

# What are The Roles of Narcissism, Self-Efficacy, Perfectionism, Loneliness and Depression on Benign and Malicious Envy?

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## Keywords

Envy, depression, narcissism, perfectionism, self-efficacy, loneliness

## Anahtar kelimeler

Haset, depresyon, narsisizm, mükemmeliyetçilik, öz yeterlik, yalnızlık

## Abstract

Malicious and benign envy are quite complex emotions that have attracted attention in recent years. This study aimed to further evaluate the predictor roles of the demographics as well as level of depression, narcissism, self-efficacy, loneliness and perfection on malicious envy and benign envy. A total of 430 participants (305 women, 125 men) aged between 18 and 64 participated in the study. Beck Depression Inventory, Pathological Narcissism Inventory, Big Three Perfectionism Scale, UCLA Loneliness Scale, The General Self-Efficacy Scale, and Benign and Malicious Envy Scale were administered. Data were collected from April 15<sup>th</sup> to August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021 through online survey. Hierarchical multiple regression analyses measured the predictor roles of study variables in malicious envy and benign envy. Older age was linked to decreased benign envy, while higher education level was associated with increased benign envy. The level of vulnerable narcissism, and self-efficacy was positively, while grandiose narcissism and depression was negatively associated with benign envy. Any of the perfection domains and loneliness were not related to the benign envy. Demographical variables (except for residence) and loneliness were not linked to malicious envy. The level of vulnerable narcissism, narcissistic perfection, and depression were positively; whereas self-efficacy was negatively associated with malicious envy. In conclusion, vulnerable narcissism, self-efficacy, and depression may impact on malicious envy and benign envy, separately.

## Narsisizm, Öz Yeterlilik, Mükemmeliyetçilik, Yalnızlık ve Depresyonun Haset ve Gıptadaki Rolü Nedir?

### Öz

Haset ve gıpta, son yıllarda dikkat çeken oldukça karmaşık duygulardır. Bu çalışma, demografik özelliklerin yanı sıra depresyon, narsisizm, öz yeterlilik, yalnızlık ve mükemmeliyetçilik düzeylerinin haset ve gıpta üzerindeki yordayıcı rollerini değerlendirmeyi amaçlamıştır. Çalışmaya 18-64 yaşları arasında toplam 430 katılımcı (305 kadın, 125 erkek) katılmıştır. Beck Depresyon Envanteri, Patolojik Narsisizm Envanteri, Büyük Üçlü Mükemmeliyetçilik Ölçeği, UCLA Yalnızlık Ölçeği, Genel Öz Yeterlilik Ölçeği ve Haset ve Gıpta Ölçeği uygulanmıştır. Veriler 15 Nisan - 28 Ağustos 2021 tarihleri arasında çevrimiçi anket yoluyla toplanmıştır. Hiyerarşik çoklu regresyon analizleri, değişkenlerin haset ve gıpta üzerindeki yordayıcı rollerini ölçmek için kullanılmıştır. İleri yaş gıptanın azalmasıyla ilişkiliyken, eğitim düzeyinin yükselmesi gıptanın artmasıyla ilişkiliydi. Kırılgan narsisizm ve öz yeterlilik düzeyi gıpta ile pozitif yönde, büyüklenneci narsisizm ve depresyon ise negatif yönde ilişkiliydi. Mükemmeliyetçilik alt boyutlarından hiçbiri ve yalnızlık gıpta ile ilişkili değildi. Demografik değişkenler (ikamet yeri hariç) ve yalnızlık haset ile ilişkili değildi. Kırılgan narsisizm, narsisistik mükemmeliyetçilik ve depresyon düzeyi haset ile pozitif yönde; öz yeterlilik ise negatif yönde ilişkiliydi. Sonuç olarak, kırılgan narsisizm, öz yeterlilik ve depresyon haset ve gıptayı ayrı ayrı etkileyebilmektedir.

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The feeling of envy is a complex feeling that contains many emotional elements. According to research, envy occurs across all cultures and affects the majority of people at some point in their lives (Schoeck, 1969; Smith et al., 1999). According to Smith et al. (1999), envy is the feeling sparked when one wishes something what other one has. It happens when two people exhibit mutual comparison (Schoeck, 1969), and what is noticed as lacking should be meaningful for the self-definition of the person (Cohen-Charash & Larson, 2017). According to Meier and Johnson (2022), people who compare themselves to others are likely to feel envious. Higher comparison is associated with increased envy (Schreurs et al., 2023). Envy has basically two principal affective components. The hostile constituent is linked to feelings of hostility and rage brought on by subjective injustice beliefs, whereas the depressive constituent is linked to feelings of inadequacy brought on by negative social comparison (Parrot & Smith, 1993). After comparison, the determinants of an individual's tendency to elevate oneself to the level of the other or to bring the other to his/her level are the evaluation of personal capacity, the acceptance that the feeling of envy originates from himself, and the belief that others as well as himself are worthy of good. The different combinations of these three determine the differences in the transformation of emotion into behavior (Berman, 2007).

