Associating Big Five Personality Traits with Benign and Malicious Envy Among Emerging Adults

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Abstract

People with different personalities may experience and express envy in different ways, and this in turn may influence how they respond to others' possessions and achievements. However, in the Philippine context, research on some of the personality traits connecting with envy is limited. The important objective of this quantitative research study was to explore the five personality traits associating benign envy and malicious envy among college students at St. Michael's College of Iligan, Inc. enrolled in the academic year 2024-2025. Data was gathered in a form of random sampling method through surveys using standardized questionnaires and were distributed to 345 students. The findings revealed that personality traits can impact how emerging adults react to certain things, specifically being envious. First, in terms of personality traits, they show high levels of openness to experience and agreeableness. Second, in terms of benign envy the data displayed an average level while in malicious envy it showed low levels. Lastly, there is a significant relationship between benign envy and extraversion, and neuroticism and openness to experience; whereas malicious envy did not significantly correlate with personality traits. Based on these findings, an awareness program was made to focus on reinforcing the understanding of the emerging adults about personality traits and benign envy, and how they may apply benign envy to their positive growth while taking action to avoid malicious envy.

Keywords: *personality traits, benign envy, malicious envy, emerging adults*

1.0 Introduction

People with diverse personality traits become consumed with envy towards what others possess – whether it is tangible such as a new gadget or car, or even future plans. Personality traits are often categorized into five domains: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. On the other hand, envy is a negative feeling of having a sense of inadequacy and bitterness produced by awareness of someone else's achievements, possessions, or higher status is a negative feeling (Li et. al., 2023) which classified into two types, benign envy and malicious envy.

Individuals with different personalities may experience and express envy in different ways, and this in turn may influence how they respond to others' possessions and successes.

Some studies have directly investigated the connection between neuroticism and benign/malicious envy. Jiang et. al. (2022) found a positive correlation between neuroticism and dispositional envy. Regardless of the published studies, there is a limited amount of studies, particularly investigating the correlation between the big five personality traits and benign and malicious envy. The existing studies that the researchers found about personality traits and envy are mostly authored by foreign researchers. Also, not all of the big five personality traits correlating with the two subdomains of envy have readily available materials which suggests a lack of studies on the subject. In the Philippine context, studies specifically on personality traits associated with envy still need to be introduced and expanded. The researchers considered that it is important to address this gap to ensure a further understanding of the potential link between personality traits and envy.

This study aimed to examine the association between the Big Five personality traits and the envy of an individual. The researchers utilize the Big Five Inventory (BFI) which measures an individual on the dimension of personalities, and the Benign and Malicious Scale (BeMaS) which measures the dispositional envy designed to assess personality differences in people's tendencies to react with benign or malicious envy toward superior comparison standards. Researchers conducted this study to help college emerging adult students of St. Michael's College of Iligan, Inc. learn to regulate their feelings toward others. Lastly, an intervention program was designed to give college students the support they need to manage and regulate their desires and emotions to attain a higher level of self-control that results in positive outcomes in their performance. This study was conducted during the first semester of the Academic Year 2024-2025.

2.0   Theoretical and Empirical Background

In the investigation of the association of Big Five personality traits with benign and malicious envy among emerging adults, a number of theories were employed to provide a lens through which the study is conducted and how these theoretical frameworks relate to the research problem.

The structure of the phenotypic personality traits can be explained by the Five Factor Model which discusses that individuals vary in five broad domains that can be remembered with the acronym OCEAN: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism (Goldberg, 1981). Accordingly, a person's personality traits have to do with how they would react to things differently. As people have different approaches because of different personalities, this model may also explain how each personality trait reacts to envy. The benign and malicious envy, on the other hand, can be explained with the Social Comparison Theory which discusses the idea that people evaluate their value, achievements, and abilities by comparison respectively with

the value, achievements, and abilities of others. This theory highlights the idea that the production of two types of envy may arise when individuals compare themselves to others in terms of their qualities, possessions, and achievements.

3.0   Research Objectives

This research aimed to determine if there is a correlation between the association of the Big Five with benign and malicious envy among emerging adults.

