

# AN INVESTIGATION ON THE DEPRESSION, HOPELESSNESS AND ANXIETY LEVELS OF FINAL YEAR STUDENTS ATTENDING THE FACULTY OF EDUCATION

A. ÜSTÜN<sup>1</sup> E. HASKILIÇ<sup>1</sup> P. ASLAN<sup>1</sup>  
K. KAZANCIOĞLU<sup>1</sup>

**Abstract:** *The period in which a person passes from adolescence to the young adult can cause anxiety, depression and hopelessness on the university students as their responsibilities and roles change. These factors cause negative effect on the mental health of the students. The aim of this study is to investigate the depression, hopelessness and the anxiety levels of Education Faculty students related to the different variables and to determine the relations between these levels. This research is descriptive as it displays the present situation. The reseach group is made up of purposive sampling. The sample contains 144 students 55 of whom are boys and 89 of whom are girls. For collecting the data, Beck depression scale is used to determine the depression level, Beck hopelessness scale to determine the hopelessness level and Beck anxiety scale is used to determine the anxiety level. In the analyses of the obtained data, Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis tests were used. According to the data, there is no significant difference between the depression and anxiety levels of the university students related to their gender and department, whereas the hopelessness levels display differences related to their departments. The obtained data was discussed regarding to the current studies.*

**Key words:** *depression, anxiety, hopelessness.*

## 1. Introduction

University years are those in which the young make the transition to adulthood. It is known that the young indicate a very rapid change in this period. Particularly those who get the chance to study at university, as well as the joy of entering a university also face many problems such as

separation from family, a new environment and making friends, fear of being alone, economic difficulties, adjusting to dorm life and anxiety about future profession and working life.

These social, cultural and economic changes adversely affect young's psychology. Specially, the depression which is one of the most common

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<sup>1</sup> Department of Educational Sciences, Amasya University, Turkey.

syndromes adversely may affect the university population.

The various studies found that 17-23% of the population suffered from depression and 45% of students admitted to the university counselling centres suffered from depression [10]. Mergen et. al. [9]: 39.4% (n:110) students of all show depressive syndromes in university and from these students 35.5% students are boys, 64.5% students are girls. Depression and anxiety effect individual life, concerning academic achievement, social relations and individual factors. Al-Qaisy [1] showed that girls have depression symptoms twice frequent comparing to boy students, moreover there is a positive relation between anxiety and academic achievement but there is a negative relation between depression and academic achievement.

One of the main reasons which gets university students into depression is KPSS exam and uncertainties in the education system in Turkey. The preservice teachers, who prepare this exam in the final year even from the third class, are anxious about being successful in this examination and about being assigned as well as the rush to finish school. In our country, students who study at university became a university student after a challenging marathon. Their anxiety isn't stopped by being university student, they face the completion of education and fear of the future.

Their graduation is the beginning of business life or unemployment days. Fear of unemployment, various responsibilities and the exams which are the first step in starting the profession are considered as some of the factors that cause anxiety. In general, anxiety is examined with issues of stress and depression in terms of cause-effect relationship. Anxiety is a very common symptom in depression. Increase of anxiety leads person not to make a

decision and not knowing what to do about his/her future and lead him/her to have unreasonable fears such as assuming that something bad will happen. Considering this aspect, for preservice teachers, KPSS exam is in the centre of learning experiences in the final year. Hence, it is extremely important to identify students' anxiety regarding this exam, that is the key position in assignments of teachers, in order to explain the behaviour patterns in this respect.

In this study, it is aimed to examine levels of depression, anxiety, and hopelessness of final year students of Amasya University - Faculty of Education according to gender and departments. The scope of this research is to answer the following questions:

- 1) Do the depression levels of students show a significant difference according to their gender?
- 2) Is there a significant difference in depression levels of students according to their departments?
- 3) Do the anxiety levels of students show a significant difference according to their gender?
- 4) Is there a significant difference in anxiety levels of students according to their departments?
- 5) Do the hopelessness levels of students show a significant difference according to their gender?
- 6) Is there a significant difference in hopelessness levels of students according to their departments?