Recently, while the majority of recent studies on envy have primarily addressed its malevolent side, which is connected to unfavorable attitudes and behaviors, other studies have also highlighted envy's positive features (e.g., Smith & Kim, 2007). The positive aspect of envy, called benign envy (Rawls, 1999) or non-malicious envy (Parrot & Smith, 1993), is mainly distinguished from the malevolent dimension by the absence of hostility. According to Van de Ven et al. (2009), benign envy is a type of envy in which the victim displays favorable traits including greater work drive and improved performance. For example, it makes it possible for someone to achieve positive and upward-moving approaches, particularly in an organizational context (Jafri, 2020). While benign envy is anticipated to drive the envious to develop themselves in order to reach their desired level, malicious envy will motivate the envious to level down others in order to lose their supremacy and benefits (Van de Ven et al., 2009). Based on the functional perspective of emotion, these two varieties of envy are distinguished (Van de Ven, 2016). In addition, envy can be either benign or malignant, depending on whether someone is hoping for success or fearing failure, respectively (Lange & Crusius, 2014). Despite methodological and measurement challenges when investigating the two subtypes of envy, as well as the lack of theoretical and empirical support to distinguish between the two subtypes of envy (see Cohen-Charash & Larson, 2017), recently, various studies demonstrated significant different roles of both subtypes of envy (Lange et al., 2016; Van de Ven, 2017). When someone feels they have much control over a status threat and thinks the person they are jealous of has earned their success, they may experience benign envy. (Lange et al., 2016; Van de Ven et al., 2012). It was linked to appreciation for the object of the envy (Van de Ven et al., 2009), a shift in focus toward strategies for achieving the object of the envy (Crusius & Lange, 2014), and real improvement behavior (Lange & Crusius, 2015b; Van de Ven et al., 2011). It was related to admiration for the individual who was being envious (Van de Ven et al., 2009), a shift in focus toward strategies for achieving the envied advantage (Crusius & Lange, 2014) as well as real improvement behavior (Lange & Crusius, 2015b; Van de Ven et al., 2011). On the other hand, malicious envy is triggered when the envious feels they have little control over the status threat and believes the envied person's achievement is unjustified (Lange et al., 2016; Van de Ven et al., 2012). It was linked to envy-related resentment (Van de Ven et al., 2009), a change in focus on the object of the envious behavior (Lange & Crusius, 2014), and actual destructive activity (Van de Ven et al., 2015; Lange & Crusius, 2015b).

Narcissism (Kohut, 1977, Kernberg, 2009) is one of the associated factors with envy. Narcissism, in its essence, includes meeting the individual's desires for respect and approval, but it is the self-affirming

expectations from the social environment, implicitly or explicitly, in order to maintain the individual's relatively positive self-perception and the capacity to regulate his boundaries (Pincus & Roche, 2011). Considering grandiose narcissism (Back et al., 2013), in social comparison situations, individuals who have greater amounts of narcissistic admiration perceive greater control to change the situation and feel more benign envy for the superior person, whereas people with higher levels of narcissistic rivalry perceive more injustice and are more maliciously envious of those who are superior (Lange et al., 2016). In the first, the underlying factors are explained as the desire to gain social admiration and the effort to express oneself, while in the latter, it is explained as the desire to be protected from social failure and the self-defense reaction. In addition, benign envy is associated with narcissism (Lange et al., 2014) and marked by negative affect and the feeling of strong frustration (e.g., Crusius & Lange, 2014). In another study, vulnerable narcissism fostered envy towards a high-status peer and was consistently and substantially connected to dispositional envy and also all of the cognitive-affective components of envy (Krizan & Johar, 2012). On the other hand, based on informant reports on the perceptions of envy or the cognitive-affective components of the emotion were not predicted by grandiose narcissism, it did not enhance envy toward a peer with high social status (Krizan & Johar, 2012).

