

**Investigation of Variables Predicting Depression in College Students\***Hülya SAHIN BALTACI<sup>1</sup> Deniz KUCUKER<sup>2</sup> Isil OZKILIC<sup>3</sup> Ugur Yigit KARATAS<sup>4</sup> Hilal Asena OZDEMIR<sup>5</sup>

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## ABSTRACT

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**Purpose:** In this study, the role of social anxiety, state, and trait anxiety in depression among college students was investigated. **Research Methods:** Research group consisted of 439 college students (341 females and 98 males) having consulted to a state university's counselling centre between 2018-2019. Counselling Centre Application Form, The Beck Depression Inventory, Liebowitz Social Phobia Scale, and State and Trait Anxiety Scale were used to collect data. Multiple linear regression analysis was carried out to determine the predictive power of social anxiety, state, and trait anxiety. **Findings** Regarding the findings of the present study, social anxiety, state, and trait anxiety positively and significantly

predicted depression in college students consulting to counselling centre. The total variance rate of predictor variables related to depression was 58% ( $R^2 = .585$ ,  $F(3,473) = 203.862$ ,  $p < .001$ ). **Implications for Research and Practice:** It is discussed whether the findings demonstrate consistency with the related literature and suggestions were made for researchers and counsellors working in higher education institutions, for academic and administrative staff working in higher education institutions, and for policymakers who may facilitate taking necessary steps to create a protective atmosphere at university campuses. For practitioners, it is advised that self-help brochures, psychoeducational studies, individual and group counselling, and awareness-raising activities on online platforms to help college students cope with anxiety may also reduce their anxiety levels, and thus decrease the number of people who are at a risk group for depression. Limitations of the research and suggestions for future studies were shared.

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## Introduction

College years represent a period in which young adults transform from adolescents to adults. During this phase, young adults may suffer from several psychological problems. The increasing number of college students struggling with mental health challenges every year indicates a public health problem with a negative impact on the quality and efficiency of higher education (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010; Locke, Bieschke, Castonguay & Hayes, 2012; Beiter et al., 2015). Universities aim at educating students, making it easier for them to find a job after graduation and making them feel successful on a personal level (Beiter et al., 2015). Looking at the mission statements of several universities, notions such as growth, citizenship, development, and responsibility were regarded as the expected outcomes of university experience (Deges-White & Borzumato-Gainey, 2014). From this perspective, it may be inferred that universities are not only an academic institution but also an institution providing young adults with various opportunities so that they can be successful at developmental tasks, as well.

Academic studies are an integral part of life for college students, and students who do not have a healthy strategy to achieve academic goals may falter when stressed. College students are generally seen as a privileged population, but their mental health is not immune to psychological problems (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). Berger, Franke, Hofmann, Sperth and Holm-Hadulla (2015) found that 12% of students attending higher education in Germany had mental health challenges. Psychological problems experienced by college students are evaluated under several headings such as emotional problems, interpersonal problems, and career planning problems. For instance, a study in China indicated that students attending higher education experienced problems with interpersonal relations, emotional problems, academic stress, career development, and internet addiction (Yang, Lin, Zhu & Liang, 2015). Sarmiento (2016) found that college students had more depressive symptoms than the non-tertiary population, that one-third of college students had emotional problems and emphasized that all actors in higher education should play a role in the development of preventive interventions and rehabilitative services on behalf of the students. Beiter et al. (2015) revealed that the most challenging issues during college were academic performance, the pressure to be successful, and post-graduation plans. As seen in the literature, mental health challenges experienced by students attending higher education emerge in similar areas. While the phenomenon of poor mental health during college education is growing, campus life should also serve as a medium for students exploring various opportunities (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). Along with academic studies, it is crucial for university administrations to apprehend, acknowledge, and discern the factors that lead to an increase in depression, anxiety, and stress so that they can meet the specific needs of their students. Higher education institutions need to address their students' personal and psychological well-being in addition to encouraging their academic success (Beiter et al., 2015). Although a significant number of college students reported experiencing depressive symptoms, those seeking help were limited (Michael, Huelsman, Gerard, Gilligan & Gustafson, 2006). Those students are increasingly experiencing depressive symptoms; however, many do not consult to university counselling services for support (D'amico,

Mechling, Kemppainen, Ahern & Lee, 2016). When a student is exposed to stigma or discrimination from family and friends related to depression, his/her tendency to apply to the university counselling centre or to seek alternative treatments for the treatment of depression decreases. In addition to the numerous facilities provided by university institutions, it is crucial to include more psychological support services on top of existing ones.

