

## RESEARCH ARTICLE / ARAŞTIRMA YAZISI

## Investigation of Loneliness and Anxiety Processes of University Students

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**Abstract:** The importance of the research is to reveal the level of anxiety about the loneliness experienced by the students coming to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. In the study, descriptive analysis was used depending on the quantitative research design. The analysis of the quantitative data obtained during the research was analyzed with SPSS 24.0 package program. Frequency and percentages of quantitative data were calculated. Correlation analysis and one-way ANOVA test were applied to these scales based on the university students' grade level, gender, place of birth, and department. The study group consists of 600 pre-service teachers who attend undergraduate programs in the fall semester of 2018-2019 educational year in the Department of Guidance and Psychological Counseling, Department of Preschool Teachership and Department of Special Education Teachership in a private university in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Personal Information Form, UCLA Loneliness Scale and Trait Anxiety Scale were used in the study. According to the findings of the study, it was found that there was a significant difference between loneliness and anxiety processes of freshman students and final year students coming to the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus to get higher education in terms of adaptation of the students with regard to the school and the place they reside. However, there was no significant difference in the loneliness and anxiety processes of university students studying in the second and third grades (sophomores). Depending on gender, there was a significant difference between the variables in terms of loneliness and anxiety processes of girls compared to boys. When we look at the variables according to the departments, a meaningful difference has emerged in the findings that the students studying in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus feel more lonely in their first years. It is considered that the subject of the study is valuable in terms of being the first research conducted in overall the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus and it will contribute to the future research.

**Key Words:** Loneliness, Anxiety, Social Relations, University Students.

## Üniversite Öğrencilerinin Yalnızlık ve Kaygı Süreçlerinin İncelenmesi

**Özet:** Araştırmanın önemi Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'ne okumak için gelen öğrencilerinin yaşadıkları yalnızlık ile ilgili kaygı düzeylerini ortaya çıkarmaktır. Araştırmada nicel araştırma desenine bağlı olarak betimsel analiz kullanılmıştır. Araştırma sırasında elde edilen nicel verilerin analizi, SPSS 24.0 paket programı ile çözümlenmiştir. Nicel verilerin frekans ve yüzdeleri hesaplanmıştır. Bu ölçekleri üniversite öğrencilerinin sınıf düzeyi, cinsiyet, doğum yeri, bölüme bağlı olarak korelasyon analizi ve Tek yönlü Anova testi uygulanmıştır. Çalışma grubunu 2018-2019 güz döneminde Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'nde bulunan özel bir üniversitede öğrenim gören Rehberlik ve Psikolojik Danışmanlık Anabilimdalı, Okulöncesi Öğretmenliği Anabilimdalı ve Özel Eğitim Öğretmenliği Anabilim dalı lisans programlarına devam eden 600 öğretmen adayı oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada Kişisel Bilgi Formu, UCLA Yalnızlık Ölçeği ve Sürekli Kaygı Ölçeği kullanılmıştır. Araştırmada elde edilen bulgulara göre, üniversite düzeyinde öğrenim görmek için Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'ne gelen birinci sınıf düzeyinde okuyan öğrencilerin okula ve kaldıkları ortama bağlı olarak adapte olmaları bakımından dördüncü sınıfta okuyan öğrencilere nazaran yalnızlık ve kaygı süreçleri arasında anlamlı bir fark bulunmuştur. Ancak ikinci ve üçüncü sınıflarda öğrenim gören üniversite öğrencilerin yalnızlık ve kaygı süreçlerinde anlamlı bir fark bulunmamıştır. Cinsiyete bağlı olarak değişkenler arasında kızlar erkeklere oranla yalnızlık ve kaygı süreçleri arasında anlamlı bir fark ortaya çıkmıştır. Bölümlere göre değişkenlere bakıldığında, Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti'nde okuyan öğrencilerin ilk yıllarında kendilerini daha yalnız hissettikleri ile ilgili bulgularda anlamlı bir fark ortaya çıkmıştır. Araştırmanın konusunun Kuzey Kıbrıs Türk Cumhuriyeti genelinde yapılan ilk araştırma olması açısından değerli olduğu ve ileriki araştırmalara katkı sağlayacağı düşünülmektedir.

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** Yalnızlık, Kaygı, Sosyal İlişkiler, Üniversite Öğrencisi

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## Introducion

In their lifetime, people face problems that are psychologically challenging to them in material and spiritual dimensions. Sometimes they need the help of others to solve their problems. In dealing with mental health, people seek solutions and gain experience through different methods (Yaşar, 2007).

