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Examining benign and malicious envy and flourishing among Muslim university students in Algeria: A quantitative study

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ABSTRACT

Envy is a social emotion that arises from comparing ourselves to others, and it can significantly affect our flourishing in competitive environments such as universities. In Muslim societies, where cultural and religious values emphasize contentment and avoiding harmful emotions, envy's impact may differ. Understanding how harmless and harmful envy can affect students' flourishing is important, as this emotion can either motivate personal growth or hinder it. Therefore, this study aimed to explore how benign and malicious envy influence the flourishing of university students in Muslim society. A cross-sectional design was employed, and data were collected from a sample of 401 Algerian university Muslim students (86.5% female, mean age 21.63 years) from the University of Chlef, with varied economic backgrounds and academic levels ranging from first-year undergraduates to doctoral students. The study utilized the Benign and Malicious Envy Scale and the Flourishing Scale. Multiple regression analysis revealed that benign envy was a significant positive predictor of flourishing, while malicious envy had a significant negative effect. The regression model indicated that only the academic year significantly impacted flourishing, while gender, age, and economic status did not significantly predict flourishing. In terms of benign and malicious envy, gender, age, family economic status, and academic year did not significantly impact either. In conclusion, this study emphasizes the complex impact of envy on people's flourishing, highlighting the different effects of benign and malicious envy. It suggests that fostering benign envy could help individuals thrive while reducing malicious envy, which is important for improving flourishing. The findings offer important insights for educators and policymakers aiming to support students in academic settings, especially in Muslim societies.

1. Introduction

Envy is a complex emotion arising from social comparisons and feelings of inferiority, is studied across multiple disciplines, and is associated with negative consequences such as animosity, resentment, and a desire to harm the envied individual (Van de Ven, 2017). A thorough definition of envy is that it is an emotion that "occurs when a person lacks another's superior quality, achievement, or possession and either desires it or wishes that the other lacked it" (Parrott & Smith, 1993).

Envy manifests in two distinct forms, benign and malicious, each leading to different behaviors (Yang & Tang, 2021). Benign envy involves positive emotions towards the person being envied, motivating self-improvement without ill will. In contrast, malicious envy is

associated with negative emotions and hostility towards the target, often leading to destructive coping strategies (Battle & Diab, 2022). Studies have shown that both forms of envy play significant roles in mediating the relationship between childhood maltreatment and depression/anxiety, with malicious envy exacerbating the effects of adverse experiences. In contrast, benign envy acts as a buffer, inhibiting the negative impact (Li et al., 2022). Additionally, cognitive processes such as upward counterfactual thoughts distinguish between benign and malicious envy, with self-focused counterfactuals contributing to benign envy and other-focused counterfactuals promoting malicious envy (Crusius & Lange, 2021). These findings highlight the multidimensional nature of envy and its complex interplay with emotions, behaviors, and cognitive processes.

The moral evaluation of envy is debated among scholars, with

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varying perspectives on its ethical implications. Overcoming envy may involve developing positive attributes like optimism and self-esteem (Ahmad & Ishaq, 2023; Gustafson, 2018; Milic, 2019; Perrine & Timpe, 2014). Envy, a nuanced and self-conscious feeling stemming from social contrasts, indicates a sense of inferiority (Schoeck, 1969) and influences social interactions, yielding both beneficial and detrimental outcomes. This emotion is influenced by theological, philosophical, and evolutionary factors and shaped by cultural and societal contexts (Quintanilla & de López, 2013; Smith, 2008). Despite its negative connotations, envy can also evoke admiration and motivate individuals toward self-improvement (Milic, 2019).

Envy is a significant emotion within Muslim societies, often discussed in the context of the Islamic revival, where it plays a pivotal role in shaping cultural and political resurgence (Fourati, 2018). In Arabic, envy, known as "Hasad," refers to feeling discontent with others' blessings or happiness and desiring those blessings for oneself (Khan & Umair Ghani, 2018). The experience of envy can have both positive and negative dimensions, depending on how individuals respond to it (Sharify-Funk, 2018). Within Muslim societies, holy envy encourages appreciating and learning from differences in religious beliefs and practices (Haratiyan & Ahmadi, 2017). Envy is deeply embedded in Islamic teachings and is often linked to beliefs about the evil eye and satanic influences (Qamar, 2013). Envy and unfulfilled aspirations have been identified as driving forces behind the Islamic revival, motivating increased participation and embracing Islamic values (Carvalho, 2009). The rise of Islamic consumer culture in Indonesia has further highlighted envy's role in discussions surrounding piety and consumption (Jones, 2010). In this study, we aim to explore the relationship between envy and flourishing within Muslim societies, examining how envy influences individuals' flourishing within Islamic culture and values.

