

- RESEARCH ARTICLE -

## THE RELATIONSHIP OF EXISTENTIAL AND ECONOMIC CONCERNS WITH THE TRUST IN GOVERNMENT DURING THE PANDEMIC

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### **Abstract**

*The aim of this study is to analyze the relationship between people's existential and economic concerns and their trust in the government during the COVID-19 pandemic. In this context, it is aimed to obtain in-depth information about the direction of government-individual relations during the pandemic, how the policies regarding trust in the government during and after the pandemic are perceived, the relationship between the duties and responsibilities assigned to the government and the existential and economic concerns of individuals. In line with these purposes, the method of the study was determined as the explanatory sequential mixed method. In this framework, firstly, quantitative data collection and analysis process was carried out, and qualitative research was carried out with the results obtained from there. According to quantitative findings; As the trust in the government and its institutions increases, there is a regression in the existential concerns of individuals. On the other hand, it has been determined that there is no relationship between gender and trust in the government, but existential concerns are related; there is a significant difference between trust in the government and existential concerns according to work-occupational status; trust in the government and existential concerns decrease as age increases; as religious commitment increases, existential concerns decrease, while trust in the government increases. In addition, it has been observed that there is a significant relationship between the economic concerns of individuals and their trust in the government and their existential concerns. It was understood that the empirical and descriptive analysis results were also supported by the qualitative findings, and it was determined that they largely overlapped with the relevant literature.*

**Keywords:** COVID-19 Pandemic, Trust in the Government, Existential Concerns, Economic Concerns, Government-Individual Relations, Duties and Responsibilities Assigned to the Government.

**JEL Codes:** A13, A14, H11.

**Başvuru:** 01.11.2021

**Kabul:** 02.03.2022

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## **SALGIN SÜRECİNDE VAROLUŞSAL VE İKTİSADİ KAYGILARIN DEVLETE GÜVENLE İLİŞKİSİ<sup>4</sup>**

### **Öz**

*Bu çalışmanın amacı COVID-19 salgını sürecinde insanların varoluşsal ve iktisadi kaygılarının devlete güvenle ilişkisini incelemektir. Bu bağlamda, devlet-birey ilişkilerinin salgın sürecinde nasıl bir yön izlediği, devlete duyulan güven konusunda salgın dönemi ve sonrası politikaların nasıl algılandığı, devlete biçilen görev ve sorumluluklar ile bireylerin varoluşsal ve iktisadi kaygıları arasında nasıl bir ilişki olduğu hakkında derinlemesine bilgilerin edinilmesi amaçlanmıştır. Söz konusu amaçlar doğrultusunda çalışmanın yöntemi açıklayıcı sıralı karma yöntem olarak belirlenmiştir. Bu çerçevede öncelikle nicel veri toplama ve analiz süreci yapılmış, buradan çıkan sonuçlarla nitel araştırma gerçekleştirilmiştir. Nicel bulgulara göre; devlete ve kurumlarına güven arttıkça, bireylerin varoluşsal kaygılarında bir gerileme söz konusudur. Öte yandan cinsiyet ile devlete güven arasında ilişki bulunmadığı ancak varoluşsal kaygılar ilişkili olduğu; iş-meslek durumlarına göre devlete güven ve varoluşsal kaygılar arasında anlamlı bir farklılık olduğu; yaş arttıkça devlete güven ve varoluşsal kaygıların düştüğü; dini bağlılık arttıkça varoluşsal kaygılar azalırken, devlete güvenin arttığı tespit edilmiştir. Ayrıca bireylerin iktisadi kaygıları ile devlete güven ve varoluşsal kaygıları arasında da anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu görülmüştür. Ampirik ve betimleyici analiz sonuçlarının nitel bulgular tarafından da desteklendiği anlaşılmış, büyük oranda ilgili literatürle de örtüştüğü tespit edilmiştir.*

**Anahtar Kelimeler:** *COVID-19 Pandemisi, Devlete Güven, Varoluşsal Kaygılar, İktisadi Kaygılar, Devlet-Birey İlişkileri, Devlete Biçilen Görev ve Sorumluluklar*

**JEL Kodları:** *A13, A14, H11.*

*“Bu çalışma Araştırma ve Yayın Etiğine uygun olarak hazırlanmıştır.”*

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The COVID-19 pandemic, which has occupied the agenda of the global public since the first quarter of 2020, has brought many debates at the national level, and existential and economic concerns have been among the topics that have been scrutinized by many disciplines during the pandemic process, which is also the subject of this study. The COVID-19 pandemic, which has a high risk with both its contagiousness and lethality, has moved people's fears and concerns about the possibility of contracting the disease themselves or their relatives from the individual level to the social level (Doğan and Düzcel, 2020: 750). In addition to these existential concerns, as various studies have shown, in the shadow of the discussions that a deep economic recession will occur on a global scale with the

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<sup>4</sup> Genişletilmiş Türkçe Özet, makalenin sonunda yer almaktadır.

pandemic, it has been observed that individuals fear that there will be negative developments in the markets due to the pandemic and even that they will face unemployment at the end of the process (Ağan, 2020: 1015). The pandemic's catching global organizations that responsible for giving advice to policy makers, multinational companies, nation states and even ordinary people off-guard, have increased the burden of the pandemic on societies (Bozkurt, 2020: 116). At this point, the question of how governments and individuals caught off guard cope with the existential and economic concerns created by the pandemic comes to mind. The aim of this study is to focus on the relationship of existential and economic concerns with trust in the government during the pandemic process and to look deeply at what direction the government-individual relations follow during the pandemic process.

The pandemic has disrupted people's daily routines. As is known, anxiety, confidence and daily routines are closely related. Therefore, during the pandemic process, the level of anxiety and stress has increased in the Turkish society, as in other societies. Past research (Shevlin et al., 2020; Huang and Zhao, 2020; Aribogan and Aydın-Ozturk, 2021; Bayhan and Bozkurt, 2021; Şentürk and Bozkurt, 2021; Şahin and Nerse, 2021; Caki, Krupić, and Corr, 2021) shows that psycho-social problems and concern about the future increase in society. In particular, the concerns of the poor, women and disadvantaged groups have increased more (Stantcheva, 2022; Gönc-Şavran and Suğur, 2021; Messick, 2021). During the pandemic, the way people live and work has changed; The level of trust of the society has been seriously shaken. The pandemic process has been one of the most needed periods for solidarity and social support from the government. On the other hand, as trust in the government increases during the pandemic process, compliance with pandemic rules and management of the pandemic becomes easier (Garan, Yöney and Bozkurt, 2021; Dovidio et al., 2020). In addition, trust in the government and the health system reduces the anxiety of individuals on the one hand, and on the other hand, it increases their life satisfaction (Bozkurt and Aytaç, 2021). While the low level of general trust feeds suspicion about the vaccine with pandemic measures in countries such as Brazil (Pasqualin and Paiva, 2021), it complicates the management of the process and increases the damage it creates in society.

As a concept, trust is the state of fulfilling commitments, sincerity, honesty and virtue in the relations between individuals and institutions (Gökalp, 2003: 163). Trust, which is the most basic condition of any kind of union; it enables individuals to be together in interaction, to show continuity in their relationships and to maintain the intensity in their relationships (Örselli and Sipahi, 2016: 843). On the other hand, trust is a kind of commodity that radiates externality, as Kenneth Arrow mentioned. The existence of trust facilitates the functioning of the social system and shapes the economic life. So much so that with the trust between individuals, daily economic activities become practical. For example, in a situation where there is no trust, the length and details of the contracts will be too much (Fukuyama, 2000: 167-168). The existence of trust means that public officials will pursue the social interest even under scrutiny or supervision (Easton, 1975: 448).

Trust in the government, which is the subject of this study, can be summarized as the positive attitude of the people to the political system and its institutions (Çoymak, 2015: 269-270, as cited in Shi, 2001). In other words, trust in the government and its institutions takes into account the interaction between the government and its citizens. Individuals want the government and its institutions to keep their word, to work effectively and efficiently, to be fair and honest. Trust is formed when these demands are met (OECD, 2017: 19, as cited in Blind, 2006). The attitudes of individuals to trust or not trust the government are formed by many social and psychological factors, and each of them seems to have different internal motivations, ethical norms and moral attitudes (Turan, Aydılek and Taban, 2017: 26-27).