When the consultations made by the students benefitting from counselling services are examined, it is seen that the proportion of students with a psychiatric diagnosis is as common as their peers who do not have an education and the amount and severity of these diagnoses are increasing. Despite the apparent increase in help-seeking behaviour among these students, untreated psychiatric disorders are also quite common (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010). Students with a psychiatric diagnosis have higher risk of suicidal behaviour and academic failure (Keyes, Eisenberg, Perry, Dube, Kroenke & Dhingra, 2012). College students were defined as a risk group in terms of the emergence of depressive symptoms and the diagnosis for clinical depression (Buchanan, 2012). It is observed that depressed students have lost interest in academic studies (Cress & Ikeda, 2003). When college students having participated in a study in Turkey are compared in terms of their class levels, it is seen that freshmen have higher levels of depression and loneliness (Ceyhan & Ceyhan, 2011). In a study conducted with eighty thousand college students in the USA, it has been shown that 14.9% of the students go through a depressive period at least once during their higher education (ACHA, 2009). In another study conducted with Turkish college students consulting to a counselling centre, males had higher depression and loneliness levels than females. It was argued that this finding may have resulted from the differences in coping mechanisms, having difficulties in establishing close relationships or the differences in the level of social support (Ceyhan & Ceyhan, 2011). In the same study, it was highlighted that traditional Turkish culture does not allow men to share their feelings with others and this leads them to adopt an even tougher temperament. On the other hand, it was also emphasized that women might easily share their problems and feelings with their peers. Besides, in a US study, it was emphasized that Asian-American college students were less likely to report depression-related emotions and that from a cultural perspective, it is very unlikely for them to mention their feelings and reactions (Cress & Ikeda, 2003). Thus, the relationship between culture and how it shapes individuals' perceptions and encourages or restrains verbalization of feelings and emotions plays a critical role in how often students report feelings of depression and anxiety. In another US study, it was found that anxiety (29%) was the category of psychiatric disorder with the highest lifetime prevalence in adults (Weigold & Robitschek, 2011). It has been found that students with depression, anxiety disorder, or eating disorder were in risk group for academic failure and college drop-out (Eisenberg, Golberstein & Hunt, 2009). In another study, 29% of the students were depressed, 27% were anxious and 24% were stressful. It has been suggested that approximately 67% of anxious students are also depressed, that they face numerous developmental challenges and tasks related to the college experience and that the strategies they use to deal with life challenges may affect their mental health (Mahmoud, Staten, Hall & Lennie, 2012). Findings point to the need to develop interventions that will reduce the use of incompatible coping strategies and examine