2. Literature review

2.1. Envy in Arab Muslim culture

There is a great diversity of cultures within Muslim societies worldwide. Yet, they generally share common values and religious practices rooted in authentic Islamic traditions. Islamic culture encompasses practices that permeate every aspect of an individual's life and behavior, spanning issues, judgments, and ceremonies that touch upon various aspects of individuals, families, and civil society. These include matters centered around Allah, monotheism, welfare, culture, manners, ethics, modesty, childcare, dietary rules, marriage, family ties, defending Islamic values, social justice, environmental concerns, relations with non-Muslims, the pursuit of knowledge, and confronting challenges (Rassool, 2018). Envy, regarded as one of the diseases of the heart within Islamic teachings, manifests itself in reprehensible actions with religious, psychological, social, and ethical ramifications for both the individual and society. Notably, envy features prominently in some of the worst crimes outlined in the Holy Quran (Mashaqbeh & Jalal, 2020), such as the tragic tale of Cain and Abel, where envy culminated in fratricide as a result of hostility towards the envied person, driven by negative emotions like anger, fear, hatred, weakness, and lack of self-confidence (Sabah, 2021).

In the Arabic language, the term "حسد" (hasad, envy) conveys a sense of displeasure at another's blessings, happiness, or prosperity, with a desire to deprive them of these blessings or transfer them to oneself. Social comparison is the root of hasad in Islamic contexts (Khan & Ghani, 2018). In Islamic understanding, envy entails a psychological state where the envious individual harbors discontent and aims to diminish another's blessings, yearning for what the other person possesses or has achieved (Rassool, 2018). Imam Al-Ghazali, in his work "The Revival of Religious Sciences," distinguishes between malicious envy, characterized by the desire for a blessing's demise, and benign envy or "ghibta," where one desires a similar blessing for oneself, often seen as healthy competition (Al-Ghazali, 2015). Contrary to the Western

perception, envy in the Arab context extends beyond mere emotion, encompassing the belief in the evil eye, magic, and honor dynamics, underscoring its profound social influence (Hughes, 2020). This perspective on mental health and illness shapes how Muslims view envy, often attributing illnesses to envy or supernatural causes, thereby emphasizing its significance from cultural and religious standpoints (Rassool, 2018).

While literature often labels envy as a deadly sin, recent research by Crusius and Lange (2014), Lange and Crusius (2015), and Van de Ven (2016) distinguishes between harmful envy, marked by hostile feelings, and benign envy, devoid of such hostility. Psychologists have identified two forms of envy: benign envy, which can motivate someone to work hard and try to achieve the success of others, and malicious envy, where someone resents others' advantages and may even harm them or feel schadenfreude. These different forms represent how individuals perceive a gap between themselves and a superior comparative standard. It reflects distinct pathways through which individuals can perceive the disparity between themselves and a comparative standard (the superior) (Lange & Crusius, 2015). In benign envy, individuals may strive to elevate themselves to the success others enjoy. This is supported by research findings indicating that envy can increase personal effort (Van de Ven et al., 2011), and drive behavior towards acquiring the desired trait or object (Crusius & Mussweiler, 2012), shifting focus towards the necessary means to achieve it (Crusius & Lange, 2014). Conversely, malicious envy arises when an individual compares themselves to another with an advantage - one or more that they should also have. In this scenario, the envious individual feels the competitor does not deserve that advantage or possession. They experience persistent feelings of inadequacy and may harm the other person, exhibiting feelings of schadenfreude if that person experiences a loss (Sabah, 2021).

Imam Al-Ghazali further elucidates on envy, distinguishing between envy and emulation or competition, stressing that while competition is commendable, envy, particularly of the malicious kind, is blameworthy (Al-Ghazali, 1986; Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). He delineates different levels of envy, ranging from malevolence to excusable desire, cautioning against its detrimental effects in worldly and religious matters (Ibn Taymiyyah, 1995). Envy runs deep in Arab Muslim culture, transcending mere emotion to influence societal norms, individual beliefs, and behaviors, with significant implications for personal and societal well-being. Understanding its nuances, ranging from benign competition to harmful resentment, is vital for addressing its impact on individuals and societies.