Trust, which is divided into two as strategic (partial) and moral (generalized) by Uslaner (2002), facilitates joint decision making in the society and the government becomes more successful in the environment of trust. However, it is not easy to establish trust, especially in collectivist societies. The level of trust is higher in individualistic societies (Uslaner, 2002: 251). As the research conducted by Hofstede (1980) reveals, Turkey is a collectivist society. As Esmer (2012: 21) stated in his findings, it is one of the countries with the lowest level of trust in the world in terms of trust in other people. An opinion that can be considered as a reflection of such distrust in the society on the public sector is that the government in Turkey does not trust its citizens, and instead of the declaration-based system in various transactions, it demands practices such as notary approval (Esmer, 1999: 23). The level of trust in public institutions in Turkey is quite high in researches (Turan, Aydılek and Taban, 2017), but it is observed that it has a decreasing trend in recent years (Örselli and Sipahi, 2016: 849-850).

Hardin (2002: 10-11) bases it on expectations, saying that trust is “in the cognitive category with knowledge and belief”. Accordingly, the important thing for trust is not only individual expectation, but also individual belief. In terms of trust in the government and its institutions, expectations should be more rational. However, it is observed that this is generally not possible in practice. Most citizens’ expectations from the government are not based on trust (Hardin, 2002: 156).

If an evaluation is made in terms of the expectations of individuals, the provision of public services in a way that meets individual demands can be considered as the basis of trust. Two basic principles to ensure this; responsiveness and reliability. Responsiveness is concerned with how the government listens to individuals and responds to their demands, as well as evaluating the services they receive and expect as citizens. Reliability, on the other hand, can be said to mean that the government should “evaluate the economic, social and political environment facing its citizens and act accordingly”. The government, which also takes into account periodic risks, should help individuals who are under threat in the face of uncertainties to cope with them. In short, reliability means that the government and its institutions foresee the needs and minimize the economic, social and political uncertainty faced by citizens (OECD, 2017: 22). The duties and responsibilities of the government in risks such

as climate change, housing crisis, energy crisis and the COVID-19 pandemic, which is also the subject of the study, should be evaluated within this framework. The risks mentioned are situations that cause anxiety in individuals.

Anxiety is one of the concepts that has a place in both psychology and philosophy and is processed by various scientists and philosophers (Manav, 2011: 209). Existential concerns, which are one of the sub-headings of concern, refer to general concerns about life, including death, seeing life as meaningless, loneliness, and uncertainty. In this respect, it can help to understand the ways and behaviors of coping with anxiety individually and socially (van Bruggen, Vos, Westerhof, Bohlmeijer, and Glas, 2015: 174). Existence means being present and active in the world; there is no consensus that existentialist philosophers Kierkegaard, Heidegger, Marcel, Jaspers, Sartre and Nietzsche they agree on (Sartre, 2016). However, it is a known fact that individuals try to make sense of their lives and evaluate the events they have experienced within the scope of existence. Individuals generally try to find a purpose for living and seek meaning (van Bruggen, Vos, Westerhof, Bohlmeijer and Glas, 2015: 176). Existential concerns also included in this area. From this point of view, in the case of uncertainty mentioned above, the expectations of individuals from the government are in the form of responsiveness and reliability. If existential concerns are handled in this sense, it is expected that the government-individual relations will be based on trust in order to eliminate or minimize the anxiety, and the government will respond to the demands by listening to the individuals.

## **2. METHOD**

This study is designed as a mixed method in which quantitative and qualitative methods are used together. The mixed method is a research method that has become widespread in recent years and expresses the use of quantitative and qualitative data together in the same study (Creswell, 2014: xxiii). The aim in the mixed method is to combine quantitative and qualitative research and to minimize the limitations of both approaches (Creswell, 2014: 218). In this study, an explanatory sequential mixed method research design was used. In the design in question, it is aimed to explain the findings in the first stage in depth by making quantitative research in the first stage and qualitative research in the second stage. This design, which offers the opportunity to reveal the network of relationships in quantitative data, offers multiple perspectives (Creswell and Plano Clark, 2018: 89-90). Therefore, in the first phase of this study, the quantitative method; In the second phase, the qualitative method was used. In the study, quantitative and qualitative data were collected sequentially, priority was given to quantitative data, the purpose of integration (unification) was determined as explanation, and multiple strategy research techniques were applied in quantitative-qualitative data analysis and interpretation (Toraman, 2021: 11-12).

Quantitative data in the first phase of the research were collected through an online survey between 29 August and 5 September 2020. Online surveys are widely used in social sciences and especially in quantitative studies; and preferred due to its

advantages such as reaching large masses in a very short time and almost no costs (Christensen, Johnson and Turner, 2020: 132; Karakaya, 2019: 48). 2,515 people participated in the survey in this study. 57.6% of the participants were female and 42.4% were male.<sup>5</sup>

The average age of the participants in the study is 31.82, as seen in Table 1. The vast majority (38.9%) of the participants are students. However, 21.7% work in the public sector and 14.4% work in the private sector. 6.6% of them do their own business. 3.32% are housewives, 5.2% are retired and 9.9% are unemployed. 51.1% of the participants stated that they were from the middle-income group, 23.3% from the lower middle-income group and 18.8% from the upper middle-income group. Those from the lowest income group are 6.2%, while those from the highest income group are only 0.7%.

**Table 1. Survey Study Demographic Information**

<b>Demographic Factors</b>	<b>Definition</b>	<b>Average/Percent</b>
Age	Age	31.82 (Average)
Gender	Woman	57.6
	Man	42.4
Education	Middle School and below	6
	University	67.4
	Postgraduate and doctorate	25.4
	Self-employed	6.6
Occupation	Public Official	21.7
	Private sector employee	14.4
	Student	38.9
	Unemployed	9.9
	Housewife	3.3
	Retired	5.2

In the second phase of the research, the qualitative method was used. In this sense, a focus group meeting was held on 20 August 2021, one year after the first research. Focus group discussions are called informal discussions on many topics from public attitudes to personal behaviors in groups, and these discussions are held with the number of participants between 6 and 12 people (Neuman, 2014: 592). In this study, six participants, four women and two men, were included in the focus group discussion, which was carried out in the presence of a moderator and an observer. Thus, the weight of the previous quantitative research consisting of women and

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<sup>5</sup> The sample includes people with relatively high cognitive capacity. 94% of respondents have a university degree or higher (including those currently in education). Convenience sampling method was used in the study. Therefore, the research does not purport to represent the general population. However, the research reflects the trends of the educated middle class who predominantly use social media. Although online surveys do not claim to represent the general public, the answers given can be much more sincere, as respondents fill out the surveys without being questioned by the interviewer.

young people was tried to be preserved here as well. Four people from Istanbul and one person each from Kayseri and Karaman attended the focus group discussion, which was designed in a semi-structured way. Female participants gave their occupational information as follows: Nurse, student, public official and unemployed. Male participants, on the other hand, stated their professions as tourism professionals and academicians. The average age of the focus group interview was 34.3 (Table 2). Thus, the average age of 31.82 in the survey conducted a year ago is very close (Table 1).

**Table 2. Focus Group Discussion Demographic Information**

<b>Pseudonym Name-Surname<sup>6</sup></b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>City</b>	<b>Occupation</b>
Zeynep Yılmaz	Woman	36	Kayseri	Nurse
Yusuf Kaya	Man	24	İstanbul	Tourism Professional
Elif Demir	Woman	31	İstanbul	Student
Hiranur Şahin	Woman	48	İstanbul	Unemployed
Defne Çelik	Woman	31	Karaman	Public Official
Eymen Yıldız	Man	36	İstanbul	Academician

The qualitative data of the research were analyzed with the MAXQDA Qualitative Data Analysis Program. In addition, the ethics committee approval of the research was received on 13.07.2021 from the Harran University Social Sciences Ethics Committee and the COVID-19 Scientific Research Evaluation Commission established within the scope of the General Directorate of Health Services of the Ministry of Health of the Republic of Turkey.