## **2. Methodology**

The population of this descriptive study, carried out to identify depression, anxiety and hopelessness levels of Final year students of the Faculty of Education, are the students of the Faculty of Education of universities in Turkey. In terms of the accessibility the study group consists of

145 voluntary students who study in the final classes of Preschool Education, Primary Education, Elementary Mathematics Education, and Science Education Departments of Amasya University – Faculty of Education.

### 2.1. The Data Collection

The data were obtained by using The Beck Hopelessness Scale (BHS) , the Beck Anxiety Inventory (BAI) and the Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) that were applied to students who study in the final classes of Preschool Education, Primary Education, Elementary Mathematics Education, and Science Education Departments between 23 and 30 December in 2012.

### 2.2 Instruments

The Beck Depression Inventory (BDI) [2] was developed to measure behavioural findings in depression of adolescents and adults by Beck and his friends in 1961. Turkish adaptation of the scale was developed by Tegin and Hisli [8]. It measures the somatic, emotional, cognitive, and motivational symptoms developed in depression. The aim of the scale is not to diagnose depression, but is to objectively determine the severity of depressive symptoms. It is a self-rating scale. It can be applied to adolescents and adults over the age of 15. There is no time limit. It can be answered about 10-15 minutes. It includes 21 categories of symptoms: mood, pessimism, sense of failure, lack of satisfaction, guilt feelings, sense of punishment, self-hate, self-accusation, self-punitive wishes, crying spells, irritability, social withdrawal, indecisiveness, body image, work inhibition, sleep disturbances, fatigability, loss of appetite, weight loss, somatic preoccupation and loss of libido [8], [3].

The Beck Hopelessness Scale was developed by A. T. Beck, D. Lester and L. Trexler in 1974. It was adapted to Turkish by Seber (1991) and Durak (1993) [6], [7]. It measures individual's negative expectations about the future. It is a self-rating scale. The group practice can be made. It is applied to adults and adolescents. There is no time limit. This scale consists of 20 items and is scored between a range of 0–1. It is a questionnaire. Beck and his friends have benefited from two stages in the development of the scale: 1. Test of attitude toward the future and 2. Pessimistic statements about the future made by psychiatric patients who were previously rated by clinicians. These expressions obtained from two sources were examined by clinicians and were applied to non-patient, non-depressed samples. Considering the obtained information they gave the final shape by working on the scale.

The Beck Anxiety scale (BAI) was developed by A. T. Beck, N. Epstein, G. Brown and R. A. Steer in 1988. It was adapted to Turkish by Ulusoy, Şahin ve Erkmen [12]. It determines the frequency of anxiety symptoms experienced by the individual. It is a self-rating scale. It is applied to adults and adolescent. There is no time limit. This scale consists of 21 items and is scored between a range of 0–3. It is a questionnaire.

### 2.3. Data Analysis

The data analysis was performed using SPSS 18.0 software package. Since the scores obtained by study group from the scales don't show a normal distribution, non-parametric tests were used. Thus, Mann-Whitney U test was used to analyze whether university student's anxiety, depression and hopelessness levels differ significantly according to gender. Kruskal-

Wallis H test was used to analyze whether university student's anxiety, depression and hopelessness levels differ significantly according to their departments. The results obtained from analysis are summarized in the finding section.

### 3. Findings

#### 3.1. Depression Levels of University Students According to Several Variables

Table 1  
*Depression Levels of University Students According to Gender*

Average of row	Sum of Row	U	P
Feminine (N=89)		2355.50	.70
71.47	6360.50		
Masculine (N=55)			
74.17	4079.50		

While examining the depression levels of university students, it is found that there wasn't a significant difference between male and female students according to gender (U=2355.500, p>.05).