the effects of depression, anxiety, and stress levels in students. Anxiety is considered to be one of the most basic emotions and defined as the unrest he/she feels in the face of a threat (Karadag & Solpuk, 2018). In a study conducted in the US, it was determined that individuals diagnosed with anxiety disorder at a time of their lives accounted for 28.8% of the total population (Kessler et al., 2005). When the types of anxiety are examined, general anxiety, social anxiety, state anxiety, trait anxiety, and death anxiety may be taken into consideration (Karadag & Solpuk, 2018). State anxiety is a personal anxiety type and lasts for a shorter period. When the situation stimulating the anxiety for the person vanishes, the state anxiety also disappears. The anxiety in this process is evaluated by the person's considering and experiencing this situation as a threatening one, regardless of whether the situation exists or not. Trait anxiety, on the other hand, shows the anxiety tendency that is present in the individual, and it is the name given to the intensification and continuity of state anxiety (Spielberger et al., 1971). Individuals who experience constant anxiety are not necessarily in a situation stimulating their anxiety, but when they are in a situation stimulating their anxiety, they show a response behaviour disproportionate to the situation they are going through (Ocaktan, Keklik & Col, 2002). Moreover, social anxiety represents a mental health problem that needs further investigation in the college population because of its impact on students' social and emotional adjustment to campus life. Social anxiety is defined as the state of continuous fear of being evaluated by others and avoiding such an environment out of fear of humiliation, embarrassment, or shame (Dilbaz, 1997). Social anxiety has an adverse effect on academic performance and other aspects of college life. It was found that students with higher social anxiety had more problems and difficulties in all dimensions of college life compared to their peers with lower social anxiety. The prevalence of lifelong major depression in individuals with social anxiety varies between 35-80% and the presence of social anxiety in individuals with panic disorder poses a risk for depression (Dilbaz, 1997). A longitudinal study in New Zealand found that adolescents with anxiety disorders are more likely to experience anxiety, depression, substance abuse, and academic failure in young adulthood (Woodward & Ferguson, 2001).

There are several studies revealing the relationship between depression and anxiety (for a meta-analysis, see Karadag & Solpuk, 2018). Depression and anxiety were found to be related to each other so frequently that this has led some researchers to consider whether these two variables are symptoms of the same problem (Chaplin, Gillham & Seligman, 2009). In terms of development, anxiety symptoms were displayed before depressive symptoms in children and this phenomenon led researchers to assume that anxiety-related feelings may contribute to depressive mood later in life, for instance, in adolescence. It is suggested that anxious individuals may be exposed to more exclusion in the society; as a result, they are more likely to withdraw themselves and this isolation may lead to loneliness, low self-perception, and ultimately depression (Chaplin, Gillham & Seligman, 2009). In a study conducted with Turkish college students, a significant positive correlation was found between trait anxiety and depression (Bozkurt, 2004). In the same study, it was emphasized that depression and anxiety symptoms were frequently seen in adolescence and a systematic study was needed to measure the depression and anxiety levels of college students and to examine the relationship between depressive thoughts and anxiety. In

terms of public health, it is stated that the protection of the mental health of college students has become a severe problem however further studies are needed on this matter (Eisenberg, Gollust, Golberstein & Hefner, 2007). Similarly, Nordstrom, Goguer and Hiester (2014) stated that it is necessary to continue to examine how the social anxiety of college students affect their higher education experiences. In the light of recent literature, young adults are at risk for depression and anxiety disorders, and this may affect their academic performance and mental health which is becoming a major public health issue that needs to be investigated in more details. In countries such as the USA, China, or Germany this phenomenon is seen as a public health problem. To contribute to the further examination of what seems to be a global phenomenon, Turkish college students consulting to a state university's counselling centre were investigated regarding variables negatively affecting their mental health. When literature is examined, no such study has been found to investigate the predictive value of social, state, and trait anxiety in depression seen in college counselling centres. Considering the levels of depression and anxiety of college students (Mahmoud, Staten, Hall, & Lennie, 2012) and the increased number of referrals to counselling centres at campuses (Beiter et al., 2015), it can be projected that psychiatry outpatient clinics and counselling centres play a crucial role for investigating the relationships among depression and other related phenomena. The aim of the present study is to examine whether social anxiety, state and trait anxiety were significant predictors of depression among college students consulting to counselling centre.

## Method

### *Research Design*

A correlational study has been carried out to examine the relationships among variables. Relational screening models are research models aiming to determine the existence or degree of co-change between two and more variables (Karasar, 2016). In the current study, the purposeful sampling method which is a non-probabilistic non-random sampling approach was used. Purposeful sampling allows for in-depth research by selecting cases rich in information, depending on the purpose of their study. Patton (1987) mentions 14 different strategies related to purposeful sampling. Criterion sampling is preferred when it is desired to work in one or more special situations that meet certain criteria or have certain characteristics. In this study, consultations to the counselling centre were chosen to be the criteria for sampling.