2.2. Relationships between benign and malicious envy and flourishing

Flourishing is a multidimensional concept that integrates pleasure-based (hedonic) and meaning-based (eudaimonic) aspects of well-being. It involves experiencing positive emotions, satisfaction with life, and a sense of purpose and meaning (Rule et al., 2024). Flourishing signifies a state of optimal functioning and fulfillment across different areas of life. This includes nurturing positive relationships, strong self-esteem, finding purpose and optimism, actively engaging in activities, and feeling competent and capable. People who flourish demonstrate a high psychological well-being and lead lives filled with positivity and significance (Diener et al., 2010).

The literature on envy's relationship with psychological well-being and flourishing provides valuable insights into its multifaceted nature. Ng et al. (2021) conducted longitudinal studies focusing on young adults and adolescents to investigate the association between dispositional envy and flourishing. Their findings revealed that dispositional malicious envy was negatively associated with flourishing, while dispositional benign envy was positively linked. Ma et al. (2024) examined within-person associations among state benign/malicious envy, self-esteem, perceived social support, and subjective well-being. They found that benign and malicious envy had opposite effects on subjective

well-being within individuals, with self-esteem and perceived social support serving as mediators in these relationships. Additionally, [Briki \(2019\)](#) explored the interrelationships between dispositional benign and malicious envy, trait self-control, demographics, and subjective well-being. Their study revealed that dispositional benign envy positively predicted subjective well-being, while dispositional malicious envy negatively predicted it, with decreased trait self-control mediating this relationship. Furthermore, [Mujcic and Oswald \(2018\)](#) conducted large-scale longitudinal research investigating the impact of envy on psychological health. Their findings indicated that envy, particularly among the young, was a powerful predictor of worse mental health and well-being in the future. These studies underscore the complex interplay between envy, self-perception, social support, and overall well-being.

2.2.1. Current study

The literature on the impact of envy on psychological well-being provides valuable insights into its complex nature. [Ng et al. \(2021\)](#) and [Ma et al. \(2024\)](#) conducted longitudinal and within-person studies, highlighting the associations between envy types and flourishing. [Briki \(2019\)](#) explored dispositional envy and subjective well-being, while [Mujcic and Oswald \(2018\)](#) examined envy's broader implications on mental health. Despite these insights, understanding envy within specific cultural contexts, particularly among university students in Muslim societies, remains understudied. This study focused on Muslim university students from Algeria, providing a unique opportunity to explore how cultural and religious dynamics influence the relationship between envy and psychological flourishing. As a Muslim society, Algeria offers a rich cultural backdrop where social interactions and emotional experiences, such as envy, are shaped by Islamic teachings and societal norms. Previous research indicates that these cultural dynamics play a significant role in how students perceive and navigate their emotions, particularly in academic settings ([Al-Jaberi et al., 2020](#); [Aljaberi et al., 2021](#); [Sabah et al., 2023, 2024a](#)). Additionally, Algeria's diverse economic backgrounds and varying academic levels among university students contribute to a nuanced understanding of envy's effects on psychological flourishing within a specific national context. This localized approach highlights the complexities of envy in Algerian society. It provides insights that can inform culturally sensitive interventions to support university students' mental health and resilience in similar Muslim societies. Hence, this study examined envy as an emotion within Arab Muslim culture, specifically Algeria, by assessing benign and malicious envy. As established earlier, these aspects of envy are recognized in both Arab and Western cultures. Additionally, we aim to explore its relationship with flourishing.

Therefore, the current study objectives were to explore how benign and malicious envy correlates with flourishing and the factors that significantly predict the flourishing among university students in a Muslim society and to contribute to a nuanced understanding of envy's role in psychological well-being within culturally specific contexts.

3. Method

3.1. Research design and sample

Quantitative research is a type of research that focuses on interpreting phenomena by collecting numerical data and analyzing them using mathematical methods, especially statistics. This research approach emphasizes gathering numerical data to understand and measure social reality objectively, often involving strict guidelines in data collection and analysis processes ([Mehrad & Zangeneh, 2019](#); [Sukamolson, 2007](#)). This study employed a cross-sectional design to investigate the relationships between benign and malicious envy among Muslim university students in Algeria and their impact on psychological flourishing. Specifically, it aimed to measure the correlation between benign and malicious envy and flourishing, as well as identify significant factors associated with flourishing among Muslim populations in

Algeria. Data were collected using paper-based questionnaires administered to male and female Muslim students attending university in Chlef, Algeria, in 2023. This method provided a comprehensive exploration of the role of envy in psychological well-being within this cultural and religious context.