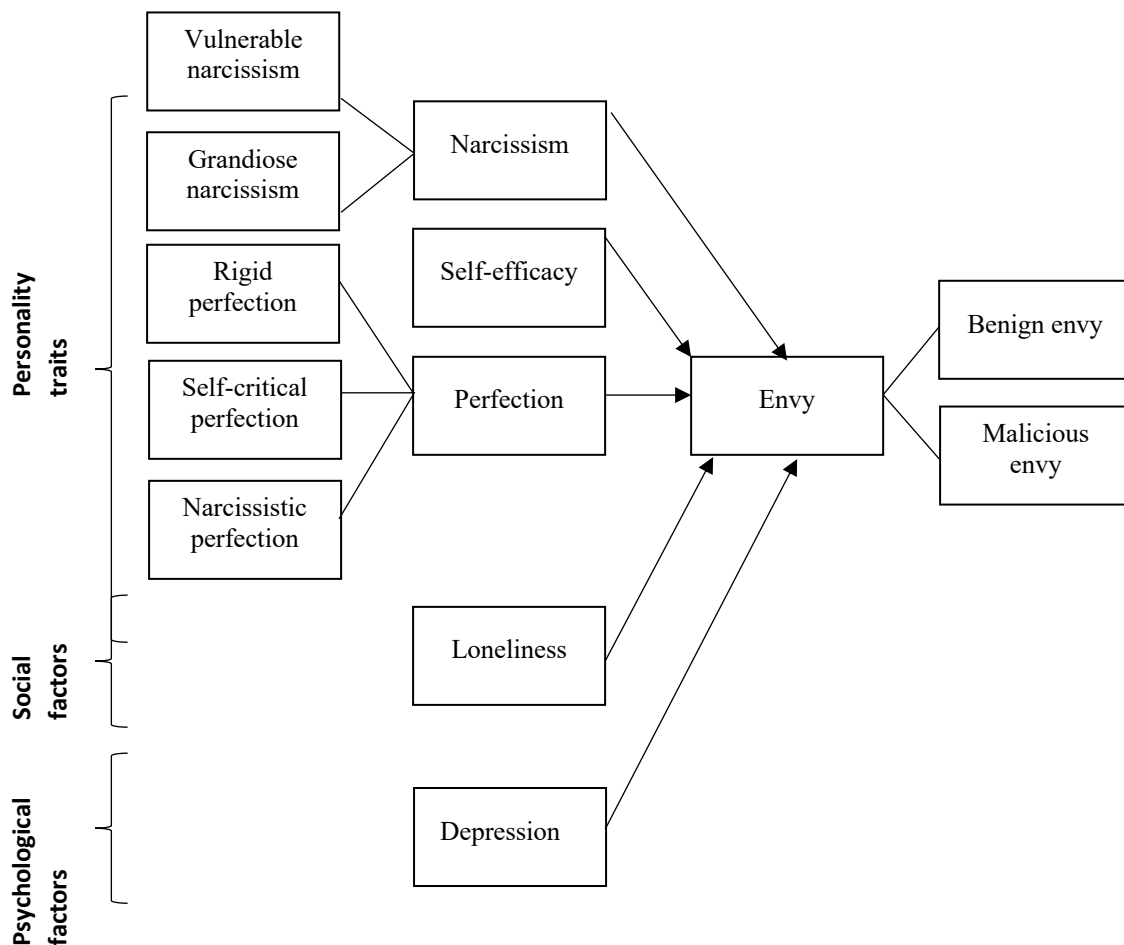
Another component connected to envy is perfectionism, which is a multifaceted personality trait defined by excessively high standards and excessively critical self-evaluation (Frost et al., 1990). According to a study by Garanian et al. (2018), students who scored higher on the perfectionism scale had considerably higher levels of envy, hypercompetitiveness, depression, and contrastive upward social comparisons than those who scored lower on the perfectionism scale. In addition, the association between perfectionism and depression was only slightly mediated by envy and social comparison orientation. Similarly, perfectionism, physical violence, and hostile attitudes were all substantially correlated with dispositional envy (Rentzsch & Gross, 2015).

Despite the increasing attention on literature, self-efficacy is one of the other concepts that has been scarcely studied in the context of envy but represents a promising mechanism to define underlying factors. Having low self-efficacy and self-worth is a major contributor to envy (Smith & Kim, 2007; Van de Ven et al., 2009), and self-efficacy may be reduced by envy (Xiang et al., 2019). Similarly, in another study by Jahri (2020), there was a significant positive correlation between self-efficacy and benign envy.

Another concept that is thought to be related to envy and investigated in this study is loneliness. Since loneliness has been identified as a representative predictor of one's psychological well-being (Cohen, 2004), it can be described as emotions of discontent with one's social contacts and social isolation. Both types of envy are positively impacted by upward comparison, but only malicious envy functioned and served as a mediating factor in the path of loneliness (Lim & Yang, 2019). According to a different study, one's grandiosity as displayed in Facebook posts has a considerable impact on the loneliness of other users through malicious (not benign) envy (Lim & Kim, 2018). The broad framework provided by cognitive emotion theory (e.g. Lazarus & Folkman, 1984) helps us better understand the origins and consequences of envy. According to this, Lim and Yang (2015) have hypothesized that envy leads to loneliness. Going a step further, it is worthwhile looking at the predictive role of loneliness in envy in the current study.

In this study, the last concept addressed in relation to envy is depression. In addition to increasing the risk of depression directly, envy also raises the risk of depression indirectly by weakening psychological resilience and reducing social support (Xiang et al., 2019). Depression-related chronic inferiority and low self-efficacy can leave people open to status threats and encourage malicious envy (Appel et al., 2016).

Based on the previous studies, assuming that personality traits, psychological and social factors may play a part in predicting benign envy and malicious envy from different extent, the variables of narcissism, self-efficacy, perfectionism, loneliness and depression were selected in the current study. The contribution of this study is to provide a holistic framework by compiling these variables into a model. Theoretical framework of the study was demonstrated in Figure 1.



**Figure 1.** Theoretical framework of the study

The goal of the current study is to determine the roles of the socio-demographics, personality traits, social, and psychological factors in predicting both forms of envy (i.e. benign and malicious). As for demographic variables, the previous studies suggested that the relationships between envy and sex is inconsistent. While some studies reported no links between envy and sex (Briki, 2019; Pila et al. 2014; Rentzsch & Gross 2015), others showed that men reported lower levels of envy than did women (Rentzsch & Gross 2015). The studies also showed that envy were negatively associated with age (Briki, 2019; Rentzsch & Gross 2015), indicating that people are less likely to use other people as a useful standard for judging their own worth and status as they get older. Thus, taking into consideration of such a broad range of demographic variables are important and meaningful for researchers in Turkey as well as international colleagues. In addition, there are limited studies in Turkey on envy. A scale adaptation study on benign and malicious envy

(Çırpan & Özüdoğru, 2017), and another study examining the relationship of work engagement and work addiction with benign envy, malicious envy and attachment styles in the workplace (Mücevher & Gül, 2023), another study examining the relationship between self-efficacy, malicious or benign envy in nurses (Polat et al., 2024), another study on the resolution of Gen Z's envy (Dedeoğlu et al., 2023), and social psychological evaluation on envy (Kaynak, 2020). With previous research on benign envy and malicious envy, we aimed to investigate:

1. as an explanatory hypothesis, the predictor roles of demographic factors (age, gender, education, income, residence and marital status) in predicting benign and malicious envy, separately.
2. the predictor roles of narcissism and perfection domains, self-efficacy, loneliness, depression and benign / malicious envy levels in predicting benign envy and malicious envy, separately.