### *Study Group*

In this study, 439 students from 19 faculties and vocational schools of a state university who consulted to the university's counselling centre during the 2018-2019 academic year consisted of the study group. The study group consisted of 341 women (77.7%) and 98 men (22.3%). 2.5% of the participants were from preparatory class, 19.4% were freshmen, 21.3% were sophomore, 28.7% were junior, 25.7% were senior, and 2.0% of them were graduate students. In the study group, 158 (%36) of them stated that they had a psychiatric diagnosis prior to their consultation and 84 of (19.1) them had been referred for psychiatric treatment after consultation.

### *Research Instruments and Procedures*

*The Beck Depression Scale* was developed by Beck, Mendelson, Mock, and Erbaugh (1961) to assess the severity of physical, emotional, cognitive, and motivational symptoms in depression (Beck et al., 1961). The scale has a total of twenty-one symptom categories. Each item has 4 options and scores between 0 and 3. Total depression score is obtained by adding these scores. The scores obtained from the scale can vary between 0 and 63 and the increase in the scores refers to higher levels of depression. In Turkey, the validity and reliability studies were conducted by Tegin in 1980 and Hisli in 1989 (Tegin, 1980; Hisli, 1989). In the adaptation study conducted with college students, cut-off scores were examined, and it was found that scores of 17 and above could distinguish depression with an accuracy of over 90% (Hisli, 1989).

*State-Trait Anxiety Inventory* was developed by Spielberger et al. in 1964, to determine the state and trait anxiety levels of individuals and scale's translation into Turkish, reliability and validity studies were conducted by Oner and Le Compte (1983). The scale is a self-assessment scale and consists of 40 items made up of short expressions. State anxiety form consists of 20 items is utilized to identify those who felt anxiety instantly, and trait anxiety form which also consists of 20 items is utilized to identify those who have felt anxiety within the last seven days. It was reported that the alpha reliability of the 4-point Likert scale ranged between .83 and .87, test-retest reliability ranged between .71 and .86, and item reliability ranged between .34 and .72 (Oner & Le Compte, 1998; Aydemir & Koroglu, 2000; Sahin, Batigun & Ugurtas, 2002).

*Liebowitz Social Anxiety Scale* was developed by Liebowitz (1987) to evaluate various social situations in which people with social phobia experience difficulties (Soykan, Ozguven & Gencoz, 2003). Each item in the scale was rated separately for both "fear or anxiety" and "avoidance behaviour". The scale gives two subscale scores and total scale scores for Fear or Anxiety and Avoidance. The internal consistency of the scale was quite high, and the Cronbach alpha coefficient ranged from .81 to .92 (Heimberg, Horner, Juster, Safren, Brown, Scheier & Liebowitz, 1999). Test-retest reliability of the Turkish version of the scale was .97, and Cronbach's alpha coefficients were .96 for Fear or Anxiety subscales; .95 for Avoidance subscale, and .98 for the whole scale (Soykan, Ozguven & Gencoz, 2003).

Paper-based scale forms are filled out by the students individually at the counselling centre secretariat. Researchers accompanied participants throughout the data collection process and answered any questions that may arise. The personal information form included students' demographic information, a brief summary and duration of the problem they have been experiencing, other accompanying problems (adjustment problems, academic problems, loneliness, sleep problems, interpersonal relations, etc.), psychological support and pharmacological treatment history, possible self-harm thoughts, and other health problems. There was an informed consent form that mentions the data obtained from the scales included in the application forms can be used in scientific research in the future. The study was approved by Pamukkale University Social Sciences and Humanities Ethics Committee (23.12.2020; 12-6).