The study included 401 students, 86.5% female, $M_{age} = 21.63$, $SD = 4.47$ from the University of Chlef, Algeria. Most participants reported a moderate familial economic status 82.0%, 3.5% reported low economic status, and 14.5% reported high economic status. In terms of academic year distribution, 37.4% were second-year students, 24.2% were third-year students, 13.5% were first-year students, 2.2% were in Master's first year, 21.4% were in Master's second year, and 1.2% were doctoral students (see [Table 1](#) for more details).

3.2. Measures

The Benign and Malicious Envy Scale, developed by [Lange and Crusius \(2015\)](#), is a psychometric tool designed to assess dispositional envy, targeting individual differences in the propensity to experience benign or malicious envy towards perceived superior others. This 10-item scale comprises two dimensions: benign envy and malicious envy. For example, items in the benign envy dimension include statements like "I feel motivated to work harder when I see someone with superior achievements," reflecting a positive response to others' success. Conversely, items in the malicious envy dimension capture negative reactions, such as "I feel resentful towards those who are more successful than me." Participants rate each item on a 6-point Likert scale (1: strongly disagree, 6: strongly agree). The scale demonstrates strong internal consistency, with Cronbach's alphas ranging from .72 to .90 across various samples and versions ([Inoue & Yokota, 2022](#); [Lange & Crusius, 2015](#)). The scale had been translated and validated in the Arabic context, demonstrating good psychometric properties ([Sabah, Aljaberi, Hajji, et al., 2024](#)). In the current study, the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for benign envy was .72, while the Cronbach's alpha coefficient for malicious envy was .70. These coefficients indicate acceptable reliability for both forms of envy.

The Flourishing Scale, developed by [Diener et al. \(2010\)](#), is an 8-item measure to assess an individual's self-perceived success across key life domains such as relationships, self-esteem, purpose, and optimism. It yields a single psychological well-being score, providing insights for enhancing life and prompting introspection, particularly for individuals without clinical disorders. A validation study of the scale by [Diener et al. \(2010\)](#) involved 689 college students across six locations, demonstrating its accuracy in measuring subjective well-being through correlations with established measures. A principal axis factor analysis revealed a dominant factor explaining 53% of the variance, with robust factor loadings. The scale exhibited high internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$) and temporal stability over one month ($r = .71$). Scores range from 8 to 56, with higher scores indicating greater psychological well-being. At the same time, percentiles offer normative comparisons ([Diener et al., 2010](#)). In the current study, Cronbach's

Table 1
Characteristics of the sample.

Variables		n	%
Gender	Male	54	13.5
	Female	347	86.5
Family economic situation	Lower	14	3.5
	Middle	329	82.0
	Upper	58	14.5
University year	First year	54	13.5
	Second year	150	37.4
	Third year	97	24.2
	Master first year	9	2.2
	Master second year	86	21.4
	Doctorate	5	1.2

alpha coefficient was calculated, and its value was found to be .80, indicating acceptable reliability.

3.3. Statistical analysis

The data for the study was analyzed using IBM SPSS Statistics version 26. Descriptive statistics were computed for the study variables, including the mean and standard deviation. Additionally, skewness and kurtosis values were calculated to assess the data distribution. A normal distribution is indicated if skewness falls between -2 and $+2$ and kurtosis is between -7 and $+7$ (Abiddine et al., 2024; Hair Jr et al., 2010). The Pearson correlation coefficient was used to examine the relationships between the study variables. Multiple linear regression analysis was conducted to evaluate the impact of independent variables (benign and malicious envy) and demographic factors on flourishing. The "ENTER" method was utilized to specify and include variables in the regression analyses.

4. Results

4.1. Preliminary analysis of the variable

Skewness and kurtosis results determined a normal distribution with values within an acceptable range between -2 and $+2$ for skewness and kurtosis between -7 and $+7$. Table 2 indicates that benign envy averages approximately 24.17 with a standard deviation of 4.24, showing skewness of -1.129 and kurtosis of 1.680. In contrast, malicious envy averages around 8.37 with a standard deviation of about 3.54, exhibiting skewness of 1.771 and kurtosis of 5.044. Flourishing scores were about 46.26, with a standard deviation of approximately 6.53, skewness of -1.791 , and kurtosis of 5.745, indicating that all distributions are normal.