Whichever emotional or social loneliness is more painful or pleasurable is a relative concept that changes from person to person. The phenomenon of loneliness is analyzed in four groups including psychological loneliness which the individual experiences with different parts of his/her self, interpersonal loneliness which the individual experiences due to lack of communication with other individuals, cultural loneliness which the individual experiences due to cultural shock or cultural problems and the cosmic loneliness which the individual experiences due to religious alination. While loneliness is defined as the greatest fortune, it means that people cannot be more alone than in a society or community which they do not recognized (Yaşar, 2007).

It is known that loneliness is painful and is a negative feeling. The feeling of loneliness seperates from demanding to be alone with its feature of consisting despair and unhappiness and inflicting pain to the individual, and this makes the individual more anxious. As for anxiety, the human being is inherently a social entity (Karaoğlu, Avşaroğlu and Deniz, 2009).

Loneliness is expressed as an undesirable and unpleasant experience which is almost always avoided and accompanied by feelings of anxiety, anger, sadness and emotions of feeling different from others and, contrary to popular myth, occurs frequently among adolescents and young adults more than later ages. It was underlined that loneliness in young adulthood stemmed especially from the difficulties and critical viewpoint of this period (Çeçen, 2008).

Describing loneliness as “the greatest fortune”, Goethe stated that man could not feel himself more alone than in a society or community he did not know at all. Goethe said that he might fully taste loneliness he longed, if there was any pleasure in it, because man never felt more alone than he was in a community he did not recognize (Goethe, 2010).

Cüceloğlu (2010) emphasized that loneliness was a process which individuals experienced in adolescence and old age. He underlined that loneliness in adolescence especially stemmed from the problems and critical viewpoints of adolescence period. It is thought that modernization carries loneliness to a different dimension. In today's societies where the communication possibilities of the individuals have been developed, access to the desired information or the person whenever it is wanted has strengthened the communication of the individuals, while eliminating the shared environment.

Anxiety, in the most general sense, is expressed as the thought or concern feeling sadness or worry. It is a psychological reaction that corresponds to the high energy brought about by the stressing situation in the individual. There are differences from the emergence of, and development, to frequency and intensity of anxiety. Among the factors of this change; genetic characteristics,

gender, character, intelligence, self-perception, social identity and role can be shown (Cüceloğlu, 2010).

Anxiety is described as a feeling that sometimes stimulates people in daily life by encouraging creative and constructive behaviors, and sometimes by preventing such behaviors, often creating uneasiness. According to learning-oriented theories, anxiety is a feeling that is gained through conditioning and is impulsive. It is not the source but the severity and duration of the emotion and the level of importance of the external hazard that determines whether the anxiety is normal or pathological (Taşdemir, 2015).

Anxiety has been described as an unpleasant affective state which emerges in people against perilous or threatening situations, involves concerns about the future and manifests itself by bodily reactions (stretching, sweating, etc.) (Lewis, 1970).

Continuous anxiety refers to the general tendency of the person in terms of anxiety level. Therefore, it is a personal trait and includes continuity. People whose level of axiety is continuously high are generally more susceptible to perceiving situations as dangerous or threatening and experiencing anxiety (Spielberger, 1972).

Social relations are a phenomenon that is discussed in its different dimensions. As a reflection of the modernization process, changes in social values and in the functioning of the dynamics that constitute the social structure have occurred. This process has increased the value of interpersonal relations over time, social relations have gained more importance and the phenomenon of social relations has been evaluated from different perspectives (Kılınç, 2005).

Inadequate and individually insatiable social lives in individuals' relationships may affect their lives to different levels. This may cause individuals to isolate themselves from society and feel lonely. It is a fact that loneliness, which is known to be the cause of many pathological mental disorders and personality disorders, is experienced intensively in the society (Dussault and Frenette, 2014).

Loneliness is generally expressed as being physically alone. In the literature, this concept is generally defined as "a disturbing, psychological situation that arises because of the difference and contradiction between the social relations in which the individual lives and the relations he wants to live" (Dussault and Frenette, 2014).

The fact that all living and nonliving creatures on Earth have a universal commitment can be demonstrated in organic and inorganic relations of nature among all organisms. The subject of observation in sociology is interpersonal relations; it also has valuable animal and plant sociology; whereas these belong to Zoology and Botany; but as a means of researching the human world, it must be involved in sociological research. The main issue here is the relations between people (Öğüt, 2001).