### *Data Analysis*

The collected data were analysed by using SPSS software. Regarding the purpose of the present study, multiple linear regression analysis was used to determine whether social anxiety, state, and trait anxiety were significant predictors of depression in students who consulted to counselling centre in the 2018-2019 academic year. The assumptions of the multiple linear regression model are normal distribution, linearity, constant variance, zero means of error terms, no autocorrelation, and absence of multiple correlations between independent variables (Kucuksille, 2018). In the assumption of normality, the kurtosis and skewness values of the variables are in the range of  $\pm 3$ , indicating that the data show a normal distribution (Celik & Yilmaz, 2013). To determine whether the data meet the assumptions of multiple linear regression analysis, kurtosis and skewness coefficients were calculated, outlier analysis was conducted, and Pearson correlation coefficients between variables were examined. After all these investigations, it was found that data showed normal distribution and there was no multicollinearity problem among variables.

### Results

In this section, the findings obtained from the multiple linear regression analysis of social anxiety, state, and trait anxiety levels as predictors of depression levels of the students in the research group are presented.

**Table 1**

*Correlation Coefficients of Variables.*

	Depression	State Anxiety	Trait Anxiety	Social Anxiety
1	1	.644**	.663**	.440**
2	.644**	1	.553**	.273**
3	.663**	.553**	1	.359**
4	.440**	.273**	.359**	1
Average	22.55	47.34	53.55	95.96
Standard deviation	10.48	11.39	10.30	27.41
Kurtosis	-.084	.941	.002	.751
Skewness	.557	.729	.172	-.365

$p < .01$

When Table 1 was examined, there were significant correlations between depression and state anxiety ( $r = .64, p < .01$ ), sustained anxiety ( $r = .66, p < .01$ ), and social anxiety ( $r = .44, p < .01$ ). According to these findings, it can be said that there is a significant relationship between the dependent and independent variables on a moderate level. Furthermore, the kurtosis and skewness coefficients of the variables vary between .002 and .941. Thus, these values are considered acceptable since they are in the range of  $\pm 1$  (Buyukozturk, 2016). Table 2 below presents findings for multiple linear regression analysis.

**Table 2**

*Results of Multiple Linear Regression Analysis for Predictors of Depression Levels*

Variables	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p
State Anxiety	.347	.034	.377	10.125	.000
Trait Anxiety	.390	.039	.383	9.963	.000
Social Anxiety	.076	.013	.200	6.003	.000
R= .765 <sup>a</sup>		R <sup>2</sup> = .585			
F <sub>(3,437)</sub> = 203.862		p=.000			

According to Table 2; state, trait, and social anxiety are significant predictors of depression. When the beta coefficients are analyzed, the most crucial predictor of depression is the trait anxiety with an explanation rate of 38.3%. State anxiety (37.7%) and social anxiety (20%) were also significant predictors of depression, respectively. The total variance rate of the three variables related to depression was 58% (R<sup>2</sup>= .585, F<sub>(3,473)</sub>= 203.862, p<.001).

### Discussion, Conclusion and Recommendations

College counselling centres are the institutions that provide services on behalf of the university students. The increase in the number of students experiencing mental health challenges among college community (Hunt & Eisenberg, 2010; Locke, Bieschke, Castonguay & Hayes, 2012; Beiter, et al., 2015) indicates that these centres are becoming increasingly significant. In the context of investigating psychological problems experienced by college students, scientific research conducted at college counselling centres is also gaining importance. Considering the studies examining the relationship between anxiety and depression among college students (Bozkurt, 2004; Chaplin et al., 2009), it can be stated that the necessity of replicating such studies with a sample of clients from counselling centre is much needed to further understand the dynamics of this public health issue. Thus, it is imperative to conduct such studies in counselling centres. In the present study, the predictive power of social, trait, and state anxiety variables over depression levels of college students were investigated.

The main finding of the study is that state, trait, and social anxiety were significant predictors of depression. When the literature is examined, it is found that depression and anxiety develop simultaneously (for the meta-analysis study, see Karadag & Solpuk, 2018). Wittchen and Vossen (1995). On the other hand, it is also put forward that most anxiety disorders occur before depressive disorders, suggesting that people with anxiety disorders are at risk of developing depressive disorders as well.