Specifically, this research attempted to answer the following questions:

1. What is the level of the Big Five personality among the respondents in terms of Openness to Experience; Conscientiousness; Extraversion; Agreeableness; and Neuroticism?

2. What is the level of envy among the respondents in terms of Benign and Malicious?

3. Is there a significant relationship between the Big Five personality traits and envy?

4. What intervention could be made based on the findings of the study?

4.0   Methodology

The study utilized a correlational research design to examine the association of the Big Five personality traits with benign and malicious envy, which can provide insight into the nature of the association of the variables. This quantitative approach was the appropriate design for this study to examine the association between the two main variables mentioned using two sets of standard questionnaires. The 345 respondents of this study were randomly selected from the various college departments of St. Michael's College of Iligan, Inc. who were enrolled during the 1st Semester of School Year 2024-2025.

The respondents were asked to sign the attached informed consent form. The Big Five Inventory (BFI) by John et. al. (1991) containing 44-item short phrases was used in this study to assess the Big Five trait domains: openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism. The Benign and Malicious Envy Scale (BeMaS) by Lange and Crusius (2015) consisted of 10 items was also utilized in this study to measure dispositional envy designed to assess personality differences in people's tendency to react with benign or malicious envy toward superior comparison standards.

Mean and standard deviation were used to describe and measure the average of the students' level of personality traits as well as their level of envy. Moreover, Spearman rho correlation was applied to test for significant relationships between the main variables and its subscales. The data gathered was treated with utmost confidentiality and anonymity.

5.0   Results and Discussion

This chapter presents, analyzes, and interprets various data collected during the study in a structured manner, adhering to the order outlined in the statement of the problem. The sequence of data presentation is as follows.

Table 1.1
Level of Respondents' Perceived Big Five Personality in terms of Openness to Experience

	Indicators	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1.	Is original, comes up with new ideas.	3.75	0.91	*Agree a Little*
2.	Is curious about many different things.	4.32	0.79	*Agree Strongly*
3.	Is ingenious, a deep thinker.	3.86	0.99	*Agree a Little*
4.	Has an active imagination.	4.18	0.82	*Agree a Little*
5.	Is inventive.	3.20	0.91	*Neither Agree nor Disagree*
6.	Values artistic, aesthetic experiences.	3.83	0.95	*Agree a Little*
7.	Prefers work that is routine.	2.09	0.92	*Disagree a Little*
8.	Likes to reflect, play with ideas.	3.82	1.01	*Agree a Little*
9.	Has few artistic interests.	2.38	1.15	*Disagree a Little*
10.	Is sophisticated in art, music, or literature.	3.66	1.19	*Neither Agree nor Disagree*

Qualitative Description: 1.00 - 1.79 Very Low; 1,80 -2,59 Low; 2.60 - 3.39 Moderate; 3.40 - 4.19 High; 4.20 - 5.00 Very High

Table 1.1 shows that indicator number two (2) displayed the highest mean (4.32) with a quantitative description "Agree Strongly". While indicator number seven (7) displayed the lowest mean (2.09) having a quantitative description of "Disagree a Little".

Based on the data shown, it shows that the respondents have a powerful desire to learn, explore, and seek to comprehend more about the world around them. In the study of Pinxten et al. (2021) individuals with high levels of openness have the tendency to show great curiosity, which is the driving force to explore new ideas and experiences, enhancing their adaptability. Emerging adults are curious about many things as they shift to a new environment and adapt to the ways of different surroundings. As they continue to learn and evolve, their curious mind could lead to personal development and success.

On the other hand, the emerging adults prefer to work in variety rather than following repetitive tasks. In the study of Strunz and Chlupsa (2019), they found that curiosity can overcome routine as it drives individuals to be inspired to pursue new knowledge and creatively solve problems. Being curious can lead to continuous growth and can gain an adaptable mindset that could be essential in this time.