### **3. RESULTS**

In line with the methods and purposes of the study, primarily quantitative research and analysis were carried out, and then qualitative research and analysis were included. In the quantitative part, the hypotheses stated in the table below were developed and tested (Table 3). The quantitative data of the research were analyzed with the help of SPSS Statistics 26 program.

<sup>6</sup> The personal information of the participants in the focus group interview was not included in the study; pseudonyms are used instead of real names. According to the data of the General Directorate of Population and Citizenship Affairs of the Ministry of Internal Affairs of the Republic of Turkey, Zeynep, Elif, Hiranur and Defne, which are the most preferred names for girls in 2020; Likewise, the most preferred boy names were coded as the pseudonyms Yusuf and Eymen. Also, according to the same statistics, the most frequently used surnames were matched with the surnames Yılmaz, Kaya, Demir, Şahin, Çelik and Yıldız (Source: <https://www.nvi.gov.tr/2020-yilinda-turkiyede-en-cok-tercih-edilen-isimler-merkezicerik>).

**Table 3. Hypotheses of Quantitative Research**

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<i>H1.</i> There is a significant relationship between individuals' trust in government and government institutions and existential concerns.
<i>H2a.</i> There is a significant relationship between gender and trust in government.
<i>H2b.</i> There is a significant relationship between gender and existential concerns.
<i>H3a.</i> There is a significant relationship between age and trust in government.
<i>H3b.</i> There is a significant relationship between age and existential concerns.
<i>H4a.</i> There is a significant difference between work-occupation status and trust in government.
<i>H4b.</i> There is a significant difference between work-occupation status and existential concerns.
<i>H5a.</i> There is a significant difference between religious commitment and trust in government.
<i>H5b.</i> There is a significant difference between religious commitment and existential concerns.
<i>H6a.</i> There is a significant difference between the economic concerns of individuals and trust in government.
<i>H6b.</i> There is a significant difference between the economic concerns of individuals and their existential concerns.

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In the second stage of the study, qualitative data were collected and as a result of the creative coding made in the light of these data, four main titles were determined as demographic information, concerns about the pandemic, trust in the government and the importance of measures against COVID-19. Under the heading of concerns arising in the pandemic, there are three sub-headings as types of concern, existential concerns and economic concerns; On the other hand, under the title of trust in the government, two sub-headings were formed as trust in government institutions and duties and responsibilities of the government (Table 4).

**Table 4. Focus Group Discussion Code Map**

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<p><b>1. Demographic Information</b>                  Employee                  Unemployed</p> <p><b>2. Concerns in the Pandemic</b>  <b>2.1. Types of Concerns</b>                  Concern about the future                  Concerns About Basic Needs</p> <p>Global Concerns                  Economic Concerns                  National Concerns                  Lack of Social Support of Companies                  Artistic Concerns</p> <p>Cultural Concerns                  Social Concerns                  General Concern                  Unemployment Concern for Relatives                  Unemployment Concern</p> <p><b>2.2. Existential Concerns</b>                  Fear of Having the Disease</p> <p>Fear of Losing Relatives                  Public Distrust                  Fear of Death</p>	<p><b>3. Trust in Government</b>  <b>3.1. Trust in Government Institutions</b>                  The Sacrifice of Healthcare Professionals                  Trust in Doctors                  Trust in the Ministry of Health                  Trust in the Minister of Health</p> <p><b>3.2. Duties and Responsibilities of the Government</b>                  Put Unemployed on a Salary                  Importance of Transparency                  Giving Credit                  Lack of Emergency Action Plan                  Additional Charge for Healthcare Professionals                  Housing Benefit to Workplaces                  Expectations from the Government                  Unawareness of COVID-19 Line                  Losing Trust as the Pandemic Progresses                  Low Expectation                  Success Beyond Expectation                  Transparency in the Early Stage of the Pandemic                  Usage of Social Media                  Deficiency of Government</p> <p><b>4. Importance of Precautions Against</b></p>
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Nonchalance Feeling that the Pandemic Will Never End <b>2.3. Economic Concerns</b> Uncertainty Stockpiling Opportunism Unemployment Hyperinflation Costliness Economic Insufficiency	<b>COVID-19</b> Importance of Vaccine Importance of Social Distance Importance of Hygiene The Importance of Individual Protection Importance of Social Media Importance of Mask Cautiousness of COVID-19
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Although coded, the codes that are not directly related to the study and included in the other themes title are not included in the table. Coding and analysis studies were carried out with the help of a qualitative data analysis program called MAXQDA 2021.

### 3.1. Trust in the government and existential concerns

#### 3.1.1. Quantitative Findings

In the questionnaire<sup>7</sup> used in the study, the statements measuring trust in the government and existential concerns were subjected to Exploratory Factor Analysis (EFA), and validity and reliability analyzes were made. As a result of Principal Component Analysis (PCA), a two-factor structure emerged as theoretically expected. The reliability coefficient (*Cronbach's Alpha*) of the factor of trust in the government and government institutions is .89, and the reliability coefficient of the factor of existential concerns is .83. The total variance explained by the two factors is 76.7%, and the KMO (*Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin*) value is .729. As can be seen in Table 5, it has been observed that the variables in the factor of trust in the government and government institutions have a factor load of .90 to .85. Similarly, the variables in the existential concerns factor have a very high factor load between .87 and .84.

**Table 5. Exploratory Factor Analysis Results**

Observed Variables	Factor		Reliability	Dimension
	1	2	Cronbach's Alpha	
Trust in Government	.904		.89	Trust in Government
Trust in the Minister of Health	.902			

<sup>7</sup> The questionnaire was obtained as a result of testing the question pool, which was previously created by scanning the literature, more than once. The parts of the questionnaire used in this study are; divided into four parts: existential concerns, economic concerns, trust in the government, and demographic information Three statements measuring trust in the government graded as (1) I do not trust at all, (2) I do not trust, (3) I am neutral, (4) I trust, (5) I trust a lot; And the three statements in the existential concerns scale were graded as (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) undecided, (4) agree, (5) strongly agree. In order to measure economic concerns, following statements “about work...” are preferred; (1) I am not worried about work, (2) I was unemployed after the pandemic, (3) I was already unemployed, (4) I am worried about losing my job in the future.

Trust in the Ministry of Health's Daily Coronavirus Statistics	.854			and Its Institutions
I have a constant fear of catching a virus		.875	.83	Existential Concerns
My fear of death increased		.858		
I am afraid of losing my loved ones		.843		

Note: Factor extraction method, Principal Component Analysis; Factor rotation method, Varimax. Variables with a load of 0.40 and above were selected in the rotated factor load matrix, and it was observed that the variables subjected to the analysis received a very high factor load from this limit.

The factors of trust in the government and government institutions and existential concern were subjected to correlation analysis together with other variables. As a result of the correlation analysis, a statistically negative and significant relationship was found between the factor of trust in the government and government institutions and existential concerns ( $r(2476) = -.132, p < .001$ ). In other words, as the trust in the government and its institutions increases, a regression is observed in the existential concerns of individuals.

When the relationship between gender and existential concerns was examined, a statistically negative significant relationship was found ( $r(2467) = -.192, p < .001$ ). On the other hand, it was observed that women's existential concerns were higher than men. No significant relationship was found between gender and trust in the government. When the relationship between trust in the government and age was considered, it was seen that there was a statistically negative significant relationship ( $r(2417) = -.102, p < .001$ ). In other words, as the age increases, the level of trust in the government and its institutions decreases, and as the age decreases, this level increases. Similarly, there is a negative significant relationship with existential concerns ( $r(2450) = -.102, p < .001$ ). It is seen that existential concerns decrease as age increases, while existential concerns of young people are higher.

One-way analysis of variance was applied to the scale of trust in the government and its institutions and existential concerns.<sup>8</sup> As a result of the analysis, it was seen that there was a significant difference between the participants' trust in the government and its institutions ( $F = 12.748, p < .001$ ) and their existential concerns ( $F = 4.532, p < .001$ ) in terms of their work-occupancy status.