A longitudinal study conducted with adolescents aged 11 to 14 found that anxiety significantly predicted depression (Chaplin, Gillham & Seligman, 2009). Furthermore, a meta-analysis study in Turkey stated that there is a significant positive relationship between depression and anxiety and a significant negative relationship between age and anxiety (Karadag & Solpuk, 2018). Anxiety was found to be the highest in

childhood and youth and decreases in adulthood. The results of this meta-analysis seem to support the hypothesis explaining the relationship between anxiety and depression from a developmental perspective. In a study conducted with elderly individuals in Turkey, anxiety explained 41% of the total variance in depression (Yanardag, Sahin & Yanardag, 2018). When all these findings are evaluated, it is seen that it is similar to the findings of the present study. According to these findings, it was concluded that social anxiety, state, and trait anxiety significantly predicted depression in college students. In other words, college students with high social anxiety, state and trait anxiety may experience higher levels of depression.

Considering that mental health problems may hinder the academic success of college students, this should be regarded as such an urgent matter that university counselling centre staff needs to continuously screen for mental health challenges of their clients and adapt intervention and treatment programs to their needs (Beiter et al., 2015). In terms of public health, early detection, and prevention of mental health challenges at university campuses are essential. Understanding psychological problems such as depression, anxiety, and stress, as well as their correlations, will contribute to developing appropriate screening and intervention programs (Shamsuddin, Fadzil, Ismail, Shah, Omar, Muhammad & Mahadevan, 2013). When all findings considered, it is crucial to increase interventions to reduce social, state, and trait anxiety. Cognitive and behavioural psychotherapies, social skills training, and relaxation exercises are used to address social anxiety in counselling processes (Dilbaz, 1997).

The main recommendations are as follows: to provide academic staff with training on social anxiety, state, and trait anxiety; conducting field events on campus to raise awareness on social anxiety; prepare and apply online and in-person psychoeducational programs that teach social coping skills; and examine their effectiveness, further investigate the factors leading to anxiety in college students. Moreover, self-help brochures to help college students cope with anxiety, individual and group counselling, and awareness-raising on online platforms can help to reduce anxiety levels of students and thus reduce the number of people at risk for depression. Results of the present study are considered a much-needed contribution to the related literature. When these suggestions mentioned above are to be followed, further research and experimental studies will carry this at-risk population to a much healthier position regarding their mental health. Further research is needed to fully understand what kind of variables are involved in the prevention of depression among college students as well as other populations.

As in every study, there are limitations in this study. The findings of the present study are based on data obtained from applications to a counselling centre at a university and therefore may not be generalized across the university or for all college students. Another limitation would be self-report application forms where students may choose not to fully state their psychiatric treatment and diagnosis, if any, or further psychopathologies they may have. Therefore, we concluded data analysis regarding what has been stated in application forms and may have faced limitations

regarding participants' medical history since data collection took place in a college counselling centre and some participants could hesitate sharing sensitive personal information with a state institute.

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#### Ethics Committee Approval

The ethical approval of the research was received from Pamukkale Social Sciences and Humanities Ethics Committee (Date: 23.12.2020, Number: 12-6).

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## Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Depresyon Düzeylerini Yordayan Değişkenlerin İncelenmesi

### Atf:

Sahin Baltacı, H., Kucuker, D., Ozkiloc, I., Karatas, U. Y. & Ozdemir, H. A. (2021). Investigation of variables predicting depression in college students. *Eurasian Journal of Educational Research*, 92, 211-226, DOI: 10.14689/ejer.2021.92.11