## Method

### Participants

A total of 430 participants (305 women, 125 men) aged between 18 and 64 ( $M = 33.98$ ,  $SD = 11.99$ ) completed an online survey. Due to being outlier ( $n=14$ ) and having psychiatric/psychological diagnosis ( $n=5$ ), the data of 19 participants were not included the final sample. Data were collected from April 15<sup>th</sup> to August 28<sup>th</sup>, 2021. After removals, the duration of data collection of the final sample was 75 days ( $M = 43.40$ ,  $SD = 22.38$ ), between April 15<sup>th</sup> and June 28<sup>th</sup>. This cross-sectional and self-reporting study was conducted via an online survey. The data for this study was generated using Survey software, Copyright 2009, <http://www.surveey.com>. Study protocols and procedures were approved by Ankara University Ethics Committee (Decision date: 03/29/2021, No: 05/98). Demographic information for study sample was demonstrated in Table 1.

Table 1  
*Demographic Information for the Study Sample*

Variables	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>
Age (18-64)	33.98	11.99
<b>Gender</b>	<i>N</i>	<i>%</i>
Female	305	70.9
Male	125	29.1
<b>1.Education level</b>		
Up to high school ( $\leq 12$ years)	142	33.0
University and above ( $>12$ years)	288	67.0
<b>Monthly income</b>		
Low	57	13.3
Middle	312	72.6
High	61	14.2
<b>Residence place</b>		
Metropolis	284	66.0
Province/ Town/Village	146	34.0
<b>Marital status</b>		
Married	190	44.2
Single	240	55.8

M = Mean; SD = Standard deviation

### Measurements

**Demographic Information Form:** Participants reported their age, gender, educational level, income, residence, relationship status and lifetime and current psychiatric diagnoses and treatment in this form.

**Beck Depression Inventory** (BDI; Beck et al., 1974; Hisli, 1989a; 1989b) is a measure of depressive symptoms including vegetative, affective and cognitive symptoms, consisting of 21 items with a response options between 0-3 to indicate severity of each symptom. In the adaptation study conducted with the sample consisting of participants with psychiatric diagnoses, the split-half reliability value was .74, while as for criterion validity, the correlation between MMPI and BDI was .63 (Hisli, 1989a), whereas in the adaptation study conducted with university students, the split-half reliability value was .74, and the correlation between MMPI and BDI was .50 for criterion validity (Hisli, 1989b). The Turkish version is reliable and valid instrument. In this study, BDI has demonstrated strong internal consistency with  $\alpha = .89$ .

**Pathological Narcissism Inventory** (PNI; Pincus et al., 2009; Şen & Barışkın, 2019) is a 6-point, 52-item scale ranging from 0 (not at all like me) to 5 (very much like me), measurement tool that assess grandiose and vulnerable narcissism. The PNE is suitable for both normal and clinical use (Pincus 2013). The Turkish version's test-retest reliability is  $r = .91$  and its Cronbach alpha for the sub-dimensions ranges between .78 and .93 for six factor (i.e., Contingent self-esteem, exploitative, self-sacrificing / self-enhancement, hiding self, grandiose fantasy, devaluing, entitlement rage). In the current study we used two dimensions. The internal consistency coefficient for grandiose narcissism was  $\alpha = .51$ , and it was  $\alpha = .94$  for vulnerable narcissism.

**Big Three Perfectionism Scale** (BTPS-16; Feher et al., 2020; Kaçar-Başaran et al., 2020) designed to assess perfectionism's several facets (i.e. rigid, self-critical, and narcissistic). Each item was rated by participants on a scale of 1 to 5, with 1 representing "strongly disagree," and 5 representing "strongly agree." The Cronbach alpha is .85 for rigid perfectionism, .86 for self-critical perfectionism, and .75 for narcissistic perfectionism subscales of the Turkish version of BTPS-16. Factor analysis verified that BTPS-16 is a valid instrument. In the current study, the BTPS-16 has a good internal consistency with  $\alpha = .89$ . Cronbach alpha coefficients are .79, .82, and .76 for rigid, self-critical, and narcissistic perfectionism sub-dimensions, respectively.

**UCLA Loneliness Scale** (UCLA-8; Doğan et al., 2011; Hays & DiMatteo, 1987) is a 4 point Likert type (1-never to 4-often), eight-item scale. High scores are taken to indicate a high level of loneliness. In the Turkish version, factor analysis and criterion validity verified the validity of the instrument and the Cronbach alpha value verified the reliability of the scale with a value of .72. In this study, UCLA-8 has good internal consistency with  $\alpha = .82$ .

**The General Self-Efficacy Scale** (Magaletta & Oliver 1999; Sherer et al., 1982; Yıldırım & İlhan, 2010) is a 17-item, 5-point scale ranging from 1 (not at all) to 5 (very much), measurement tool that assess general self-efficacy level of an individual. In the Turkish adaptation study, the Cronbach alpha was .80 and split-half coefficient was .69. The factor analysis and criterion validity verified the validity of the instrument. A higher score reflects a greater belief in one's own self-efficacy abilities. The scale has good internal consistency with  $\alpha = .87$  in this study.