Table 2  
*Depression Levels of University Students According to their Departments*

Department	N	Average	X <sup>2</sup>	P
Preschool	30	74.57	5.05	.282
Mathematics	30	73.77		
Science	30	85.78		
Turkish	26	66.58		
Social Studies	29	63.12		

While examining the depression levels of university students, there wasn't a significant difference according to their departments:

$$X^2 = 5.5, p > .05 \quad (1)$$

(sd=4, n=145)

#### 3.2. Anxiety Levels of Students According to Several Variables

Table 3  
*Anxiety Levels of University Students According to Gender*

Average of row	Sum of Row	U	P
Feminine (N=89)		2455.50	.93
72.78	6550.50		
Masculine (N=55)			
73.35	4034.50		

While examining the anxiety levels of university students, it was found that there wasn't a significant difference according to gender (U=2455.500, p>.05).

Table 4  
*Anxiety Levels of University Students According to their Departments*

Department	N	Average	X <sup>2</sup>	P
Preschool	30	65.09	3.90	.419
Mathematics	30	81.55		
Science	30	80.21		
Turkish	26	65.25		
Social Studies	29	71.08		

While examining whether the anxiety levels of students show a significant difference according to their departments, it is found that there wasn't a significant difference according to their departments:

$$X^2 = 3.905, p > .05 \quad (2)$$

(sd=4, n=145)

#### 3.3. Hopelessness Levels of Students According to Several Variables

As hopelessness levels of university students can be seen in the table below, they don't show a significant different according to gender (U=2311.000, p>.05).

Table 5  
*Hopelessness Levels of Students  
According to Gender*

Average of row	Sum of Row	U	P
Feminine (N=89)		2311.00	.64
73.24	6445.00		
Masculine (N=55)			
70.02	3851.00		

Table 6  
*Hopelessness Levels of University  
Students According to their Departments*

Department	N	Average	$\chi^2$	P
Preschool	30	77.42	9.95	.041
Mathematics	30	63.50		
Science	30	62.22		
Turkish	26	65.73		
Social Studies	29	90.34		

*Significant Differences: Science - Social Studies, Mathematics- Social Studies, Turkish-Social Studies*

While examining the hopelessness levels of university students, there was a significant difference according to their departments:

$$\chi^2 = 9.950, p < .05 \quad (3)$$

(sd=4, n=145)

According to the Mann-Whitney U tests, it is found that there is a significant difference between the student groups from ‘Science – Social Studies, Mathematics - Social Studies, Turkish - Social Studies’. Given as averages of row, students from Social Studies department have higher levels of hopelessness than students from Science, Mathematics, Turkish departments.

#### 4. Discussions and conclusion

As in many developing societies, in our society, for many individuals, transition

from high school to higher education constitutes an important aspect of the process of transition to adulthood. During the transition university students experience a sense of grow, spend more time with their peers, find the opportunity to review values and ways of different lifestyle and take away from family supervision, and also experience more sense of freedom. However, the positive implications of the educational process as well, There is also a number of negative repercussions.

The university education include a period in which social relationships and loyalties are weaker, covers of and it is focused on the processes of evaluation and success. The changes such as adjustment to a new environment, romantic relationships, separation from family, efforts to keep up with the university environment may adversely affect an individual's life. These negative effects mentioned can cause some problems such as depression, anxiety, and hopelessness.

Cunningham [4] found that emotional problems are going on from adolescence to adulthood. Moreover this situation is shown on girls twice higher than on boys. Recently as a result of work performed by "The American College Health Association" on more than 90,000 students in 177 campuses, it is determined that senses of hopelessness, excessive workload, mental fatigue, unhappiness and depression are so widely prevalent [14].

In our society, The Public Personnel Selection Examination (KPSS) puts an excessive pressure on university students in the final year and causes the problems such as mental fatigue, hopelessness, depression. DeLisle [5], found that stress affects on hopelessness level. In this study it is indented to determine stress, depression, hopelessness and anxiety levels of last-year students of Amasya University – Faculty of Education.