**Table 6. ANOVA Results of Trust in Government and Existential Concerns Scale by Work-Occupation Status**

Dimension	Work – Occupation Status	N	X	SS	F	P	Tukey HSD Post-Hoc Test
<b>Trust in Government</b>	Self-employed	152	2.498	1.177	12.748	<b>.000</b>	There is a significant
	Public Official	509	2.843	1.124			

<sup>8</sup> ANOVA, one of the parametric tests, is expected to provide the assumption of normality (Howitt and Cramer, 2020). It has been observed that this condition has been met by performing the necessary tests.

<b>and Institutions</b>	Private sector employee	345	2.498	1.185			difference between Public Official, Student, Housewife and Retired.
	Student	926	2.841	1.132			
	Unemployed	235	2.545	1.147			
	Housewife	73	3.223	1.260			
	Retired	118	2.218	1.178			
<b>Existential Concerns</b>	Self-employed	156	2.853	1.113	4.532	<b>.000</b>	There is a significant difference between students and the unemployed
	Public Official	519	3.126	1.076			
	Private sector employee	347	3.093	1.093			
	Student	938	3.283	1.065			
	Unemployed	236	3.214	1.152			
	Housewife	78	3.106	1.235			
	Retired	119	3.093	1.038			

When Table 6 is examined, it is seen that housewives trust the government and their institutions at a higher rate than other work-occupancy branches ( $X=3.22$ ). Afterwards, the highest level of trust is in salaried employees ( $X=2.84$ ) and students ( $X=2.84$ ). The lowest level of confidence is in retirees ( $X=2.21$ ). In terms of existential concerns, it is seen that the group with the highest rate of existential concern among work-occupancy branches is students ( $X=3.28$ ). Then the unemployed ( $X=3.21$ ); salaried employees in the public sector ( $X=3.12$ ) and housewives ( $X=3.10$ ).

There was also a significant difference between religious commitment and trust in the government ( $F= 237.555$ ,  $p<.001$ ) and existential concerns ( $F= 13.166$ ,  $p < .001$ ).<sup>9</sup> When Table 7 is examined, it has been determined that the group with the highest level of trust in the government and its institutions is those with high religious commitment who define themselves as “I believe, and I fulfill my religious obligations” ( $X=3.16$ ). Those who say “I do not believe or I am skeptical” are the group with the lowest level of trust in the government ( $X=1.80$ ).

**Table 7. ANOVA Results of Trust in Government and Existential Concerns Scale by Religious Commitment**

Dimension	Religious Commitment	N	X	SS	F	P	Tukey HSD Post-Hoc Test
<b>Trust in Government and Institutions</b>	I believe and I fulfill my religious obligations	1133	3.1684	1.131	237.555	.000	There is a significant difference between the three groups regarding religious commitment.
	I believe but I cannot fulfill my religious obligations	912	2.5515	1,056			
	I do not believe or I am skeptical	346	1.8020	.890			

<sup>9</sup> The normality assumption required for ANOVA (Howitt and Cramer, 2020) is provided.

<b>Existential Concerns</b>	I believe and I fulfill my religious obligations	1160	3.0494	1.117	13.166	.000	There is a significant difference between the three groups regarding religious commitment.
	I believe but I cannot fulfill my religious obligations	915	3.2880	1.054			
	I do not believe or I am skeptical	348	3.2404	1.089			

Considering existential concerns and religious commitment, it was observed that the group with the highest level of such anxiety was those who said “I believe, but I cannot fulfill my religious obligations” ( $X=3.28$ ). Then there are those who say “I do not believe or I am skeptical” ( $X=3.24$ ), followed by the participants who define themselves as religious ( $X=3.04$ ).

**Table 8. Existential Concerns-Hypothesis Results**

Hypotheses	Result
<i>H1.</i> There is a significant relationship between individuals’ trust in government and government institutions and existential concerns.	ACCEPTED
<i>H2a.</i> There is a significant relationship between gender and trust in government.	REJECTED
<i>H2b.</i> There is a significant relationship between gender and existential concerns.	ACCEPTED
<i>H3a.</i> There is a significant relationship between age and trust in government.	ACCEPTED
<i>H3b.</i> There is a significant relationship between age and existential concerns.	ACCEPTED
<i>H4a.</i> There is a significant difference between work-occupation status and trust in the government.	ACCEPTED
<i>H4b.</i> There is a significant difference between work-occupation status and trust in government.	ACCEPTED
<i>H5a.</i> There is a significant difference between religious commitment and trust in government.	ACCEPTED
<i>H5b.</i> There is a significant difference between religious commitment and existential concerns.	ACCEPTED

In this part, which examines the interaction between trust in the government and existential concerns, nine hypotheses were tested empirically and eight were accepted as statistically significant (Table 8).

### 3.1.2. Qualitative Findings

In the quantitative study, it was determined that there is a negative significant relationship between the trust of individuals in the government and government institutions and existential concerns in the test of hypothesis H1. Qualitative findings also give a similar result. As seen in Table 9, it was understood that as trust in the government increased, existential concerns decreased in all participants except Elif Demir (ED). A participant named Defne Çelik said, “...as a matter of fact, my only fear is that I live with my family, I have the fear of infecting my family. I am afraid

of them getting hurt. I am not afraid of death. The government, especially our healthcare professionals... Once again, and again, I would like to thank all of them. As far as I have witnessed, our healthcare professionals really shouldered the responsibility. Very good work has been done. They are exhausted.” In her words, he stated that she was afraid of losing his loved ones on the one hand, but this situation subsided with the increase in trust in the government and healthcare professionals. Yusuf Kaya, who had low expectations about trusting in the government when the pandemic started, said that he was surprised by the performance of the government. A participant named Hiranur Şahin stated that a line should be established to answer the questions of the public about COVID-19, and another participant named Zeynep Yılmaz, who works in the health sector, replied that such a line already exists. Zeynep Yılmaz also mentioned the importance of vaccination in another speech, “The government may not impose sanctions, but people who are not vaccinated must also fulfill their responsibility of not being vaccinated. Then they always must pay attention to their mask, hygiene and distance. They must be careful not to sit in public places, not to be in the crowd. Because they may be spreading the disease, they might get sick, or they might be carrying it, but not being vaccinated also comes with a responsibility.” In addition to her words, she stated that the government fulfilled its responsibility to introduce the vaccine, and on the other hand, intensive care beds in hospitals are filled with the unvaccinated patients recently.

**Table 9. The Relationship Between Trust in Government and Existential Concerns**<sup>10</sup>

Code System	ZY	YK	ED	EY	HŞ	DÇ	TOT...
Concerns in the Pandemic							0
Existential Concerns							15
Trust in Government							33
TOTAL	6	8	7	7	12	8	48

In the quantitative study, it was concluded that there was no significant relationship between gender and trust in the government in the test of hypothesis *H2a*. Qualitative findings also give a similar result. As seen in Table 10, it has been understood that participants Yusuf Kaya (YK) and Eymen Yıldız (EY) trust the government as much as the other participants, so there is no significant difference between women and men in terms of trust in the government. This situation was also reflected in the verbal expressions of the participants, and Hiranur Şahin and Yusuf Kaya stated that they trusted the Ministry of Health very much, especially in the first period of the pandemic process. In addition, Elif Demir’s words that “the great professional ethics and patience of the healthcare professionals is very, very

<sup>10</sup> In order for the views of all the volunteers participating in the focus group meeting to be included in the table, the abbreviations consisting of the first letters of the pseudonym names and surnames are formed as follows: Zeynep Yılmaz ZY, Yusuf Kaya YK, Elif Demir ED, Hiranur Şahin HŞ, Defne Çelik DÇ and Eymen Yıldız EY.

admirable” shows the appreciation that she has for the government and for its institutions and employees. Similarly, Eymen Yıldız emphasized the “hard work” of healthcare professionals.