**Benign and Malicious Envy Scale** (BeMaS; Çırpan & Özüdoğru, 2017; Lange & Crusius, 2015a) evaluates benign envy and malicious envy with ten items which has response alternatives between 1 (strongly disagree) to 6 (strongly agree). In the Turkish adaptation study, factor analysis and convergent divergent validity suggested that the scale was valid. The Cronbach alpha is .78 for benign envy, and .86 for malicious envy, indicating the scale was reliable. The higher score reflects more envious feelings. In this study, the internal consistency coefficients were .79 for benign envy, and .84 for malicious envy.

## Procedure

Participants were recruited through multiple sources, including posts on social media platforms. Being 18 years of age or older, residing in Turkey, having a technological device to participate the survey were inclusion criteria, whereas having psychiatric/psychological diagnosis was exclusion criteria.

All statistical analyses were conducted using SPSS version 22, using a 0.05 significance level. Before statistical analyses, the data were checked to assess whether they fulfill the requirements of the assumptions of normality. Data were normally distributed between  $\pm 2.0$  values (George & Mallery, 2019). First, participants' demographic, characteristics and frequency distributions were assessed. Correlations between variables were calculated using the Pearson's coefficients. The hierarchical multiple linear regressions were used to define what variables predict the malicious envy and benign envy, separately. In the first step, demographical variables (duration of data collection, age, gender, education, income, residence and relationship status) were entered into the model. In the second step, as personality traits, vulnerable narcissism, grandiose narcissism, self-efficacy, rigid perfection, self-critical perfection, narcissistic perfection were entered into the model. In the third step, as social factors loneliness was entered into the model. As psychological factors, depression was entered into the model.

## Results

### Correlations between study variables

Correlations between malicious envy, benign envy and other study variables were reported in Table 2. As can be seen in Table 2, all relations are presented. There was non-significant relationship between benign envy and depression, grandiose narcissism and loneliness ( $p > .05$ ).

Table 2  
*Means, standard deviations and correlations*

Measure	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	Mean	SD
1. Malicious envy	-	.30***	.28***	.43***	-.33***	-.26***	.26***	.25***	.27***	.33***	1.69	0.91
2. Benign envy		-	.03	.34***	-.34	.10*	.03	.33***	.22***	.30***	2.98	1.22
3. Depression			-	.45***	-.24***	-.42***	.43***	.23***	.44***	.17***	14.13	9.42
4. Vulnerable narcissism				-	-.51***	-.30***	.36***	.56***	.62***	.59***	113.24	33.66
5. Grandiose narcissism					-	.22***	-.30***	-.34***	-.32***	-.34***	43.23	7.61
6. Self-efficacy						-	-.48***	-.02	-.31***	-.09	59.88	11.66
7. Loneliness							-	.20***	.39***	.26***	13.27	4.47
8. Rigid perfection								-	.64***	.72***	11.37	4.06
9. Self-critical perfection									-	.53***	16.94	5.40
10. Narcissistic perfection										-	14.02	4.72

SD = Standard Deviation. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

### **Relationship of duration of data collection and demographics with benign and malicious envy**

The Pearson correlation analysis was undertaken to investigate the relationship between age and benign envy and malicious envy. There was a negative association between age and malicious envy ( $r = -.16, p < .001$ ), and benign envy ( $r = -.28, p < .000$ ).

Then, the independent samples T-Test were undertaken to compare the effect of gender (male vs. female), education (up to high school vs. university and above), residence (metropolitan vs. province/district/town) and marital status (single vs. married) on benign and malicious envy.

As for gender, T-test did not reveal any statistically significant differences in benign envy ( $t = -1.07, p = .285$ ) and in malicious envy ( $t = -1.12, p = .264$ ) between males (benign envy:  $M = 3.08, SD = 1.24$ ; malicious envy:  $M = 1.77, SD = .99$ ) and females (benign envy:  $M = 2.94, SD = 1.22$ ; malicious envy:  $M = 1.66, SD = .88$ ).

As for education, there was no significant difference in malicious envy ( $t = .25, p = .801$ ) between participants who have education level up to 12 years ( $M = 1.70, SD = 1.02$ ) and those who have education level higher than 12 years ( $M = 1.68, SD = .85$ ), but there was a significant difference in benign envy ( $t = -2.28, p = .024$ ) between participants who have lower education level ( $M = 2.79, SD = 1.23$ ) and those who have higher education level ( $M = 3.08, SD = 1.21$ ). Participants with higher education level had higher scores in benign envy compared to the participants with lower education level.

As for residence, there was no significant difference in benign envy ( $t = 1.47, p = .142$ ) between participants who live in metropolitan ( $M = 3.04, SD = 1.20$ ) and those who live in province/district/town ( $M = 2.86, SD = 1.26$ ), but there was a significant difference in malicious envy ( $t = 2.90, p = .004$ ) between participants who live in metropolitan ( $M = 1.78, SD = .94$ ) and those who live in province/district/town ( $M = 1.52, SD = .82$ ). Participants who live in metropolitan had higher scores in malicious envy compared to the participants who live in residential places lower than metropolitan.