Table 1.2

Level of Respondents' Perceived of the Big Five Personality in terms of Extraversion

Indicators	Mean	SD	Qualitative Description
1. Is talkative.	3.78	1.12	*Agree a Little*
2. Is reserved.	2.29	1.04	*Disagree a Little*
3. Is full of energy.	3.79	1.14	*Agree a Little*
4. Generates a lot of enthusiasm.	3.71	0.95	*Agree a Little*
5. Tends to be quiet.	2.36	1.06	*Disagree a Little*
6. Has an assertive personality.	3.68	0.88	*Agree a Little*
7. Is sometimes shy, inhibited.	2.14	1.21	*Disagree a Little*
8. Is outgoing, sociable.	3.43	1.28	*Agree a Little*

Qualitative Description: 1.00 - 1.79 Very Low; 1,80 -2,59 Low; 2.60 - 3.39 Moderate; 3.40 - 4.19 High; 4.20 - 5.00 Very High

Table 1.3 shows that indicator number three (3) presents the highest mean (3.79) having a quantitative description of "Agree a Little". On the other hand, indicator number seven (7) displayed the lowest mean (2.14) with a quantitative description of "Disagree a Little".

As reflected in the table, it showed that the respondents are highly energetic people. These individuals are motivated to do tasks productively and efficiently. Energetic people are goal oriented and they enjoy the process more. Accordingly, Oppong (2020) stated that individuals full of energy seek positive energy which enhance their daily activities. Moreover, having a positive energy towards certain things can lead to a healthy mindset that could benefit the well-being of the person and the relationships they engage in.

In contrast, it indicates that the respondents are outgoing and are socially engaging. Social engagement indicates willingness for collaborative learning and helping peers. In the study of Tuovinen et al. (2020) they found out that social engagements should be encouraged to help students and collaborate with each other, which can motivate students to boost their self-confidence and engage actively in school.

Table 1.3

Level of Respondents' Perceived Big Five Personality in terms of Neuroticism

Indicators	Mean	SD	*Quantitative Description*
1. Is depressed, blue.	2.69	1.34	*NeitherAgree nor Disagree*
2. Is relaxed, handles stress well.	2.54	1.14	*Disagree a Little*
3. Can be tense.	3.41	1.00	*Agree a Little*
4. Worries a lot.	3.98	1.03	*Agree a Little*
5. Is emotionally stable, not easily upset.	2.87	1.09	*NeitherAgree nor Disagree*
6. Can be moody.	3.90	1.13	*Agree a Little*
7. Remains calm in tense situations.	2.26	1.02	*Disagree a Little*
8. Gets nervous easily.	3.88	1.07	*Agree a Little*

Qualitative Description: 1.00 - 1.79 Very Low; 1,80 -2,59 Low; 2.60 - 3.39 Moderate; 3.40 - 4.19 High; 4.20 - 5.00 Very High

Table 1.5 shows the respondents' level of the Big Five personality in terms of neuroticism. It showed that indicator number four (4) displayed the highest mean (Mean = 3.98; SD = 1.03) which has a quantitative description "Agree a Little", while indicator number seven (7) displayed the lowest mean (Mean = 2.26; SD = 1.02) which has a quantitative description "Disagree a Little".

According to González-Valero et al. (2019) students are prone to stress and anxiety as they have many tasks to complete and responsibilities that can lead to socio-cultural imbalance and worsening of their mental health. Balancing responsibilities is a big challenge to emerging adults as they shift to bigger roles in their life, which can be overwhelming. They would worry a lot about deadlines, expectations, and other things that are part of their responsibilities. With this constant pressure, emerging adults have their own way of dealing with these situations. They are being mindful about their tasks and how they feel, being able to handle their excessive worrying and can manage if it reaches an overwhelming state.

In line with this, Hao et al. (2019) states that people with low levels are likely to be less reactive to stressful situations but that does not mean they are low in negative emotion, they are also not necessarily high in positive emotion.