## The Aim of The Study

Loneliness occurs when the individual lives inwardly in terms of social relations. The aim of this study is to examine the loneliness and anxiety processes of university students. In this study, the relationship of opinions of the students in the Faculty of Education of

Near East University about loneliness and anxiety in regard to socio-demographic aspects was examined. The importance of the research is to reveal the level of anxiety about the loneliness experienced by students coming to Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. In the research, UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Inventory will be used together for the first time.

The sub-problems supporting the problem statement of the research are given below:

Is there a significant difference in the comparison of UCLA Loneliness Inventory scores according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the students?

Is there a significant difference in the comparison of the scores of the Trait Anxiety Scale according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the students?

Are there any significant differences in the correlations between UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Scale scores of the students?

### Methodology

The sample of the study will be determined based on stratified random sampling. In stratified random sampling, the universe is divided into homogeneous strata. Sample is selected from the layers. The selections are combined. Stratified sampling is used in cases where substrates or subunit groups exist in a defined universe. The advantages of this type of selection are; If the variable is related to our stratification criteria, we can obtain more accurate results (Büyüköztürk and et al., 2010).

In this study, the relationship between loneliness and anxiety processes of the university students and several variables was investigated by using descriptive relational scanning model. Descriptive research examines the relationship of being together of the variables (Balci, 2016).

In the study, it was first tried to reveal the relationships between the variables such as gender, age, department, class, number of siblings, economic level and relationship with social environment and the loneliness and anxiety processes of the university students.

### Unit of Analysis

Firstly, ethical permission was obtained from the ethics committee in The Near East University on 2nd April 2018. Data started to be collected within 1-2 months. The study three group of students studying at a private university in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus in the fall semester of 2018-2019. The study group consists of 600 prospective teachers attending undergraduate programs of Guidance and Psychological Counseling, Preschool Teaching and Special Education Teaching Department. Pre-service teachers consist of students in the first, second, third, and fourth grades depending on 3 different departments.

### Data Collection Tools

“UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Scale” were used as data collection instruments. The survey consists of 3 sections. In the first part, demographic information, in the second part UCLA Loneliness Inventory, in the third part, there is a 5-point Likert type expressions for the Trait Anxiety Scale. In UCLA Loneliness Inventory, it consists of 20 questions. It is evaluated with a 4 scale. 1,4,5,6,8,10,15,16,20, the individual gets the opposite score in the questions in this. Other questions are scored normally. The highest score is 80, the lowest score is 20. The feeling of loneliness is common as it rises between 20-80, and the feeling of loneliness decreases as it decreases. Cronbach alpha coefficient of the scale was found 0.94 Demir, A. (1989). In Trait Anxiety Scale, its constant value is 50 for the state anxiety scale and 35 for the trait anxiety scale. The last value obtained is the individual's anxiety score. The average score level determined in the applications varies between 36 and 41 (Kara and Acet, 2012).

The application was carried out during class hours and permission was given from the faculty members. During the application, attention was paid to the influence of the students on each other. The students were asked to answer the scale on a voluntary basis.

### Statistical Analysis of Data

In the research, the 24th version of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) program was used to analyze the data collected from the students. The frequency analysis was used to determine socio-demographic characteristics of the students such as gender, age, department, class, number of siblings, economic level and social environment. Descriptive statistics were used to determine the UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Scale scores.

Parametrical hypothesis tests were used to compare UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Scale scores of the students according to gender, age, department, class, number of siblings, economic level and social environment. In order to use the parametric hypothesis tests in the study, the normal distribution of UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Scale scores of the students was tested with the Komogorov-Smirnov test and it was observed to be in normal distribution.

According to this, independent sample t-test was used to compare gender and social environment variables and UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Scale scores. The variance analysis (ANOVA) was used to compare the UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Scale scores according to age, department, class, number of siblings and economic level variables. Tukey test was preferred as post-hoc test. The correlations between UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Scale scores were determined by Pearson correlation analysis.