**Table 10. The Relationship Between Gender and Trust in Government**

Code System	ZY	YK	ED	EY	HŞ	DÇ	TOT...
Trust In Government	•	•					2
Trust In Government Institutions	•	•	•	•	•	•	11
Duties and Responsibilities of the Government				•	•	•	7
Expectations from the Government	•	•	•		•	•	13
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>33</b>

In the quantitative study, it was concluded that there was a significant relationship between gender and existential anxieties in the test of hypothesis *H2b*. Qualitative findings also give a similar result. As seen in Table 11, the two male participants of the focus group interview were the ones who gave the least importance to existential concerns. Likewise, it was seen that Elif Demir and Hiranur Şahin showed the most concern. Zeynep Yılmaz emphasized that her concerns are universal; Defne Çelik added that her concerns are not limited to the pandemic, but that she is concerned about many issues, especially the climate crisis. Hiranur Şahin, on the other hand, emphasized that the inadequacy of vaccination in poor regions of the world such as India and Africa cause global concern. On the other hand, Elif Demir admitted that her concerns were not only existential and economic, but also social, cultural and artistic concerns during the pandemic period. Despite this, it can be said that the fear of losing relatives is the common ground among the participants. There is no difference between the genders in this regard. Along with Yusuf Kaya, three female participants stated that they shared a similar concern.

**Table 11. The Relationship Between Gender and Existential Concerns**

Code System	ZY	YK	ED	EY	HŞ	DÇ	TOT ...
Concerns in the Pandemic							0
Types of Concerns							0
Concern About the Future	•	•	•		•		5
Concerns About Basic Needs			•		•	•	3
Global Concerns	•				•	•	3
Economic Concerns	•			•	•		3
National Concerns				•		•	2
Lack of Social Support of Countries			•		•		2
Artistic Concerns			•				1
Cultural Concerns			•				1
Social Concerns			•				1
General Concern					•		1
Unemployment Concern for Relatives					•		1
Unemployment Concern			•				1
Existential Concerns							0
Fear of Having the Disease	•	•	•		•		4
Fear of Losing Relatives			•	•		•	4
Public Distrust				•	•		3
Fear of Death	•					•	2
Nonchalance		•					1
Feeling that the Pandemic Will Never End			•				1
<b>Σ TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>39</b>

In the quantitative study, it is seen that there is a negative significant relationship between age and trust in the government in the test of hypothesis  $H3a$ . Qualitative findings also give a similar result. As the age increases, the level of trust in the government and its institutions decreases, and as the age decreases, this level increases. As can be seen in Table 10, although 48-year-old Hiranur Şahin and 31-year-old Elif Demir have high expectations from the government, their level of trust in the government and its institutions is low. Similarly, 36-year-old Eymen Yıldız thought that the government should have more duties and responsibilities, but it was observed that his trust in government institutions was low. On the other hand, the two youngest participants of the focus group meeting, Yusuf Kaya (24) and Defne Çelik (31) had the highest level of trust in the government. In this context, Hiranur Şahin, the oldest participant, stated that although they had hoped for transparency at the beginning of the pandemic, she thought that the government failed in this regard in the later stages. On the other hand, Eymen Yıldız, who is in the second oldest category, added that health workers made great efforts during the pandemic process, but that he is not sure about the return of those efforts. Despite these, Yusuf Kaya, one of the youngest participants, said, “Therefore, I never thought that the government should do this or that. Because I do not actually have such a choice in my hand anyway, since I am not the person to change it, at least I did not think about it. My trust in institutions was in terms of health. More like in healthcare professionals, to be precise.” He expressed his confidence in the government and its institutions. Defne Çelik said, “There is trust in the government, yes, but it started late. All over the world, everywhere, this process actually started this March. It could have started earlier, it could have been taken into account earlier, but I do not

think it matters much anymore to talk about it.” She stated that although the government was late, her trust in the government and institutions continued.

In the quantitative study, it was determined that there was a significant relationship between age and existential concerns in the test of hypothesis *H3b*. It is seen that existential concerns decrease as age increases, while existential concerns of young people are higher. A relatively more balanced distribution is observed in the qualitative findings. The segments with higher anxiety levels among the focus group participants are the older participants of the group. As can be seen in Table 12, 48-year-old Hiranur Şahin, 36-year-old Zeynep Yılmaz and 31-year-old Elif Demir are seen as the participants with the highest anxiety based on concern types. Yusuf Kaya, 24, who is the youngest participant of the focus group meeting in the same category, has the lowest level of anxiety. In the sub-title of existential concerns, it is understood that there is no significant difference between the participants.

**Table 12. The Relationship Between Age and Existential Concerns**

Code System	ZY	YK	ED	EY	HŞ	DÇ	TOT...
Concerns in the Pandemic							0
Types of Concerns	■	•	■	■	■	■	24
Existential Concerns							0
Fear of Having the Disease	•	•	•	•	•	•	4
Fear of Losing Relatives	•	•	•	•	•	•	4
Public Distrust	•	•	•	•	•	•	3
Fear of Death	•	•	•	•	•	•	2
Nonchalance	•	•	•	•	•	•	1
Feeling that the Pandemic Will Never End	•	•	•	•	•	•	1
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>10</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>39</b>

According to the hypothesis numbered *H5a* in the quantitative study, there is a significant difference between religious commitment and trust in the government. It has been determined that the group with the highest level of trust in the government and its institutions are those with high religious beliefs who define themselves as “I believe, I fulfill my religious obligations”. Qualitative findings also give a similar result. Yusuf Kaya shared his observation with the words: “Well, as the level of religious belief increases, so does happiness. I think such an observation is correct. Faith and happiness are at least directly proportional to the understanding of religion in Turkey. For the second question, let me give an example over a person, for example; There was such a distinction in the Qur’an, for example, the verses revealed in Mecca and the verses revealed in Medina. The verses that were revealed in Medina regulate more social norms. Like, regulating people’s social life, maybe their relationship with government, something like that. In other words, religion actually has such an aspect. In that sense, I think it is very correct to observe that as the religious belief increases, the loyalty to the government increases in Turkey.” that religious commitment would increase trust in the government. Finally, in the quantitative study, there is a significant difference between religious commitment and existential concerns, according to hypothesis *H5b*. In this context, as religious



belief increases, existential concerns also decrease. Qualitative findings also give a similar result. Hiranur Şahin said, “I cannot say I did not experience existential concerns, of course I did, but I can say that my religious belief reduced these concerns. I would say it is effective, so the answer here is yes.” In her words, she revealed the relationship between her religious commitment and existential concerns.

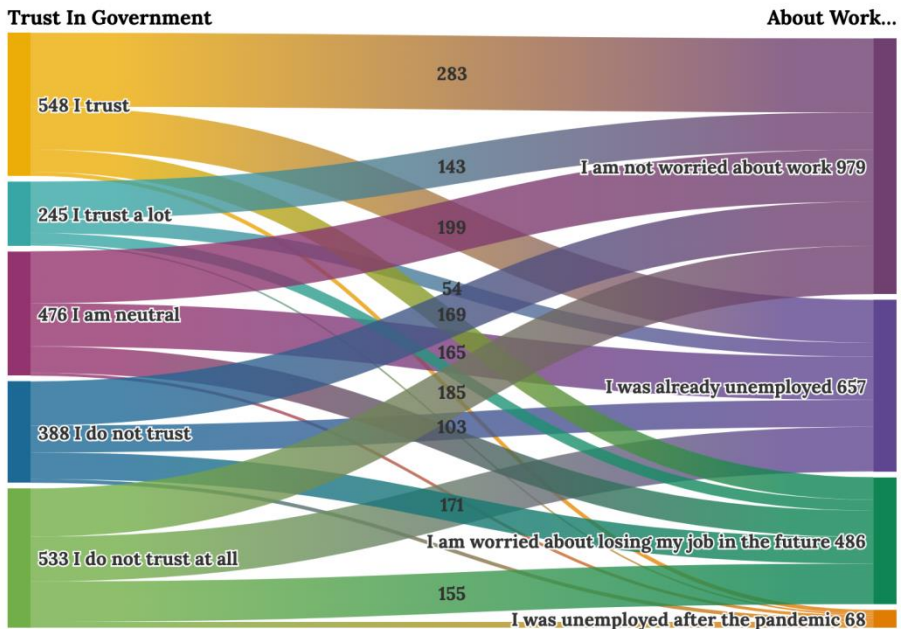
## **3.2. Trust in the Government and Economic Concerns**

### *3.2.1. Quantitative Findings*

What is meant in the study is economic concerns, concerns about work and the fear of not being able to meet their basic needs in the future. Therefore, in the first stage of the research, two statements were included in the questionnaire to measure the concerns in question. The first of these is the expression “About work...”. Considering the options of the multiple-choice statement in the questionnaire and the answers from the participants; It was observed that there were 1072 people who said “I am not worried about work”, 74 people who said “I am unemployed after the pandemic”, 699 people who said “I was already unemployed”, and 538 people who said “I am worried about losing my job in the future” ( $N=2383$ ).

