

RESEARCH ARTICLE

Measuring Envy Level among Students of a Faculty of Medicine

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Abstract

Envy is a negative emotion that painful and unpleasant, caused by feelings of inferiority when someone compared themselves to others. Envy is divided into benign and malicious envy. Benign envy could be leverage to motivate someone to improve themselves until they reach or even exceed the envied person's level. In contrast, malicious is destructive that someone could do anything to pull the envied person down to the same level as themselves or even lower. This study aimed to measure benign and malicious envy among the students of the Faculty of Medicine Universitas Islam Bandung. It was a descriptive study involving 152 students. Measurement made using the Benign and Malicious Envy Scale (BeMaS), which uses 6 points Likert scale during November 2019. Data analysis using Microsoft Excel. The study results showed envy among the students dominated by positive or productive envy, the mean value for benign envy (4.57), and malicious envy (1.92). It showed that benign envy push students to be more competitive rather than destructive envy. The conclusion of this study that the level of envy students of the Faculty of Medicine Universitas Islam Bandung dominated by benign envy. The faculty is responsible for developing strategies to increase the benign envy level and control the malicious envy level.

Key words: BeMaS, benign envy, envy, malicious envy

Pengukuran Tingkat Iri pada Mahasiswa Fakultas Kedokteran

Abstrak

Iri adalah emosi negatif menyakitkan dan tidak menyenangkan yang diakibatkan oleh perasaan inferior ketika membandingkan diri dengan orang lain. Iri terbagi atas *benign envy* dan *malicious envy*. *Benign envy* bersifat memotivasi seseorang untuk terus memperbaiki diri sampai mencapai bahkan melebihi apa yang dimiliki kompetitornya. Sebaliknya, *malicious envy* bersifat destruktif ketika seseorang berupaya untuk menarik kompetitornya ke level yang sama dengan dirinya atau bahkan lebih rendah. Penelitian ini bertujuan mengukur tingkat *benign* dan *malicious envy* pada mahasiswa Fakultas Kedokteran Universitas Islam Bandung. Penelitian ini merupakan penelitian deskriptif dengan melibatkan 152 mahasiswa sebagai subjek penelitian. Pengukuran dilakukan menggunakan *Benign and Malicious Envy Scale* (BeMaS) selama November 2019 menggunakan 6 poin Skala Likert dan analisis data menggunakan Microsoft Excel. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa rerata *benign envy* (4,57) lebih tinggi dibanding dengan *malicious envy* (1,92). Hal ini menunjukkan bahwa iri yang bersifat positif atau produktif jauh lebih tinggi dibanding dengan nilai iri yang bersifat destruktif. Simpulan penelitian ini adalah bahwa tingkat iri pada mahasiswa Fakultas Kedokteran Universitas Islam Bandung lebih dominan pada *benign envy* dibanding dengan *malicious envy*. Tugas fakultas adalah mengembangkan strategi agar dapat meningkatkan nilai *benign envy* serta berupaya mengendalikan tingkat *malicious envy*.

Kata kunci: BeMas, *benign envy*, iri, *malicious envy*

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Introduction

In organizational or social life, emotions can impact attitudes, behavior, cognition, and even personality.¹ One of the emotions that occurs in social life today in a world full of competition is envy. To define envy, many researchers referred to the definitions of Parrott and Smith and Kim and Smith. They defined envy as painful and unpleasant negative emotions caused by feelings of inferiority that arise due to comparing themselves to others who are considered to be more superior.²⁻⁸ Another definition by Adrianson and Ramdhani⁹ described envy as a mixed and vague feeling, but also accompanied by inferiority and desire to have what others have. Envy can make a person stimulated to compete and try to narrow the gap with the envied person.^{5,10}

We generally associate envy with something wicked or sinful, but previous studies about envy revealed that envy could also have ethical impacts on someone's life. Envy can be divided into two, benign and malicious envy.^{3,9,11} Xiang et al.¹² quoted Smith stated that the difference between benign and malicious envy is hostility. Benign envy is never accompanied by hostility, while malicious envy is mostly accompanied by anger, hatred, and hostility.