**Findings****Table 1.** Comparison of UCLA Loneliness Inventory Scores According to Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Students

	n	$\bar{x}$	s	Min	Max	F	p	Difference
Gender								
Female	328	42,59	6,75	32	58	5,689	0,000*	
Male	272	39,39	7,00	27	52			
Age								
20 aged and below	158	41,06	8,36	29	58	0,580	0,628	
21 aged	202	40,71	6,29	31	56			
22 aged	136	41,40	6,86	27	52			
23 aged and older	104	41,75	6,48	29	52			
Department								
Pre-school Teaching D.	262	42,69	7,00	27	58	11,798	0,000*	1-2
Psychological C. and Guidance D.	234	39,91	6,89	27	57			1-3
Special Education D.	104	39,96	6,76	27	58			
Class								
I. Class	131	42,63	9,45	27	58	5,204	0,001*	1-4
II. Class	119	41,66	7,10	29	52			
III. Class	165	41,28	5,70	30	52			
IV. Class	185	39,61	5,74	29	51			
Number of sisters/brothers								
No sisters/brothers	19	35,58	7,39	30	51	9,239	0,000*	1-3
1 sister/brother	140	39,39	6,37	29	55			1-4
2 sister/brother	140	41,59	7,31	27	58			2-3
3 sisters/brothers and older	301	42,09	6,91	29	57			2-4
Economical Statuses								
Low	86	43,30	6,17	33	51	2,113	0,122	
Medium	448	40,90	7,03	27	57			
High	66	42,29	7,26	32	58			
Social Environment and Relationship								
Poor	70	46,26	7,00	32	58	6,707	0,000*	
Well	530	40,46	6,77	27	57			

\* $p < 0,05$ 

When Table 1 is examined, the results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the comparison of UCLA Loneliness Inventory scores according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the students are shown. A

significant difference was found between the gender, age, class, department, number of siblings, relationship with social-environment levels of the students included in the study.

**Table 2.** Comparison of Continuous Anxiety Inventory Scores According to Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Students

	n	$\bar{x}$	s	Min	Max	F	p	Difference
Gender								
Female	328	47,48	6,81	36	66	10,037	0,000*	
Male	272	41,64	7,41	26	58			
Age								
20 aged and below	158	45,03	8,84	28	66	0,370	0,775	
21 aged	202	45,10	7,71	26	62			
22 aged	136	44,26	6,55	28	59			
23 aged and older	104	44,74	7,01	30	59			

Department								
Pre-school Teaching D.	262	46,16	7,65	26	66	8,569	0,000*	1-2
Psychological C. and Guidance D.	234	44,24	7,68	26	63			1-3
Special Education D.	104	42,79	7,06	28	61			
Class								
I. Class	131	46,49	9,58	28	66	2,823	0,038*	1-4
II. Class	119	44,54	9,34	26	59			
III. Class	165	44,60	6,45	32	59			
IV. Class	185	44,05	5,51	28	56			
Number of sisters/brothers								
No sisters/brothers	19	41,16	10,81	26	62	7,530	0,000*	1-4
1 sister/brother	140	42,94	6,55	30	59			1-3
2 sister/brother	140	44,44	8,69	29	60			2-4
3 sisters/brothers and older	301	46,12	7,14	28	66			
Economical Statues								
Low	86	47,15	8,62	35	58	1,017	0,362	
Medium	448	44,79	7,66	26	66			
High	66	44,42	7,32	28	59			
Social Enviroment and Relationship								
Poor	70	47,73	7,34	35	62	3,399	0,001*	
Well	530	44,45	7,62	26	66			

\* $p < 0,05$

The results of the analysis of variance (ANOVA) on the comparison of the Continuous Anxiety Inventory scores according to the socio-demographic characteristics of the students are shown. When Table 2 is examined, a

significant difference was found between the gender, age, class, department, number of siblings, relationship with social-environmental levels of the students included in the study.

**Table 3.** Correlations between UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Scale scores

		Trait Anxiety Scale	
UCLA Loneliness Inventory	r	0,583	
	p	0,000*	
	n	600	

In Table 3, the results of correlation analysis between UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Scale scores of the students were given, and there was a statistically significant correlation between UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Scale scores.

### Discussion

Correlation analysis results of UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Scale scores were given and there was a statistically significant correlation between UCLA Loneliness Inventory and Trait Anxiety Inventory. Bilgen (1989) found that as the level of social, personal and general harmony decreased, there was a negative correlation between the level of loneliness and the level of adjustment.

According to the results of the study, it can be said that as loneliness increases, the level of trait anxiety is increasing in university students. When we look at the socio-demographic variables that affect the UCLA.