An important point to be noted regarding quantitative research is that the mandatory answer option was not used for each of the statements in the questionnaire. Therefore, participants did not optionally respond to some statements. Considering this situation; After eliminating the blank answers ( $N=2.190$ ) in order to understand the economic concerns of the participants (concern about work) and their level of trust in the government, it was possible to make a descriptive evaluation with the help of the Sankey diagram (Figure 1).

**Figure 1. The Relationship Between Trust in Government and Economic Concerns**



When Figure 1, which deals with trust in the government and economic concerns, is examined, it is seen that those who say I trust the government (283 people) and I trust the government a lot (143 people) are not concerned about work. On the other hand, 199 people who said “I was already unemployed” stated that they trust the government, and 54 people stated that they trust the government a lot. When we look at the distribution of those who do not trust the government, it has been determined that 169 of the 388 people who say they do not trust the government are composed of those who are not worried about work, and 103 of them are currently unemployed. It has been observed that a significant majority of those who say they do not trust at all are those who are not worried about their job (185 people), those who are already unemployed (171) and those who have fear of losing their job in the future (155). When Figure 1 is considered together with Table 6, it is observed that the findings are consistent with each other.

Another expression of the study that measures economic concern is the “Do you have a fear of not being able to meet your basic needs financially in the future?”. Existential concerns of individuals who are afraid of not being able to meet their basic needs financially in the future ( $r = .24, N = 2457, p < .001$ ) are higher, as expected, and their trust in the government is lower ( $r = -.21, N = 2425, p < .001$ ). On the other hand, as seen in Table 13, a significant difference was found between

trust in the government and economic concerns ( $F= 18.265, p<.001$ ) and existential concerns and economic concerns ( $F= 31.347, p<.001$ ).<sup>11</sup>

**Table 13. ANOVA Results of Trust in Government and Existential Concerns Scale by Economic Concerns**

Dimension	Economic Concerns	N	X	SS	F	P	Tukey HSD Post-Hoc Test
Trust in Government and Institutions	I am not worried about work	1044	2.8926	1.197	18.265	.000	There is a significant difference between I am not worried about work; I was already unemployed and “I am worried about losing my job in the future.”
	I was unemployed after the pandemic	72	2.6435	1.188			
	I was already unemployed	684	2.6693	1.122			
	I am worried about losing my job in the future	523	2.4442	1.102			
Existential Concerns	I am not worried about work	1054	2.9301	1.109	31.347	.000	There is a significant difference between I am not worried about work; I was already unemployed and “I am worried about losing my job in the future.”

According to Table 13, those who are not worried about their jobs have a higher level of trust in the government and its institutions ( $X=2.89$ ); Confidence level of those who have fear of losing their job in the future is at the lowest level in the group ( $X=2.44$ ). It is seen that those who are currently unemployed ( $X=3.36$ ) and those who have fear of losing their job in the future ( $X=3.36$ ) have higher existential concerns. It was determined that those who were not concerned about work had low existential concerns ( $X=2.93$ ).

**Table 14. Economic Concerns-Hypothesis Results**

Hypotheses	Result
<i>H6a.</i> There is a significant difference between the economic concerns of individuals and trust in government.	ACCEPTED
<i>H6b.</i> There is a significant difference between the economic concerns of individuals and their existential concerns.	ACCEPTED

<sup>11</sup> The normality assumption required for ANOVA (Howitt and Cramer, 2020) is provided.

As a result of the statistical analyzes described above, the *H6a* and *H6b* hypotheses stated in Table 14 were accepted, and a significant relationship was found between the economic concerns of individuals and their trust in the government and their existential concerns.

### 3.2.2. Qualitative Findings

In the quantitative study, it was seen that there was a significant relationship between the economic concerns of individuals and trust in the government in the testing of the hypothesis numbered *H6a*. Individuals with low economic concerns have higher trust in the government. Qualitative findings also support this result. As can be seen in Table 15, individuals with high economic concerns have low trust in the government and its institutions; Individuals with low economic concerns also have high trust in the government and its institutions. Hiranur Şahin, who stated that she was unemployed during the pandemic and was very worried about the future at that time, added that her trust in the government and its institutions was low. Similarly, although Elif Demir was unemployed during the pandemic, there was not a high level of distrust in the government, as in Hiranur Şahin, in terms of trust in the government. Here, Elif Demir's voluntarily leaving her job for education is understood from the following words of her own: "I did not directly worry about being unemployed either, but when I quit my job at the end of the spring semester, I look at it as more limited opportunities for the future under the conditions created by the indirect pandemic. In general, I have such a concern because the economic conditions are getting harder". Despite this, their expectations from the government were high, as they had job concerns in the future. On the other hand, Yusuf Kaya, who works in the tourism sector and started to work remotely during the pandemic, is among the participants with low anxiety and his trust in the government and its institutions is high. Similarly, Defne Çelik, who does not have any economic concerns, added that she trusts the government and its institutions.

**Table 15. The Relationship of Economic Concerns and Trust in Government**

Code System	ZY	YK	ED	EY	HŞ	DC	TOT...
Concns In the Pandemic							0
> Types of Concns							13
> Economic Concns							11
Trust In Government							2
> Trust In Government Institutions							11
> Expectations from the Government							13
Σ TOTAL	9	8	9	4	15	5	50

In the quantitative study, it was determined that there was a significant relationship between the economic concerns of individuals and their existential concerns in the test of hypothesis *H6b*. Individuals with high economic concerns also have high existential concerns. Qualitative findings also support this result.

**Table 16: The Relationship of Economic Concerns and Existential Concerns**

Code System	ZY	YK	ED	EY	HŞ	DÇ	TOT ...
Concerns In the Pandemic							0
> Types of Concerns	●	●	●	●	●	●	13
> Existential Concerns	●	●	●	●	●	●	15
> Economic Concerns	●	●	●	●	●	●	11
Σ TOTAL	7	4	8	5	11	4	39

As can be seen in Table 16, individuals with high economic concerns also have high existential concerns. The best example for this section is Hiranur Şahin, who was unemployed during the pandemic. Mrs/Ms. Hiranur, who also worries about the future at the same time, stated that she also experiences deep concerns about her children with the following words: “Of course, I have such a concern. I am more concerned about the future of my children than myself.” In addition, Zeynep Yılmaz, whose husband works in the health sector like herself, stated that she has job concern about the future with the words “I have great unemployment concerns for myself”; however, she stated that she benefited from the comfort of her husband’s work.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

It has been seen that the results of the quantitative research conducted in accordance with the sequential mixed method used in this study and the qualitative research conducted afterward are generally compatible with each other. In this context, as the trust in the government and its institutions increases, there is a regression in the existential concerns of individuals. The general tendency in the literature on trust in the government is that it is dramatically affected by political turmoil and perceptions of poor economic management. By eliminating these negativities and avoiding them afterwards, the concerns of the society will decrease and it will be effective in regaining the trust in the government (Chanley, Rudolph and Rahn, 2000: 254). Similarly, in the findings of this study, it is observed that existential concerns decrease as trust in the government and its institutions increases.

There is evidence in the literature to suggest that trust in government, and especially in its institutions, is associated with higher life satisfaction. On the other hand, trust in others is also associated with higher life satisfaction, happiness and lower suicide rates (Sirgy, 2021: 246). Trust in institutions is also an indication that the system is fair in the eyes of the public, or in other words, it is legitimate (Esmer, 1999: 41). In this study, it has been observed that there is a significant relationship between the economic concerns of individuals and their trust in the government and their existential concerns.