4.2. Correlation analysis

The correlation analysis in Table 3 demonstrates a positive correlation between benign envy and flourishing and a negative correlation between malicious envy and flourishing. Specifically, a positive correlation of .359** indicates that higher levels of benign envy are associated with greater flourishing. In contrast, a negative correlation of $-.296^{**}$ suggests that higher levels of malicious envy are linked to lower levels of flourishing.

4.3. Regression analysis of benign and malicious envy on flourishing

Multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the contribution of benign and malicious envy to flourishing, as shown in Table 4. The analysis utilized multiple regression, and as indicated by the table, the (F) value was significant at the level $<.001$, confirming the contribution of benign and malicious envy to flourishing. The model's explanatory power reached .205, indicating that benign and malicious envy together explain 20.5% of flourishing. The collinearity diagnostics for the regression model, with flourishing as the dependent variable and malicious and benign as predictors, indicate excellent model stability and minimal multicollinearity. Both predictors exhibit tolerance values of .999 and corresponding VIF values of 1.001. Tolerance values close to 1 suggest that nearly all the variance in each predictor is unique,

Table 2
Preliminary analysis of the variables.

Descriptive Statistics				
	Mean	SD	Skewness	Kurtosis
Benign envy	24.173	4.239	-1.129	1.680
Malicious envy	8.368	3.544	1.771	5.044
Flourishing envy	46.256	6.5325	-1.791	5.745

Table 3
Correlation analysis of the variables.

Correlations			
	Benign envy	Malicious envy	Flourishing
Benign envy	1	$-.037$	.359 ^a
Malicious envy	$-$	1	$-.296^a$
Flourishing	$-$	$-$	1

^a Correlation is significant at the .01.

implying minimal collinearity concerns and allowing for reliable estimation of regression coefficients. The VIF values around one indicate that the variance of the estimated regression coefficients is not inflated due to collinearity. Typically, VIF values exceeding ten are considered indicative of problematic multicollinearity, but the VIF values here are well below this threshold, reinforcing the robustness of the model. These collinearity statistics confirm that the predictors "malicious" and "benign" are not collinear, ensuring that the regression coefficients are stable and the interpretations of the effects of these predictors on "flourishing" are reliable. The low multicollinearity enhances the overall validity of the regression model, providing confidence in the derived conclusions.

Regarding the contribution of benign and malicious envy to flourishing (Table 5), the significant impact of both benign and malicious envy on flourishing was evident at a significance level of less than .01. The greatest contribution to flourishing was benign envy, with a t-value of 7.808 and a significance level of .000, followed by malicious envy, which had a t-value of -6.342 at a significance level of .01. The beta value for benign envy was .34, indicating that for every one-unit increase in benign envy among students, flourishing increased by .34 units. As for malicious envy, its beta coefficient was $-.283$, meaning that for every one-unit increase in malicious envy among students, flourishing decreased by .283 units.

4.4. Regression analysis of gender, age, economic status of families, and academic year on flourishing

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the contribution of gender, age, economic status of families, and academic year to flourishing (Table 6). The analysis revealed that the model's explanatory power is relatively low, with an R² value of .029, indicating that these predictors explain only 2.9% of the variance in flourishing. Despite the low explanatory power, the overall model fit was statistically significant ($F = 2.980$, $p = 0.019$).

These findings suggest that the combination of gender, age, economic status of families, and academic year significantly predicts flourishing, albeit with a small effect size (Table 7).

The coefficients for the impact of gender, age, economic status of families, and academic year on flourishing examine the effects of these demographic factors on this measure of well-being. Academic year has a significant negative effect ($p = 0.002$), suggesting that as students progress through academic years, their level of flourishing tends to decrease. Gender, age, and economic status of families do not significantly predict flourishing in this sample.

4.5. Regression analysis of gender, age, economic status of families, and academic year on benign and malicious envy

A multiple regression analysis was conducted to examine the contribution of gender, age, family economic status, and academic year to the dependent variables: benign and malicious envy (Table 8). The analysis revealed that the model's explanatory power is relatively low, with an R² value of $-.001$ for benign envy and .008 for malicious envy. Despite the low explanatory power, the overall model fit was not statistically significant for benign envy ($F = .872$, $p = 0.481$) and for malicious envy ($F = 1.801$, $p = 0.128$), indicating that gender, age, family

Table 4

Contribution of benign and malicious envy to flourishing.