Loneliness Inventory and trait anxiety level, it was seen that gender factor is important, the sense of loneliness is lower in men, and the age is not effective, but there is a difference in terms of the departments studied. While class, number of siblings, relationship with social-environment were effective, the economic level was not effective.

Kozaklı (2006) examined the relationship between university students' perceived social support and loneliness levels from various sources. According to the findings of the study, it was found that the loneliness level of university students varied according to age, the center where their families resided, their mothers' education level and ways of meeting their educational expenses.

Oruç (2013) investigated the relationship between loneliness and automatic thoughts according to psychosocial variables in university students. Findings obtained as a result of the research showed that the level

of loneliness of the students is based on marital status, marital status, economic status, psychological support of parents and varies significantly according to family attitude. However, it was observed that there were no differences in the number of university students according to age, gender and number of siblings.

As nearly same as our study, In other study, it is aimed to investigate the relationship between university students' levels of fear of missing out and levels of loneliness according to different variables. As a result of the study, it has been found that there is no important diversity between loneliness and fear of missing out (Tayiz, 2018).

He studied the relationship between university students' loneliness and hopelessness and life satisfaction. As the results obtained from the research result increase as the score obtained from the Loneliness Scale increases, the score obtained from the Despair Scale also increases. Accordingly, a significant difference was found between age, gender, perceived economic status and perceived academic achievement variables and loneliness (Özkaya, 2017).

Yüksel (2012) showed that self-esteem, perceived academic achievement and mother's level of education are important predictors affecting the shyness level of university students.

The other research was determined that the students' self perception was positive and the loneliness levels were low. The loneliness levels of students, the duration of using social networking, used social networking site and the social network usage purpose predict the research and communication sub-factors (Kılıç, 2015).

In his study titled "loneliness, exam anxiety and social support as a predictor of academic success", Yıldırım (2000) points out that high school students' academic success was predicted by first the teachers, the second was the support of the family, the third was the loneliness and the last was the test anxiety. The findings of this research about teacher and family support are compatible with the findings of Cutrona, et all. (1994), Levitt, et all.(1994), Meeus and Wim (1993).

Loneliness among university students: In an empirical study conducted at Mediterranean University, there was a significant relationship between loneliness scores in the high UCLA Loneliness Scale taken according to the student's department (Seçim, Alpar and Algür, 2014).

Self-esteem, loneliness levels and affecting factors of university senior students were examined. Similar results were obtained according to age and gender in the findings obtained as a result of the research (Softa, et all, 2015).

According to research, the level of loneliness differs depending on age and the level of loneliness decreases with age. The preference for solitude did not differ according to age and the level of loneliness and preference for solitude did not differ according to gender, grade level and sheltering (Avan, 2019).

According to the other research's results of the research, it's seen that there is a weak positive correlation between the submissive behaviour scores and social anxiety scores, and a moderate positive correlation between submissive behaviour scores and social avoidance scores. It was determined that social avoidance, gender, loneliness and relationship status predicted the submissive behaviours in a significant level (Eren, 2019).

On the other hand, it was seen that the variants of social anxiety and close friend relationships don't have a significant effect on submissive behaviours. In addition, significant differences between submissive behaviours and sociodemographic variants were detected (Eren, 2019).

### Conclusion and Suggestions

As a conclusion, content analysis can be developed among university students studying in different schools related to UCLA. Loneliness Inventory and Continuous Anxiety Inventory of university students studying in the Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus. Psychosocial support programs can be established with a preventive guidance approach for students studying in university institutions by psychological counseling and guidance units. The studies about introducing the students who are new to the school, rules and the functioning of the school, providing information about how to meet their needs in the school and that environment and thus helping them adjust to the new environment they have entered in a short time can be mentioned.

The study was carried out in accordance with the screening model. Further studies can be carried out qualitatively or experimentally. "UCLA Loneliness Inventory and the Trait Anxiety Inventory" which was developed and reliability and validity studies conducted in TURKEY, can be used in the Northern Cyprus without any adjustment but just conducting a reliability and validity tests because of cultural and linguistic diversity. Conducting these studies on a large sample to cover different University and faculty students throughout the Turkish Northern Cyprus, and examining the various factors affecting the "Ucla Loneliness inventory and trait anxiety inventory" separately for different disciplines will increase the efficiency and effectiveness of psychological counseling and guidance services for university students and will be base for an infrastructure.

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