As for marital status, there was no significant difference in malicious envy ( $t = -1.81, p = .072$ ) between married participants ( $M = 1.60, SD = .84$ ) and single participants ( $M = 1.76, SD = .96$ ), but there was a significant difference in benign envy ( $t = -3.88, p < .001$ ) between married participants ( $M = 2.73, SD = 1.12$ ) and single participants ( $M = 3.18, SD = 1.26$ ). Single participants had higher scores in benign envy compared to the married participants.

Lastly, one-way ANOVA was conducted to analyze the effect of income (low, middle, high) on benign and malicious envy revealed no statistically significant associations on benign envy [ $F(2, 427) = .81, p = .444$ ] and malicious envy [ $F(2, 427) = 1.72, p = .181$ ].

Thus, duration of data collection, age, education level, residence, and marital status were included in further regression models.

### **Predictive factors associated with benign envy**

The results of hierarchical multiple linear regression were reported in Table 3. After controlling the effect of malicious envy, with respect to demographic characteristics, older age was associated with decreased benign envy, while lower education level (up to 12 years) was associated with decreased benign envy. As for the narcissism domain, it has been shown that both vulnerable narcissism and grandiose narcissism had predictor roles in benign envy; the individual's vulnerable narcissism level was positively associated with



benign envy, while grandiose narcissism was negatively associated with benign envy. With respect to the predictor role of self-efficacy, self-efficacy was positively related to benign envy. As for the perfection domain, perfection did not predict; any of the perfection domain was not related to the benign envy. Loneliness did not predict benign envy. The depression levels of individuals predicted benign envy. Depression scores of participants was negatively related to benign envy. All variables together explained 32% of the variance of the malicious envy. In conclusion, age, education level, vulnerable narcissism, grandiose narcissism, self-efficacy, and depression played important roles in predicting benign envy.

### Predictive factors associated with malicious envy

The results of hierarchical multiple linear regression were reported in Table 3. After controlling the effect of benign envy, with respect to demographic characteristics, only residence were associated with malicious envy. Living in metropolitan was related to increased malicious envy score compared to living in smaller settlements than metropolitan. As for the narcissism domain, only vulnerable (but not grandiose) narcissism had a predictor role in malicious envy. It has been shown that the individual's vulnerable narcissism level was associated with increased malicious envy. With respect to self-efficacy in predicting malicious envy, self-efficacy was negatively related to malicious envy. As for the predictor role of perfection domain, only narcissistic perfection was positively related to the malicious envy. While loneliness did not predict malicious envy, it was shown that depression predicted malicious envy. Depression scores was positively associated with malicious envy. All variables together explained 28% of the variance of the malicious envy. In conclusion, residential place, vulnerable narcissism, self-efficacy, narcissistic perfectionism, and depression played important roles in predicting malicious envy.

Table 3  
Hierarchical multiple regression of study variables predicting benign and malicious envy

	Benign Envy			Malicious Envy		
	B (SE)	$\beta$	%95 CI	B (SE)	$\beta$	%95 CI
<b>Step 1 – Demographics</b>						
Duration of data collection	-.00 (.00)	-.03	-.01, .00	-.00 (.00)	-.04	-.00, .00
Age	-.02 (.00)	-.23***	-.03, -.01	-.00 (.00)	-.04	-.01, .00
Education (up to 12 years)	-.25 (.11)	-.10*	-.47, -.03	-.04 (.08)	-.02	-.20, .13
Residence (metropolitan)	.12 (.11)	.04	-.09, .33	.17 (.08)	.09*	.01, .33
Marital status (married)	-.01 (.12)	-.01	-.26, .23	.10 (.09)	.06	-.08, .29
	$R^2 = .17; \Delta R^2 = .166; F = 14.00^{***}$			$R^2 = .11; \Delta R^2 = .109 F = 8.66^{***}$		
<b>Step 2 – Personality traits</b>						
Vulnerable narcissism	.01 (.00)	.19**	.00, .01	.01 (00)	.21**	.00, .01
Grandiose narcissism	-.02 (.01)	-.15**	-.04, -.01	-.01 (01)	-.08	-.02, .00
Self-efficacy	.02 (.00)	.19***	.01, .03	-.01 (00)	-.15**	-.02, -.00
Rigid perfection	.03 (.02)	.11	-.01, .07	-.01 (02)	-.04	-.04, .02
Self-critical perfection	.01 (.01)	.04	-.02, .04	-.02 (.01)	-.11	-.04, .00
Narcissistic perfection	.01 (.02)	.03	-.02, .04	.03 (.01)	.16*	.01, .06
	$R^2 = .31; \Delta R^2 = .141; F = 15.40^{***}$			$R^2 = .27; \Delta R^2 = .161 F = 12.86^{***}$		
<b>Step 3 – Social factors</b>						
Loneliness	-.01 (.01)	-.05	-.04, .01	.01 (.01)	.05	-.01, .03
	$R^2 = .31; \Delta R^2 = .004; F = 14.43^{***}$			$R^2 = .27; \Delta R^2 = .003 F = 12.03^{***}$		
<b>Step 4 – Psychological factors</b>						
Depression	-.02 (.01)	-.12*	-.03, -.00	.01 (.00)	.11*	.00, .02
	$R^2 = .32; \Delta R^2 = .009; F = 13.94^{***}$			$R^2 = .28; \Delta R^2 = .007 F = 11.55^{***}$		

B = Non-standardized regression coefficients; SE = Standard error; CI = Confidence intervals;  $\beta$  = Standardized regression coefficients;  $R^2$  = R-square;  $\Delta R^2$  = R square change.