Table 1.4

Summary of Respondents' Perceived Level of the Big Five Personality

Factors	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Qualitative Interpretation
Openness to Experience	25.00	44.00	35.09	3.85	*Moderate*
Conscientiousness	19.00	42.00	29.39	3.84	*Moderate*
Extraversion	11.00	36.00	25.17	4.60	*Low*
Agreeableness	21.00	44.00	33.10	4.61	*High*
Neuroticism	13.00	38.00	25.53	4.55	*Moderate*

Table 1.6 presents the summary of the perceived levels of the Big Five personality among emerging adults, namely openness to experience, conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, and neuroticism.

This table shows that the openness to experience, which has an over-all mean score (Over-all mean = 35.09; SD = 3.85) with a qualitative interpretation "Moderate" shows that the emerging adults are least likely to try new things and experiences. An individual who is open to new things and adventures, they are also high on intellect which is most likely linked to political ideas, creativity, and cultural behavior (Gocłowska et al., 2019). The conscientiousness trait which has an over-all mean score (over-all mean = 29.39; SD = 3.83) having a qualitative interpretation "Moderate" implies that the emerging adults are least likely to finish important tasks right away. In accordance with Lysova et al. (2019) this trait is also best to use in the workplace because of the ability to predict the success of the project that includes everything from performing well at work to managing work-life balance to being successful in training and learning, even leading to a happier life.

In the extraversion trait which contains an over-all mean score (over-all mean = 25.17; SD = 4.60) having a qualitative interpretation "Low" suggests that the emerging adults are unlikely to engage with other people. This shows that individuals are still sociable but they are also reserved and quiet. They may socialize with other people but they value some alone time to recharge, as they find socializing enjoyable but draining after a while (Saucedo, 2024). With the agreeableness trait, it has an over-all mean score (Over-all mean = 33.10, SD = 4.61), having a qualitative interpretation "High", which signifies that the emerging adults respondents are likely to have a great deal with other people. Being agreeable promotes the harmony of a community and builds positive relationships with them as they do not want conflict to arise. According to Soto (2019) friendly people have an emotional concern for the well-being of others. Lastly, the neuroticism trait has an over-all mean score (Over-all mean = 25.53; SD = 4.55), with a qualitative interpretation "Moderate" suggesting that the emerging adults are least likely to worry about many things. In connection with this, Hill et al. (2019) individuals may experience some negative emotions such as feeling anxious or worried at times, but these

feelings do not take over their lives or seriously affect their entire day.

Table 2.1

Respondents' Perceived Level of Envy in terms of Benign

Indicators	Mean	SD	Quantitative Description
1. When I envy others, I focus on how I can become equally successful in the future.	4.57	1.17	*Agree*
2. If I notice that another person is better than me, I try to improve myself.	4.62	1.20	*Agree*
3. Envying others motivates me to accomplish my goals.	4.04	1.41	*Slightly Agree*
4. I strive to reach other people's superior achievements.	3.47	1.48	*Slightly Disagree*
5. If someone has superior qualities, achievements, or possessions, I try to attain them for myself.	3.47	1.42	*Slightly Disagree*

Qualitative Description: 1.00 - 1.82 Very Low; 1.83 - 2.65 Low; 2.66 - 3.48 Average; 3.49 - 4.31 Above Average; 4.31 - 5.14 High; 5.15 - 6.00 Very High

Table 2.1 presents the respondents' perceived level of envy in terms of benign. Results showed that indicator number two (2) displayed the highest mean score (Mean = 4.62; SD = 1.20) having a qualitative description "Agree". It also showed that indicator number five (5) displayed the lowest mean (Mean = 3.47; SD = 1.42) with a qualitative description "Slightly Disagree".

Based on the findings, it revealed that indicator number two (2), " If I notice that another person is better than me, I try to improve myself." has the highest mean score which gives the impression that the emerging adults focus on thinking of ways on how and what to do to build up and enhance themselves if they see another person that is better or higher than them. They view those they envy as an inspiration or motivation to enhance their abilities and improve themselves. In a research by Li et. al. (2022), individuals who develop benign envy in upward social comparisons are promising, presumably to have relatively positive cognitive styles and emotional experiences, and tend to improve the self in comparisons with others to achieve their goals, believing that they can work hard to achieve what the person they envied has so that they are less possible to fall into depression and anxiety.