In addition, as a result of the study, it was determined that existential concerns decreased as religious commitment increased. In a study measuring the relationship between existential concerns and religiosity (Bylski and Westman, 1991: 1390), a similar expectation was set out, but no relation was found between existential

concern and religion. Because religion is assumed to be an opium effective in suppressing concerns. In the study in question, situations such as trauma or war were counted as the reason why no relationality could be detected. In addition, it has been shown that religion does not reduce the types of everyday existential concern. In this respect, it is possible to say that the findings of the study are generally compatible with the expectations in the literature.

Various studies have shown that death anxiety is associated with depression, constant or common anxiety (van Bruggen, Vos, Westerhof, Bohlmeijer and Glas, 2015: 174). In this study, a relationship was found between death anxiety and existential concerns. Similar results have been reached in the literature, and it has been determined that as existential concern increases, the level of death anxiety decreases (Halıcı, 2016: 173).

In a study, it was revealed that COVID-19 caused an increase in health-related concerns and the pandemic increased the desire for information in individuals. Participants who follow more news during the pandemic period compared to normal times stated that their trust in government institutions has not changed (Karataş, 2020: 14). The findings of this study point to similar results and support the literature.

In this study, the trust in government of individuals who experience economic concern decreases and their existential concerns increases. These findings were also valid in the qualitative part of the study. Especially in the period of COVID-19, with increasing unemployment, economic concerns have increased. It is also supported by recent studies in the literature that there is a relationship between COVID-19 and unemployment during the pandemic process in which the study was conducted (Konat, 2021: 256; Yilmazkuday, 2020, 12; Bartik et al., 2020: 17666).

In a study that deals with the relationship between the policies followed in the fight against COVID-19 and trust in institutions, the institutions in which the participants' trust increased the most are healthcare professionals, science, the Ministry of Health, municipalities, the Presidency and the General Directorate of Police. Then comes the media, opposition parties and companies/markets. The decisions taken and the policies implemented by the Ministry of Health are the leading factors that determine the increase in trust in healthcare professionals (Gündüz, 2020: 459-461).

It has been revealed in the literature that COVID-19 increases concerns about the future. Karataş (2020: 15) determined that the risk of illness and death increases existential concerns and individuals want to reconsider their future expectations. It has been observed that the existential inquisitions of individuals have increased since the beginning of the pandemic. According to the findings of a research conducted on what will be the expectations of trust in the post-pandemic period in Turkey, the areas that should be prioritized are strong health system, strong social solidarity, social security system, qualified science committee, strong government/management and full-time and secure work. In other words, in the

period of COVID-19, individuals think that a strong health system is required at a high rate of 97% in order to look at the future with confidence (Gündüz, 2020: 461-462). Consistent with the findings of this study, the expectations of individuals who do not want to experience existential and economic concerns in the future from the government and its institutions are in this direction.

During the pandemic, internet facilities have gained immense importance. Individuals who expressed their wishes, demands and complaints online during lockdowns also used the same communication channel with public institutions (Demirhan, 2021: 55). In this process, the rate of voluntary use of the Life Fits into Home (Hayat Eve Sığar) mobile application is extremely high. According to Ankara and Tekin (2021: 158), the factor that is effective in this high rate is the trust in the government and its institutions. The participants of the relevant study stated that they are aware of the threats that may arise due to the personal information collected by the application and that they would not use this application if it was developed by an institution other than the government institution.

According to a study examining public service ads as another indicator of trust in the government and its institutions during the pandemic (Çelebi and Özgüzel, 2021: 3458); It has been observed that individuals who do not trust public institutions during the pandemic, perceive the information-messages given in the public service ads negatively and share them more. Although it is known that the state of anxiety and fear caused by the pandemic is effective in this, the credibility and reliability of the government, which is not the only source of information, is endangered by the effect of social media. In the related study, it has been determined that public service ads, which are deemed inadequate, are not preferred and tend to unfounded content, and this negatively affects the trust in public institutions.

## **CONCLUSION**

This study deals with the relationship between individuals and the government with the COVID-19 pandemic within the framework of their trust in the government and their existential and economic concerns. Trust is an important value in government - individual relations as well as between individuals. Attitudes and behaviors will be shaped based on the trust value. In this respect, topics such as the direction of individuals' relations with the government, the duties and responsibilities imposed on the government, and expectations from the government during the pre-pandemic and ongoing process are of great importance when considered together with existential and economic concerns.

In accordance with the aims of the study, the research was designed to spread over a long period, using the sequential mixed method. From this point of view, by comparing the findings of the research titled "Social Effects of the Coronavirus-2" held in September 2020 with the findings of the focus group meeting held one year after this date, it was tried to examine the existential and economic concerns of people in the axis of trust in the government over a one-year period. In this

framework, quantitative research, the first stage of the study, was conducted in September 2020 and eleven hypotheses were empirically tested, ten of which were found to be statistically significant and accepted.

Considering the results of the hypotheses; First of all, as individuals' trust in the government and its institutions increased, it was observed that there was a regression in their existential concerns. On the other hand, as individuals' fears of not being able to meet their basic needs financially increase, their trust in the government decreases and their existential concerns increase. These findings were also valid in the qualitative part of the study. It was found that there is a significant difference between trust in the government and existential concerns according to the work-occupation status of the participants. While there was no relationship between gender and trust in the government in the gender topic of the study, it was observed that women's existential concerns were higher than men. Age is associated with trust in the government and existential concerns; It has been determined that as the age increases, the level of trust in the government decreases, and as age decreases, trust increases. Similarly, it has been observed that existential concern of young people is higher and lower as they get older. Another variable that was quantitatively analyzed is religious commitment. As religious commitment increases, trust in the government increases and existential concerns decrease. These findings were also valid in the qualitative part of the study.

Concerns about work and fear of not being able to meet their basic needs in the future were included in the questionnaire to be used in quantitative analyzes of trust in the government and economic concerns. Descriptive statistics were used to measure concerns about work, and it was determined that a significant portion of the respondents were not concerned about work, and the majority of these people trusted the government. It has been observed that those who have fear of losing their job in the future mostly stated that they do not trust and do not trust at all. These findings were also valid in the qualitative part of the study. On the other hand, the existential concerns of individuals who are afraid of not being able to meet their basic needs financially in the future were found to be higher, as expected, and their trust in the government was lower. In the analysis made according to the state of concern about work, a significant difference was found between trust in the government and economic concerns, and existential concerns and economic concerns. These findings were also supported in the qualitative part of the study.



## SALGIN SÜRECİNDE VAROLUŞSAL ve İKTİSADİ KAYGILARIN DEVLETE GÜVENLE İLİŞKİSİ

### 1. GİRİŞ

2020'nin ilk çeyreğinden itibaren küresel kamuoyunun gündemini meşgul eden COVID-19 salgını ulusal düzeyde de birçok tartışmayı beraberinde getirmiş, çalışmanın da konusunu oluşturan salgın sürecinde varoluşsal ve iktisadi kaygılar da pek çok disiplin tarafından mercek altına alınan başlıklardan olmuştur. Bulaşıcılığı ve öldürücülüğü ile yüksek risk barındıran COVID-19 salgını insanların kendileri ve yakınlarının hastalığa yakalanma olasılığına ilişkin korku ve kaygılarını bireysel düzlemde toplumsal düzleme taşımıştır (Doğan ve Düzel, 2020: 750). Bu varoluşsal kaygıların yanı sıra çeşitli araştırmaların da gösterdiği gibi salgınla birlikte küresel ölçekte derin bir iktisadi durgunluğun oluşacağı ve bireylerin sürecin sonunda işsizlikle karşı karşıya kalacağı korkusu yaşadıkları görülmüştür (Ağan, 2020: 1015). Bu çalışmanın amacı, COVID-19 salgını sürecinde insanların varoluşsal ve iktisadi kaygılarının devlete güvenle ilişkisine odaklanmaktır.

### 2. YÖNTEM

Çalışma, açıklayıcı sıralı karma yöntem şeklinde tasarlanmıştır. Çalışmanın birinci safhasında nicel; ikinci safhasında nitel yöntem kullanılmıştır. Nicel veriler 29 Ağustos-5 Eylül 2020 tarihleri arasında çevrimiçi anket yoluyla toplanmıştır ( $N=2.515$ ).