Benign envy is positive envy. Benign envy stimulates someone to compete and achieve or even exceed every quality owned by the envied person. It leverages someone to push themselves up to have the same quality as the envied person.^{5,10,12-15} According to van de Ven et al.,⁵ the feeling of benign envy motivates a person to improve themselves to reach and even exceed their goals. Whereas malicious envy is destructive. It stimulates someone to pull the envied person down to the same level as theirs or even lower.^{3,5,10-15} Some studies showed that malicious envy is associated with mental disorders^{16,17} and poor behavior.^{2,4,13}

In line with the studies above, envy in Islam also divided into two, *ghibtah* (benign envy) and *hasad* (malicious envy). Khan and Gani¹⁸ quoted Shaykh Mufi Shafi Usmani as saying that *ghibtah* means having the same blessings as those of others without any intention of seizing the blessings. On the other hand, *hasad* is hatred for other's blessings. In Islam, *hasad* is considered as the disease of the heart and sin, which can deplete goodness.^{18,19}

Studies on envy have already been conducted

in various fields such as work environment, organizations, salespersons, and education. Someone could feel envy for others in personal development, materials, social relations, romance, family, faith, physical performance, and academic performance.²⁰ In the world of the work environment, benign envy proved to be related to increased self-esteem,¹⁵ motivation, job satisfaction,^{14,21} and success.²² While malicious envy is associated with low self-esteem,¹⁵ job satisfaction, and a tendency to change profession.^{14,21} Another study showed that malicious envy in the work environment could influence cognitive processes and cause negative behavior.²³

In the education world, students are guided not only to build friendships and cooperation but also to compete with each other to perform the best academic achievement. This competition can eventually spark envy. Sitinjak²⁴ conducted one of the studies on envy that was done among students. In his study, Sitinjak showed that envy stimulated students to work and study harder to improve their academic performance.

Other studies on envy conducted among students carried out by Xiang et al.,¹² which linked benign and malicious envy with gratitude and social support. The study revealed that gratitude is directly linked to benign envy and inversely to malicious envy. The higher the gratitude, the higher the level of benign envy and the lower the level of malicious envy. Another study carried out by Vrabel et al.¹⁵ also showed that students experienced a higher level of malicious envy with low admiration rates, a high level of rivalry, and a low level of self-esteem.

Measuring the level of benign and malicious envy among students of faculty of medicine can help the faculty develop strategies to improve student's academic performance. The competitive environment in the faculty has pushed the students to show their best academic performance. Based on these reasons, this study aimed to measure the level of benign and malicious envy among students of the Faculty of Medicine Universitas Islam Bandung.

Methods

A descriptive study was conducted in November 2019 involving 152 students of the Faculty of Medicine Universitas Islam Bandung using consecutive sampling. Measurements made using

the benign and malicious envy scale (BeMaS) developed by Lange and Crusius,¹³ that have been translated into Indonesian. On this scale, ten statements consist of five statements for each benign and malicious envy. The benign envy statements were numbers 1, 3, 4, 7, and 9, while the malicious envy statements were numbers 2, 5, 6, 8, and 10 in 6 points value each statement Likert scale. The reliability value of BeMaS is $\alpha=0.85$.^{10,12,13,24}

Measurements are made by disseminating the scale via Google forms to students. Participants were asked to rate each statement using a Likert scale from 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). To reduce bias, we did not ask for name or grade, and we also did not include the title of the scale in the forms. Data analyzed with simple descriptive statistical analysis using Microsoft Excel to measure the means and standard deviations.

The study protocol was approved by the Health Research Ethics Committee of the Faculty of Medicine, Universitas Islam Bandung, Indonesia through the issuance of the ethical approval letter number: 292/Komite Etik.FK/IV/2019.

Results

The characteristic of respondents described in Tabel 1. The respondents dominated by a female (67.8%) and age between 16–20 (56.6%).