On the other hand, the indicator number five (5), " If someone has superior qualities, achievements, or possessions, I try to attain them for myself.", which has the lowest mean implies that the respondents do not try to attain someone's superior qualities for themselves. Benign envy is a dreadful experience which motivates people to drag themselves up to shrink the difference between themselves and superior others. According to Ng et al. (2023), benign envy reflects a challenge-accepting act during tough times, such as hope for success and self-improvement.

Table 2.2

Respondents' Perceived Level of Envy in terms of Malicious

Indicators	Mean	SD	Quantitative Description
1. I wish that superior people lose their advantage.	2.58	1.34	*Disagree*
2. If other people have something that I want for myself, I wish to take it away from them.	1.89	1.22	*Disagree*
3. I feel ill will towards people I envy.	2.12	1.32	*Disagree*
4. Envious feelings cause me to dislike the other person.	2.28	1.42	*Disagree*
5. Seeing other people's achievements makes me resent them.	2.15	1.40	*Disagree*

Qualitative Description: 1.00 - 1.82 Very Low; 1.83 - 2.65 Low; 2.66 - 3.48 Average; 3.49 - 4.31 Above Average; 4.31 - 5.14 High; 5.15 - 6.00 Very High

Table 2.2 presents the respondents' level of envy among the respondents in terms of malicious. Results showed that indicator number one (1) displayed the highest mean (Mean = 2.58; SD = 1.34), with a qualitative description "Disagree" while indicator number two (2) displayed the lowest mean score (Mean = 1.89; SD = 1.22) which has the qualitative description "Disagree".

As the table has presented, in terms of malicious type of envy, the indicator number one (1), "I wish that superior people lose their advantage." which has the highest mean suggests that the respondents do not agree on wishing a downfall of someone superior that they envy. Emerging adults harness envy as a tool to improve themselves and motivate them to success. As they manage their feelings of envy, this indicates that they know what they feel and how they feel towards others. According to the study of Ahmad (2019), envy may lead to negative feelings but it also motivates individuals to achieve more.

Accordingly, indicator number two (2), "If other people have something that I want for myself, I wish to take it away from them.", which contains the lowest mean suggests that the emerging adults do not have thoughts and plans to steal or take away something from someone they envied who have what they want from themselves. The data reflects a more positive attitude outcome when it comes to envy, rather than having malicious intentions.

Table 2.3

Summary of Respondents' Perceived Level of Envy

Factors	Minimum	Maximum	Mean	SD	Description
Benign	1.20	6.00	4.03	0.92	Above average
Malicious	1.00	5.40	2.20	1.13	Low

Qualitative Description: 1.00 - 1.82 Very Low; 1.83 - 2.65 Low; 2.66 - 3.48 Average; 3.49 - 4.31 Above Average; 4.31 - 5.14 High; 5.15 - 6.00 Very High

Table 2.3 presents the respondents' perceived level of envy in terms of their mean score and standard deviation. Results showed that benign has a mean score (Mean = 4.03; SD = 0.92) where found to have a description "Above average" while malicious has a mean score (Mean = 2.20; SD = 1.13) indicating a description "low".\

As reflected in the table, the benign envy has a description "above average" implicating that the emerging adults exhibit a positive behavior towards someone they envy. As stated in table 2.1, individuals experiencing benign envy may try to reach the level with their envied individual by establishing connections and foundations of friendships with them and learning from their experiences. It causes individuals to utilize the achievements of their superiors as a guide for self-evaluation and using it as a motivation to reach the desired outcome (Zhang, et. al, 2022).

Having foundations of friendships, connecting with other people and learning from what they experienced before they achieved their success or something they wanted may explain why the benign envy is above average. Specifically when the emerging adults are exposed in a school environment where everyone is encouraged to socialize, offer a helping hand, show appreciation and contentment. The Ignacian values taught to the emerging adults may have an effect on why the emerging adults may utilize other's experiences as their motivation to learn and strive for success in a good manner.