Model	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Regression	3562.668	1781.334	52.490	.000	.457	.209	.205
Residual	13506.716	33.936	—	—	—	—	—
Total	17069.384	—	—	—	—	—	—

Table 5

Results of the effect of benign and malicious envy on flourishing.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
Benign envy	.537	.069	.348	7.808	.001
Malicious envy	−.522	.082	−.283	−6.342	.001

economic status, and academic year did not contribute significantly to either benign or malicious envy.

5. Discussion

Our study provides valuable insights into the relationship between envy and flourishing among university students in Algeria, offering a unique perspective within an Islamic cultural context. The results reveal a significant positive correlation between benign envy and flourishing, suggesting that individuals who aspire to emulate others' success tend to experience higher levels of psychological well-being. Conversely, we found a negative correlation between malicious envy and flourishing, indicating that harboring resentment towards others' success is associated with lower psychological well-being. These findings align with and extend the existing literature on envy and psychological well-being. Ng et al. (2021) conducted a series of studies on young adults and adolescents, finding similar patterns in the relationship between dispositional envy and flourishing. Their research showed that dispositional malicious envy was negatively associated with flourishing, while dispositional benign envy was positively linked. Our results in the Algerian context corroborate these findings, suggesting a cross-cultural consistency in the impact of different types of envy on psychological well-being. Ma et al. (2024) employed a diary approach to investigate within-person associations among benign/malicious envy, self-esteem, perceived social support, and subjective well-being. Their findings revealed opposite effects of benign and malicious envy on subjective well-being within individuals, which aligns with our results. While their study focused on young women, our research extends these findings to a more diverse sample of university students in Algeria, including both genders. Briki's (2019) cross-sectional study on dispositional envy and subjective well-being found that dispositional benign envy positively predicted subjective well-being, while dispositional malicious envy negatively predicted it. Our results are consistent with Briki's findings, further validating the distinction between benign and malicious envy and their differential impacts on psychological well-being. The longitudinal study by Mujcic and Oswald (2018) on envy's impact on psychological health and well-being provides a broader context for our findings. Their research highlighted the social dangers of widespread envy, particularly among younger individuals. While our cross-sectional study

complements their findings by focusing on university students, a demographic that Mujcic and Oswald identified as particularly susceptible to envy's negative effects.

A key aspect of our study is its focus on the Islamic cultural context of Algeria. Islamic teachings emphasize contentment (qana'ah) and warn against envy (hasad), which may influence how envy is experienced and expressed in this setting. The positive relationship between benign envy and flourishing could be interpreted within this cultural framework, where the aspiration to improve oneself without ill will towards others aligns with Islamic values. Conversely, the negative impact of malicious envy on flourishing could be amplified in a culture that explicitly discourages such feelings. Our findings highlight the importance of distinguishing between benign and malicious envy in understanding psychological well-being, particularly in an Islamic context. The results suggest that fostering a culture that encourages healthy aspiration (benign envy) while discouraging resentment and ill will (malicious envy) could contribute to higher levels of flourishing among university students. This study contributes to the literature by examining envy and flourishing in the specific cultural context of Algeria, providing insights into how these constructs interact in an Islamic setting. Future research could explore how specific Islamic teachings and practices might moderate the relationship between envy and psychological well-being, potentially offering culturally sensitive interventions to promote flourishing among university students in Muslim societies. Our study reinforces the importance of considering cultural context in understanding the relationship between envy and psychological well-being. It provides evidence that the distinction between benign and malicious envy is relevant in an Algerian university setting. It offers valuable insights for educators and mental health professionals working with this population.

The study's findings offer valuable insights into the factors influencing well-being among university students in Muslim societies. Contrary to expectations, neither gender nor economic status significantly contributed to flourishing, suggesting that factors beyond simple demographic categories in this Algerian context shape well-being. The key finding was that the academic year significantly predicted flourishing, with more advanced students exhibiting lower levels of well-being. This trend can be attributed to the heightened expectations and

Table 7

Coefficients for the impact of gender, age, economic status of families, and academic year on flourishing.