The results of this study are described in Table 2, it can be seen that the mean value of benign envy (4.57) is higher than malicious envy (1.92). In benign envy, the greatest mean is the statement about self-improvement (5.29). In malicious envy, the greatest mean is the statement regarding hatred for the envied person (2.06). The result was obtained by calculating the mean

value of benign envy from item 1, 3, 4, 7, and 9, and mean value of malicious envy from item number 2, 5, 6, 8, and 10. Mean value obtained from the sum of participant answer on 6 points Likert scale on every item.¹³

Discussion

Envy is a negative emotion that arises from an inferior feeling when someone compares themselves to the envied person who is considered to have better quality than themselves. That feeling then stimulates the desire to achieve the same level or even more.^{2–8} Envy can occur in every field, including in the world of education. Based on the results of this study, it can be seen that the mean value of benign envy is higher than malicious envy. It shows that envy is dominated by positive envy, which can encourage students to achieve better academic performances rather than hostility to the envied person.

Based on the study conducted by Crusius and Lange,³ a person with benign envy focus on both the envied person and the envied object. In contrast, malicious envy only focuses on the envied person rather than the envied object. It showed that there was different motivation between benign and malicious envy. In relevance to this study, it showed that the students compete not only with other students, but also chasing for envy objects such as grade, activity, or performance.

According to Sitinjak,²⁴ when the students felt envy, it would become the motivation to work harder, improving attitudes, and being more active in academic activities. Sitinjak also stated that the smaller value of malicious envy does not mean that it must be ignored, but it must be controlled that it would not develop more destructive. In line with Sitinjak²⁴ and Lange and Crusius,¹³ also showed that benign envy was linked to motivation for success, whereas malicious envy was linked to anxiety or fear to reach some standard or goals.

In this current study, even though the malicious envy level is lower than the benign envy level, that does not mean that it can be ignored. The faculty is responsible for facilitating students to control and limit malicious envy level. Armalita and Helmi²⁵ that quoted Smith and Kim, showed that envy caused conflict in an interpersonal relationship, including the conflict in a group.

Table 1 Characteristics of the Respondents

Characteristics	n=152	%
Gender		
Male	49	32.2
Female	103	67.8
Age (years)		
16–20	86	56.6
21–25	66	42.8

Table 2 The Benign and Malicious Envy Level among Students of the Faculty of Medicine

BeMaS Item	Benign Envy	Malicious Envy
When I envy others, I focus on how I can become equally successful in the future.	4.67	–
I wish that superior people lose their advantage.	–	1.86
If I notice that another person is better than me, I try to improve myself.	5.29	–
Envyng others motivates me to accomplish my goals.	4.31	–
If other people have something that I want for myself, I wish to take it away from them.	–	1.93
I feel ill will toward people I envy.	–	2.06
I strive to reach other people's superior achievements.	3.82	–
Envious feelings cause me to dislike the other person.	–	2.05
If someone has superior qualities, achievements, or possessions, I try to attain them for myself.	4.56	–
Seeing other people's achievements makes me resent them.	–	1.66
Mean	4.57	1.92
Standard Deviation	0.68	0.73

Students are divided into groups for academic activities such as tutorials or laboratory activities in the faculty of medicine. If the faculty ignored the malicious envy level, it could develop into more destructive and cause great friction in groups, which could influence academics performance. To avoid the development of malicious envy, an activity like peer assessment which can be used to develop teamwork skill, discussion skill and also to learn to handle feedback from other students.²⁶

Based on a study conducted by Xiang et al.,¹² envy relates to gratitude and social support. Students with higher benign envy levels usually full of gratitude and have higher social support, vice versa. It showed that gratitude and social support are essential to increase benign envy and reduce the level of malicious envy. The faculty's current responsibility is to facilitate students with activities to increase gratitude and provide optimal social support. In this Faculty of Medicine, the activities implemented to develop the specific advantages, known as Islamic Insert Medical Curriculum (IIMC).

The limitation of this study was that the measurement was only conducted for the envy level. In the future, another study must be conducted to show the relationship or influence of envy on group dynamics and academic

performances that Faculty can develop strategies to increase student motivations.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this study that the level of envy students of the Faculty of Medicine Universitas Islam Bandung dominated by benign envy. The faculty is responsible for facilitating the students with positive activities to increase the benign envy level and control malicious envy level.

Conflict of Interest

All researchers do not have a conflict of interest with the subjects of this study.

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