The malicious type of envy has shown a description "low", suggesting that the emerging adults have a low tendency of having a negative outlook towards someone they envy. Having a supportive environment especially an environment where the emerging adults were taught with proper values together with religious lessons, support and showing the act of appreciation of each other may explain why having a description "low" for malicious envy. According to Zelenbreg (2019), when something that molds whether people think it is earned for the other to accomplish what the person has should increase the chance of exhibiting benign envy over malicious envy. In this way, we speculate that when appreciating the other person further down the chance for malicious envy to emerge, because people probably consider an appreciated person to deserve something more than a disliked person.

Table 3

Relationship Between Levels of Perceived Big Five Personality and Envy

Envy	Big Five Personality	Correlation Coefficient (*rho*)	p-value
Benign	Extraversion	0.141**	0.009
	Agreeableness	0.098	0.068
	Conscientiousness	-0.072	0.182
	Neuroticism	0.226**	<.001
	Openness to Experience	0.224**	<.001
Malicious	Extraversion	0.093	0.085
	Agreeableness	-0.057	0.290
	Conscientiousness	0.019	0.720
	Neuroticism	0.039	0.468
	Openness to Experience	0.026	0.635

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level
*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level

Table 3 presents the relationship between the levels of the Big Five personality and envy of the respondents. The result shows the significant correlation between benign envy and the extraversion, neuroticism, and openness to experience of the big five personality.

Accordingly, extraverted individuals are more likely to experience benign envy. Wherein openness to experience may play a crucial role in inhibiting envy. When people feel envy, a high level of extraversion helps them strive to get ahead of the person being envied, thereby eliminating envy. Beyond that, it revealed that extraversion predicts envy through the mediator of emotional intelligence. These findings imply that extraversion is advantageous to lessen the generation of envy. However, extraversion had a slight impact on envy than did neuroticism (Li et. al., 2023).

In addition, individuals with moderate levels of neuroticism are more likely to experience benign envy. This suggests that neuroticism has a more intense feeling when they experience benign envy that could likely be a motivation to change and improve their circumstances. Neurotic individuals are sensitive to their feelings and others achieving success that they want to attain for themselves but also possess self-doubt. According to the study of Ma et al. (2023), individuals with high levels of neuroticism may experience benign envy in a different way, which will result in a combination of aspiration and emotional challenge.

The last personality trait that has a significant correlation with benign envy is the openness to experience, suggesting that individuals who are likely to be open to new things have the tendency to experience benign envy. This construct often has positive traits such as creativity, curiosity and the willingness to explore new possibilities which might correlate with high levels of benign envy. This indicates that they cope in a healthier way of envy that could lead to self-improvement and somehow their curiosity

of new experience would drive them to explore a different way of achieving the same success to the person they envied. In a study of Dinic and Brankovic (2021), openness has been found to not correlate with malicious envy suggesting that higher levels of openness to experience may be associated with benign envy, as individuals are more likely to appreciate the success of others than viewing it as a threat to their own personal accord.

6.0   Conclusion and Recommendations

After analyzing the results, the researchers found that there is a significant relationship between benign envy and three of the Big Five personality traits namely, openness to experience, extraversion, and neuroticism among emerging adults. The 345 emerging adults reported above average benign envy, while the malicious envy reported to be low. These findings are supported by the related literature, which shows that individuals with high levels of neuroticism may experience benign envy differently, which will result in a combination of aspiration and emotional challenge, and higher levels of openness to experience may be associated with benign envy, as individuals are more likely to appreciate the success of others than viewing it as a threat to their self.

The Social Comparison Theory provides a possible explanation for the association of personality traits with envy. This theory highlights the idea that people evaluate their value, achievements, and abilities by comparison respectively with the value, achievements, and abilities of others. People have different personality traits, and they make all kinds of judgments about themselves differently, and one of the key ways to do this is through social comparison.

Overall, this study indicates that personality traits can impact on how to deal with certain things and feelings, specifically being envious. It gives an emphasis on the importance of managing one's feelings and understanding how personality traits can influence the reactions and behaviors of an individual.

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