### Özet

*Problem Durumu:* Genç yetişkinlik döneminin bir parçası olan üniversite yaşamı öğrenciler için hem akademik hem de bireysel olarak yeni yaşantılar içinde oldukları bir dönemdir. Üniversite dönemindeki bu yaşantılar bazen öğrenciler için problem yaratabilmektedir. Literatürde yer alan çalışmalar da üniversite öğrencilerinin sıkça psikolojik sorunlar yaşadıklarını göstermektedir. Bu aynı zamanda yüksek öğrenimin verimliliğini ve kalitesini etkileyecek düzeyde bir halk sağlığı sorununun oluşmaya başladığına işaret etmektedir. Halk sağlığı açısından bakıldığında da üniversite öğrencilerinin akıl sağlığının korunması giderek ciddi bir sorun haline gelmekle beraber bu olgu üzerinde daha fazla çalışma yapılmasına ihtiyaç duyulduğu ifade edilmektedir. Üniversite öğrencilerinde görülen psikolojik sorunlar farklı başlıklar altında ele alınmaktadır. Üniversite öğrencilerinde yaygın olarak görülen depresyon belirtilerine rağmen sınırlı sayıda öğrenci yardım aramaktadır. Üniversite öğrencisi, ailesinden ve arkadaşlarından depresyonla ilgili damgalanmaya veya ayrımcılığa maruz kaldığında, üniversite psikolojik danışma merkezine başvurma veya depresyonun tedavisine ilişkin alternatif tedavileri arayıp bulma eğilimi azalmaktadır. Üniversite öğrencilerinde görülen depresif belirtiler başka olgularla da ilişkilidir. Depresyon belirtileri ile birlikte ele alınan bir diğer kavram ise kaygıdır. Üniversite öğrencilerinde depresyon ile kaygı arasındaki ilişkileri inceleyen çalışmalar da bulunmaktadır. İlgili literatür doğrultusunda, beliren yetişkinlik dönemindeki bireylerin depresyon ve kaygı belirtileri açısından risk grubunda olduğu, bu bireylerin

akademik süreçlerini etkileyebildiği ve hatta halk sağlığı açısından giderek daha büyük bir sorun haline gelen akıl sağlığı sorunlarının daha derinlemesine araştırılması gerektiği ortadadır.

*Çalışmanın Amacı:* Üniversite öğrencilerinde düzeyleri ile kaygı durumları arasındaki ilişki ABD, Çin, Almanya gibi ülkelerde halk sağlığı problemi olarak ele alınmaktadır. Bu olgunun Türkiye'deki mevcut durumunu anlamak için bir devlet üniversitesinin psikolojik danışma merkezine başvurulardan oluşan çalışma grubuyla araştırma yapma gereği duyulmuştur. Çalışmada üniversite öğrencilerinin depresyon düzeyleri ile sosyal, durumluk ve sürekli kaygı puanları arasındaki ilişkinin ortaya konması amaçlanmıştır.

*Araştırmanın Yöntemi:* Araştırmanın çalışma grubunu 2018-2019 Eğitim-Öğretim yılında psikolojik danışma merkezine başvuran 341 kadın ve 98 erkek öğrenci olmak üzere toplam 439 öğrenci oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmaya veri toplamak amacıyla Beck Depresyon Envanteri, Liebowitz Sosyal Fobi Ölçeği, Durumluk ve Sürekli Kaygı Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Araştırmanın amacı doğrultusunda araştırma grubunda yer alana öğrencilerde sosyal kaygı, durumluk ve sürekli kaygının depresyonun anlamlı yordayıcısı olup olmadığını ortaya koymak için çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizi kullanılmıştır. Verilerin çoklu doğrusal regresyon analizinin sayıltılarını karşılayıp karşılamadığı, basıklık, çarpıklık katsayıları, uç değer incelemesi ve değişkenler arasındaki Pearson korelasyon katsayıları ile incelenmiştir.