\* $p < 0.05$ ; \*\* $p < 0.01$ ; \*\*\* $p < 0.001$ .

## Discussion

The study aimed to examine the predictor roles of demographical variables as well as the narcissism domains, self-efficacy, perfection domains, loneliness, and depression levels in predicting benign/malicious envy.

As the ages of participants became older, the benign envy scores was likely to decrease. In line with, research has shown that levels of envy decrease with age (Henniger & Harris, 2015; Mujcic & Oswald, 2018). This finding is in similar vein those indicating that people are less likely to use other people as a useful standard for judging their own worth and status as they get older (e.g., Briki, 2019). Secondly, as the education levels of participants higher, the benign envy scores were likely to increase. This was consistent with the results demonstrating the age and education level were negatively related to envy (Tandoc Jr & Goh, 2021). As the third of demographic variables, living in metropolitan was related to likelihood of increased malicious envy score. In an article examining the fear of others' envy in the port city of Mahajanga, Madagascar among young students and graduates showed a similar result. Many young people from middle-class environments worry that their ambitions will go unmet because of envious peers, despite the city's general prosperity in terms of the economy, employment, and well-being (Desplat, 2018). Considering that there are many middle-income people living in metropolitan cities in Turkey (TSI, 2023), and the number of middle-income people in the study is high, this finding is understandable. Similarly, according to Belk (2011) the rise of anonymity accompanying the growth of urban centers has an impact on the nature of envy.

With respect to malicious envy, any of the demographic characteristics (except for residence) were not associated with malicious envy. A meta-analysis by Li et al. (2021) showed that there are no statistically significant associations between demographic parameters (gender, age, tenure, and education) and envy, indicating that envy exists irrespective of these variables. This was consistent with findings in our study. However, the relationship between age, educational level, and residential places of participants and benign and malicious envy should be further studied from a social clinical psychology perspective to gain deeper understanding.

Higher vulnerable narcissism scores was associated with increased benign and malicious envy. While grandiose narcissism was negatively associated with benign envy; it was not significantly associated with malicious envy. These findings are consistent with research showing that vulnerable narcissism either demonstrates a higher and more powerful association with envy than grandiose narcissism or predicts envy (Czarna et al., 2018; Neufeld & Johnson, 2016). Another study points to distinct relationships of different types of narcissism to benign and malicious envy (Lange et al., 2016). One possibility is that grandiose narcissism combines features that are both adaptive and destructive (Ackerman et al., 2011), and adaptive elements may offer some protection against envy. Another alternative explanation might come from theory of Kernberg (1984) suggesting grandiose narcissists may be impacted by acute envy that is fought against or beyond conscious awareness, as indicated by their excessive affective and behavioral sensitivity to criticisms and setbacks (Kernberg, 1984). It appears that vulnerable narcissists lack this defense against envy (Neufeld & Johnson, 2016). They are prone to experiencing inferiority and hostility, respectively, which are essential elements of envy (Miller et al., 2013; Ronningstam, 2009). Furthermore, the absence of the relationship between grandiose narcissism and malicious envy may be due to the fact that using different measurement tools consisting different contents in studies.

In the current study, self-efficacy predicted both benign envy and malicious envy; and was positively related to benign envy, whereas was negatively related to malicious envy. Similarly, in a study, it was

discovered that employee engagement was significantly impacted by the relationship between benign envy and self-efficacy (Jafri, 2020). According to a study by Li (2018), self-efficacy serves as a moderator while envy acts as a mediator in the association between upward social comparison on social networking sites (SNSs) and depressive symptoms. Our results could be explained by the study showing low self-efficacy is likely to result in workplace envy (Li et al., 2021). The same study found that people with poor self-efficacy are more likely to see themselves as inferior during the upward comparison process because they believe they are weak and vulnerable, which could lead to negative emotions like envy.

As for the perfection domain consisting of rigid perfection, self-critical perfection, and narcissistic perfection, the benign envy was not predicted by any of them, whereas the malicious envy was predicted by only narcissistic perfection in a positive direction. In order to explain the relationship between narcissistic perfection and malicious envy, it might benefit from some studies on narcissistic grandiosity, showing that self-esteem dysregulation causes hostility and envy in people who have higher scores on narcissistic grandiosity (Besser & Priel, 2010; Pincus & Lukowitsky, 2010). Our finding is largely consistent with studies demonstrating the association between perfectionism and envy (Garanian et al. 2018; Rentzsch & Gross, 2015).

Loneliness did not predict both benign envy and malicious envy. Considering research is very limited and have heterogenous results examining the relationships between loneliness and envy, the finding obtained from a bachelor thesis, demonstrating no significant relationship between loneliness, envy and intensity of Facebook use (Varga, 2016), is consistent with our finding. On the contrary, our finding is not in line with other studies reporting the positive association between loneliness and envy (Lim & Yang, 2015; Lim & Yang, 2019). Therefore, future studies should aim to further understand the impact of loneliness on envy.

