARTICIPANT 5	Servicedesk	15 years	19-11-2020
PARTICIPANT 6	Administration	6 years	19-11-2020
PARTICIPANT 7	Planner	2 years	19-11-2020
PARTICIPANT 8	Taxidriver	10 years	19-11-2020
PARTICIPANT 9	Quality officer	7 years	19-11-2020
PARTICIPANT 10	Taxidriver	2 years	19-11-2020
PARTICIPANT 11	Bus driver	12 years	19-11-2020
PARTICIPANT 12	Mechanic	11 years	23-11-2020
PARTICIPANT 13	Taxidriver	9 years	23-11-2020