*Araştırmanın Bulguları:* Araştırmanın temel bulgusu, durumluk ve sürekli kaygı ile sosyal kaygı depresyonun anlamlı yordayıcıları olduğudur. Bu bulgunun ilgili literatürle tutarlılık gösterdiği görülmüştür. Literatürde kaygı bozukluklarının depresif bozukluklardan önce ortaya çıktığını tespit edilmiş, kaygı bozukluğu olan kişilerin depresif bozukluklar geliştirme riski altında olduğunu ortaya koyduğunu öne sürülmüştür. Bu çalışmadaki sosyal, durumluk ve sürekli kaygının depresyonun anlamlı yordayıcısı olduğu düşünüldüğünde literatür adına önemli bir sonuç olduğu söylenebilir. Kaygının depresyon üzerindeki belirleyici rolü sadece üniversite öğrencilerinde değil diğer yaş gruplarında da araştırma konusu olmuştur. Bu çalışmalardan yola çıkıldığında kaygının çocukluk ve gençlik döneminde en yüksek seviyede olduğu söylenebilir. Tüm bunlar da mevcut araştırmanın bulguları ile benzer yöndedir.

*Araştırmanın Sonuç ve Önerileri:* Bu çalışma sosyal, durumluk ve sürekli kaygının depresyonun anlamlı yordayıcıları olduğunu göstermektedir. Depresyonun bir halk sağlığı sorunu olduğu ve literatürde geniş bir alana sahip olduğu düşünüldüğünde üniversite öğrencilerinin psikolojik problemlerinin önceden tespit edilmesinin önemli olduğu söylenebilir. Bir diğer yandan akıl sağlığı sorunlarının üniversite öğrencilerinin akademik başarısını engelleyebileceği göz önüne alındığında üniversitelerin öğrencilerinin akıl sağlığını sürekli olarak değerlendirmesi ve tedavi programlarını öğrencilerin ihtiyaçlarına göre uyarlaması hayati önem taşımaktadır. Halk sağlığı açısından değerlendirildiğinde ise, üniversitelerdeki genç yetişkinler arasında akıl sağlığı sorunlarının erken tespiti ve önlenmesi esastır. Depresyon, kaygı

ve stres gibi psikolojik sıkıntılarının yanı sıra korelasyonlarının da anlaşılması, uygun tarama ve müdahale programlarının geliştirilmesine yardımcı olacaktır. Mevcut çalışmanın bulgularıyla birlikte literatür değerlendirildiğinde, sosyal, durumluk ve sürekli kaygıyı azaltmaya yönelik müdahalelerin artırılmasının önemi görülmektedir. Sosyal kaygının psikolojik danışma süreçlerinde ele alınması konusunda bilişsel ve davranışçı psikoterapiler, sosyal beceri eğitimleri ve gevşeme egzersizleri kullanılmaktadır. Başlıca öneriler akademik personele sosyal kaygı, durumluk ve sürekli kaygıya ilişkin eğitimler verilmesi; kampüs içerisinde sosyal kaygıyla mücadeleyle yönelik farkındalık çalışmaları yapılması; sosyal kaygı ile başa çıkma becerilerinin öğretildiği psikoeğitsel programlarının hem yüz yüze hem de online platformlarda yer alması ve etkililiklerinin incelenmesi, üniversite öğrencilerinde kaygıya yol açan faktörlerin araştırılması şeklinde sıralanabilir. Başka bir deyişle, üniversite öğrencilerinin kaygı ile baş etmelerinde yardımcı olacak kendine yardım broşürleri, psikoeğitsel çalışmalar, bireysel ve grup psikolojik danışmanlığı, online platformlarda farkındalık artırıcı çalışmalar yürütülmesi öğrencilerin kaygı düzeylerinin düşmesine ve dolayısıyla depresyon için risk grubu olarak görülecek kişi sayısının azalmasına yardımcı olabilir. Bu çalışmalarla ortaya çıkan sonuçlarla ilgili yapılacak bilimsel araştırmaların literatüre önemli katkılar sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir. Bu öneriler izlendiğinde üniversite öğrencilerinde depresyonun önlenmesi konusunda somut adımlar atılabileceği düşünülmektedir.

*Anahtar Sözcükler:* Sosyal kaygı, durumluk kaygı, sürekli kaygı, regresyon, üniversite öğrencileri.