In our study, not surprisingly, it was found that depression was negatively related to benign envy, whereas it was positively associated with malicious envy. Research has indicated that depression may serve as a risk factor for the emergence of malicious envy (Carraturo et al., 2023). Most SNS-related studies provide evidence to our findings by conceptualizing envy as causal factors of depression (e.g., Lee, 2014). Feinstein et al. (2013) demonstrated that the pathway of depression causing envy is plausible. Other studies outside of Facebook research revealed a connection between envy and depression (Cohen-Charash, 2009; Duffy & Shaw, 2000). Similar to this, when using SNSs, depressed people may be especially vulnerable to malicious envy rather than benign envy (Appel et al., 2016). Another study suggested that college students' self-comparison with others on social media may be associated with envy and depression (Robinson et al., 2019). Consistent to this, the mechanism underlying our finding may be upward social comparison. Therefore, future studies should also measure individuals' self-comparison. Another explanation to this finding comes from semantics. In Turkish, the word (verb) "to benign envy" has two meanings: 1. feeling the urge to get something that is liked or enjoyed, or to eat a food, 2. to want to be like a person or thing that is liked, to benign envy. As can be seen in these meanings, it can be interpreted that benign envy includes hope, and the belief that one can obtain the object or feature that one envies. For this reason, this difference in the direction of the predictor role of depression could be plausible from this point of view. In general, studies investigating the association between depression and envy are novel. Therefore, more research is required to determine whether depression predisposes people to either benign envy or malicious envy.

In the current study, although they were controlled for in regression, benign envy and malicious envy were positively associated with each other. A typological dualistic approach to envy is popular explanation proposing that two separate forms of envy (i.e., benign and malicious) can explain the diverse outcomes of envy, and help to account divergent characteristics of envious reactions (for review, see Lange et al., 2018).

Recently, it has been suggested that benign and malicious envy share a similar aspect of anguish related to inferiority (Lange et al., 2018), and further, general envy, which encompasses the various varieties of specialized envy, can be conceptualized and assessed (Van de Ven, 2016). However, it would be accurate to claim that benign envy and malicious envy overlapped in terms of implying excruciating inadequacy regarding upward comparisons with comparable people and separating them from appreciation and hatred (Crusius & Lange, 2014). Parallel findings emerged in languages with only one word for envy, such as Spanish and English (Falcon, 2015; Van de Ven et al., 2009). The great variety in envious responses can be attributed to the fact that benign and malicious envy involve different ideas, feelings, motivations, and action inclinations (Crusius et al., 2020). But in Turkish, there are two different corresponding words to benign envy (*gıpta*) and malicious envy (*haset*). Semantically, demonstrating that dispositional benign envy and malicious envy are mostly independent. Taken together, suggesting a consistency to our finding, it can be concluded that envy does not reflect a unitary construct, but at the same time they can be seen together. However, more studies are needed to examine this positive relationship between benign and malicious envy.

Based on the current study, considering factors have crucial roles in predicting benign envy, it can be concluded age, education, vulnerable narcissism, grandiose narcissism, self-efficacy, and depression provided a contribution. On the other hand, in predicting malicious envy, residence, vulnerable narcissism, self-efficacy, narcissistic perfectionism, and depression provided a contribution. It could be stated that socio-demographic characteristics (age and education in benign envy; residence in malicious envy), narcissistic personality traits (especially grandiose narcissism in benign envy), self-efficacy as a personality trait, perfectionist tendencies (only narcissistic perfectionism in malicious envy), and depressive tendencies plays considerable roles in predicting envy. From this point of view, it could be suggested that investigating the roles of other variables related to narcissism, perfectionism, self-efficacy and psychological health in predicting benign and malicious envy, such as competitiveness, pessimism, rejection sensitivity, self-esteem, and other mental health symptoms.

There are several limitations to the current study. This study used self-report measures. In particular, it should be noted that it is quite difficult for the participants to answer questions about concepts that are not widely accepted by the society, such as malicious envy. There was a limitation to make conclusions regarding being deterministic due to using cross-sectional design in the study. Additionally, a large portion of the sample reported their education level as university and above, which may limit the generalizability of our findings to other populations. Considering the results of our study, vulnerable narcissism, grandiose narcissism, self-efficacy, and depression significantly had predictor roles in benign envy with a 32% contribution to the variance of benign envy. Similarly, vulnerable narcissism, self-efficacy, narcissistic perfection, and depression predicted malicious envy with a variance of 28%. The explained small percentages could be seemed as a limitation, but we acknowledge that low or small variances in social sciences have crucial role in explaining phenomenon under consideration (Field, 2013; Moksony & Heged, 1990). In addition, not employing sophisticated modeling strategies like Structural Equation Modeling (SEM) to provide more information could be thought as a limitation of this study. Further studies could perform more sophisticated models to examine relatively unbiased estimate or testing potential mediation or moderation relationships. Lastly, still there is a need to involve older participants in future studies, although the age range was very wide (between 18 and 64) to gather deeper understanding on different aspects of envy.

Besides the limitations, strengths of this study include the first study in Turkey that investigates relationship between both benign envy and malicious envy and their predictors to our knowledge. We can conclude that a holistic perspective on both types of envy provide practical information to the clinicians those

work with clients suffering from depression, narcissism, perfectionism, and loneliness. Evaluating protective factors such as self-efficacy in these group could also counted as another contribution of our findings. In particular, enhancing self-efficacy may help lessen the incidence of malevolent envy and increase the beneficial benefits of benign envy. The data shed light on our ability to identify the predictors of benign envy and malicious envy, and to understand the role of depression in them. Much remains to be understood about envy and predictors of envy in modern society, and they demand attention.

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