Model	Unstandardized Coefficients		Standardized Coefficients	t	Sig.
	B	Std. Error			
Gender	.028	.982	.001	.029	.977
Age	.128	.081	.088	1.575	.116
Economic status of families	1.029	.796	.065	1.293	.197
Academic year	−.822	.258	−.173	−3.181	.002

Table 6

Contribution of gender, age, economic status, and academic year on flourishing.

Model	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Regression	498.793	124.698	2.980	.019	.171	.029	.019
Residual	16570.591	41.845	—	—	—	—	—
Total	17069.384	—	—	—	—	—	—

Table 8
Contribution of gender, age, economic status, and academic year on benign and malicious envy.

Dependent Variable: benign							
Model	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Regression	62.744	15.686	.872	.481	.093	.009	-.001
Residual	7125.109	17.993	–	–	–	–	–
Total	7187.853	–	–	–	–	–	–
Dependent Variable: Malicious							
Model	Sum of Squares	Mean Square	F	Sig.	R	R Square	Adjusted R Square
Regression	89.774	22.444	1.801	.128	.134	.018	.008
Residual	4935.133	12.462	–	–	–	–	–
Total	5024.907	–	–	–	–	–	–

responsibilities faced by advanced students, which often lead to increased stress and anxiety. The transition to higher academic levels typically involves more rigorous coursework, contributing to a decline in mental well-being and overall flourishing (Hirshberg et al., 2022). These results emphasize the importance of considering students’ developmental trajectories when designing well-being interventions. Future research should investigate how academic progression affects flourishing through longitudinal and qualitative studies, considering the unique cultural context.

Results also revealed that gender, age, family economic status, and academic year did not significantly predict benign or malicious envy levels. These findings suggest that these demographic factors may not adequately explain variations in envy. It is likely that other psychological factors, such as personality traits or situational contexts, play a more substantial role. Future research should explore these dimensions to better understand the determinants of benign and malicious envy.

5.1. Theoretical implications

Our research enriches the frameworks for understanding envy and flourishing within Islamic cultural settings. By demonstrating the different impacts of benign and malicious envy on psychological well-being, our study deepens the comprehension of envy’s mechanisms and overall effect on flourishing. Importantly, our findings reveal that the relationship between envy and flourishing in Muslim society is consistent with that observed in other cultural contexts, underscoring the universality of these dynamics. This highlights the necessity for culturally sensitive research and intervention strategies that can be broadly applicable across various cultural settings.

5.2. Practical implications

Our findings have significant implications for interventions to enhance psychological well-being among university students in Muslim societies. By identifying the distinct roles of benign and malicious envy in shaping flourishing, our study offers valuable insights for developing targeted interventions that address envy-related issues and promote resilience and psychological well-being among young adults. Given that envy and flourishing are similar across different cultural contexts, adopting universally applicable and culturally sensitive approaches is crucial, ensuring effective strategies to tackle envy-related challenges and foster positive mental health outcomes.

5.3. Limitations and future directions

Despite the valuable insights gained from our study, it’s important to acknowledge certain limitations. The sample size and demographic characteristics of our study population may limit the generalizability of our findings to other university students in Muslim societies. Furthermore, the cross-sectional nature of our study prevents making causal inferences about the relationship between envy and flourishing. Future

research could overcome these limitations by employing longitudinal designs and more prominent, more diverse samples to explore further the dynamics of envy and flourishing within Islamic cultural contexts.

6. Conclusion

In summary, our study advances understanding of the relationship between envy and flourishing among university students in Islamic societies, highlighting the differing impacts of benign and malicious envy on psychological well-being. By elucidating these dynamics, our findings offer valuable insights for both research and practical applications aimed at promoting positive mental health outcomes in culturally diverse contexts. Adopting culturally sensitive approaches that recognize envy’s role within Muslim societies is crucial for developing effective interventions to support young adults’ flourishing in these communities.

CRediT authorship contribution statement

Aiche Sabah: Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Supervision, Software, Resources, Project administration, Methodology, Investigation, Formal analysis, Data curation, Conceptualization. **Musheer A. Aljaberi:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Resources, Methodology, Investigation, Conceptualization. **Siti Aishah Hassan:** Writing – review & editing, Writing – original draft, Visualization, Validation, Resources.

Declaration of competing interest

The authors declare that they have no known competing financial interests or personal relationships that could have appeared to influence the work reported in this paper.

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