According to the results of BDI, while examining the depression levels of university students, it is found that there wasn't a significant difference between male and female students according to gender ( $U=2355.500$ ,  $p>.05$ ). The total average score of BDI in the study was found as 14.69. Our findings were very close to the results of Özdel and his friends ( $12.80 \pm 7.19$ ). The results of this study show similarity those of the study (13.9) carried out in Middle East Technical University (METU). The average score of BDI Students of the United States of America is reported as 7.6 [11]. However, in studies with BDI carried out at various universities in Turkey depressions rates ranging from 13.8-69% were found in the levels of depressive syndromes [11].

The depression levels of students of Sivas Cumhuriyet University were found as 34.7%. The rate of this study carried out in Gulhane Military Medical Academy (GMMA) was 35.4%. The rate found in this study was higher than the results of METU and that of study carried out by Özdel and his friends [11]. There may be too many variables affecting the differentiation of these rates such as place of residence, social status, characteristics of the university and individual factors.

While examining the depression levels of university students, there wasn't a significant difference according to their departments:

$$X^2 = 5.05, p>.05 \quad (4)$$

(sd=4, n=145)

While examining the average of depression levels according to departments, depression levels of students from Science education were 85.78 so it is found that they varied from the others departments. It could be propounded that this differentiation is due to the high assignment scores for the department of

teachers' education. While examining whether the anxiety levels of university students show a significant difference according to their departments, it is found that there wasn't a significant difference according to their departments:

$$X^2 = 3.905, p>.05 \quad (5)$$

(sd=4, n=145)

In the result of this study, the average of anxiety levels of university students were found as 13.99. In the study carried out by Temur [13] and his friends, anxiety levels of final year students were found as  $p<.05$  according to their departments. It is considered that this difference results from using of different anxiety scales, carrying out the studies in different places, presenting different economic and cultural conditions of individuals included in the study group and realising the studies in different departments. Once more, the average of anxiety levels of female students was 73.24, while that of male student was 70.02.

According to BHS hopelessness levels of university students can be seen in the table above, they don't show a significant different according to gender.  $U=2311.000$ ,  $p>.05$ . While examining the hopelessness levels of university students, there was a significant difference according to their departments:

$$X^2 = 9.950, p<.05 \quad (6)$$

(sd=4, n=145)

According to the Mann-Whitney U tests, it is found that there is a significant difference between the student groups from "Science – Social Studies, Mathematics - Social Studies, Turkish - Social Studies". Given as averages of row, students from Social Studies department have higher levels of hopelessness than students from Science, Mathematics, Turkish departments. In

the study which Şahin [12] hopelessness levels of students examined according to their divisions: the average of the hopelessness levels of students from preschool education were found as 5.21, the average of the hopelessness levels of students from social science education were found as 5.68, the average of the hopelessness levels of students from science education were found as 6.25 and the average of the hopelessness levels of students from Turkish education were found as 4.40.

For this study, when it is examined the hopelessness levels of university students according to their departments, the average of the hopelessness levels of students from preschool education were found as 10.13, the average of the hopelessness levels of students from social science education were found as 11.17, the average of the hopelessness levels of students from science education were found as 9.53 and the average of the hopelessness levels of students from Turkish education were found as 4,40 and the average of the hopelessness levels of students from mathematics education were found as 9.53.

As it can be seen, as a result of applications made on the working group, it is observed that the hopelessness average scores obtained according to the department studied were higher. As the reasons for this result from that teacher assignments are getting difficult day by day, level of development of the province where the university is located is relatively low, social facilities owned by the province are fewer and these factors adversely affect the persons' self-efficacy beliefs and ways of self-perceptions.

Other information may be obtained from the address: [ustunahmet05@hotmail.com](mailto:ustunahmet05@hotmail.com).

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