Araştırmanın ikinci safhasında nitel yöntem kullanılmıştır. İlk araştırmadan bir yıl sonra odak grup görüşmesi gerçekleştirilmiştir. Odak grup görüşmesine dördü kadın ikisi erkek olmak üzere altı katılımcı dâhil edilmiştir. Böylece bir önceki nicel araştırmanın kadın ve gençlerden oluşan ağırlığı burada da korunmaya çalışılmıştır.

### 3. BULGULAR

Nicel çalışmada on bir hipotez test edilmiş, bunlardan on tanesi istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bulunmuştur. Hipotezlere ilişkin sonuçlara bakıldığında; öncelikle bireylerin devlete ve devlet kurumlarına güveni arttıkça varoluşsal kaygılarında bir gerilemenin olduğu görülmüştür. Öte yandan bireylerin maddi açıdan temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılayamama korkuları arttıkça devlete güvenleri azalmakta, varoluşsal kaygıları ise artmaktadır. Bu bulgular araştırmanın nitel kısmında da geçerliliğini sürdürmüştür.

Katılımcıların iş-meslek durumlarına göre devlete güven ve varoluşsal kaygılar arasında anlamlı bir farklılık olduğu bulgusuna ulaşılmıştır. Çalışmanın toplumsal cinsiyet başlığında kadınların varoluşsal kaygılarının erkeklerden daha yüksek olduğu görülmüştür. Diğer taraftan aynı değişkenin devlete güven ile ilişkisi

bulunmamaktadır. Yaş ile devlete güven ve varoluşsal kaygıların ilişkili olduğu; yaş arttıkça devlete güven düzeyinin düştüğü, azaldıkça ise arttığı tespit edilmiştir. Benzer şekilde gençlerin varoluşsal kaygılarının daha yüksek olduğu, yaş ilerledikçe daha düşük olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Nicel analizi yapılan bir diğer değişken de dini bağlılıktır. Dini bağlılık arttıkça devlete güven artmakta, varoluşsal kaygılar ise azalmaktadır. Bu bulgular araştırmanın nitel kısmında da geçerliliğini sürdürmüştür.

İş konusunda kaygı yaşamayan kişiler olduğu, bu kişilerin de büyük çoğunluğunun devlete güvendiği tespit edilmiştir. Gelecekte işini kaybetme korkusu yaşayanların büyük oranda güvenmiyorum ve hiç güvenmiyorum şeklinde görüş bildirdikleri görülmüştür. Bu bulgular araştırmanın nitel kısmında da geçerliliğini sürdürmüştür. Diğer taraftan, gelecekte maddi açıdan temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılayamama korkusu yaşayan bireylerin varoluşsal kaygıları beklenildiği üzere daha yüksek, devlete güvenleri ise daha düşüktür. İş konusundaki kaygı durumlarına göre yapılan analizde devlete güven ve iktisadi kaygılar ile varoluşsal kaygılar ve iktisadi kaygılar arasında anlamlı bir farklılık tespit edilmiştir. Bu bulgular araştırmanın nitel kısmında da desteklenmiştir.

#### **4. TARTIŞMA**

Çalışmada devlete ve kurumlarına güven arttıkça, bireylerin varoluşsal kaygılarında bir gerileme olduğu gözlenmiştir. Devlete duyulan güven konusunda literatürdeki genel eğilim siyasi çalkantılar ve kötü ekonomi yönetimiyle ilgili algılarla önemli ölçüde etkilendiği yönündedir. Bu olumsuzlukları gidermek ve sonrasında kaçınmakla toplumun kaygıları azalacak, devlete olan güvenin yeniden kazanılmasında etkili olacaktır (Chanley, Rudolph ve Rahn, 2000: 254). Çalışmanın bulgularında da benzer şekilde devlete ve kurumlarına güven arttıkça varoluşsal kaygılarda düşüş gözlenmiştir.

Kurumlara duyulan güven, aynı zamanda o sistemin halkın gözünde adil olduğunun göstergesidir (Esmer, 1999: 41). Bu çalışmada da bireylerin iktisadi kaygıları ile devlete güven ve varoluşsal kaygıları arasında anlamlı bir ilişki olduğu görülmüştür. Ayrıca çalışmada dini bağlılık arttıkça varoluşsal kaygıların azaldığı tespit edilmiştir. Varoluşsal kaygılar ve dindarlık arasındaki ilişkiyi ölçen bir çalışmada da (Bylski ve Westman, 1991: 1390) benzer bir beklenti ile yola çıkılmış ancak varoluşsal kaygı ile din arasında ilişki tespit edilememiştir.

Ölüm kaygısının depresyon, sürekli veya yaygın kaygıyla ilişki olduğu çeşitli araştırmalarca ortaya konulmuştur (van Bruggen, Vos, Westerhof, Bohlmeijer and Glas, 2015: 174; Halıcı, 2016: 173). Bu çalışmada da ölüm kaygısı ve varoluşsal kaygılar arasında ilişki saptanmıştır.

Yapılan bir çalışmada normal zamanlara oranla salgın döneminde daha fazla haber takip eden katılımcılar, devlet kurumlarına duyduklarını güvenin değişmediğini belirtmiştir (Karataş, 2020: 14). Bu çalışmanın bulguları da benzer sonuçları işaret etmektedir.

Çalışmada iktisadi kaygı yaşayan bireylerin devlete güvenleri azalmakta, varoluşsal kaygıları ise artmaktadır. Özellikle COVID-19 döneminde artan işsizlik ile iktisadi kaygılar artmıştır. Bu bulgu çeşitli araştırmalar tarafından da desteklenmektedir (Konat, 2021: 256; Yılmazkuday, 2020, 12; Bartik vd., 2020: 17666).

## **SONUÇ**

Bu çalışma, COVID-19 salgını ile birlikte bireylerin devletle olan ilişkilerini devlete olan güvenleri ile varoluşsal ve iktisadi kaygıları çerçevesinde ele almaktadır. Çalışmanın amaçları ile uyumlu olarak araştırma uzun bir döneme yayılacak şekilde, sıralı karma yöntem kullanılarak tasarlanmıştır. Bu çerçevede Eylül 2020’de çalışmanın ilk aşaması olan nicel araştırma yapılmış ve ampirik olarak on bir hipotez test edilmiş, bunlardan on tanesi istatistiksel olarak anlamlı bulunup kabul edilmiştir.

Hipotez sonuçlarına bakıldığında; öncelikle bireylerin devlete ve devlet kurumlarına güveni arttıkça varoluşsal kaygılarında bir gerilemenin olduğu görülmüştür. Öte yandan bireylerin maddi açıdan temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılayamama korkuları arttıkça devlete güvenleri azalmakta, varoluşsal kaygıları ise artmaktadır. Bu bulgular araştırmanın nitel kısmında da geçerliliğini sürdürmüştür. Katılımcıların iş-meslek durumlarına göre devlete güven ve varoluşsal kaygılar arasında anlamlı bir farklılık olduğu bulgusuna ulaşılmıştır. Çalışmanın toplumsal cinsiyet başlığında cinsiyet ile devlete güven arasında ilişki bulunmazken, kadınların varoluşsal kaygılarının erkeklerden daha yüksek olduğu görülmüştür. Yaş ile devlete güven ve varoluşsal kaygıların ilişkili olduğu; yaş arttıkça devlete güven düzeyinin düştüğü, azaldıkça ise arttığı tespit edilmiştir. Benzer şekilde gençlerin varoluşsal kaygılarının daha yüksek olduğu, yaş ilerledikçe daha düşük olduğu gözlemlenmiştir. Nicel analizi yapılan bir diğer değişken de dini bağlılıktır. Dini bağlılık arttıkça devlete güven artmakta, varoluşsal kaygılar ise azalmaktadır. Bu bulgular araştırmanın nitel kısmında da geçerliliğini sürdürmüştür.

Çalışma sonucunda iş konusunda kaygı yaşamayan kişiler olduğu, bu kişilerin de büyük çoğunluğunun devlete güvendiği tespit edilmiştir. Gelecekte işini kaybetme korkusu yaşayanların büyük oranda güvenmiyorum ve hiç güvenmiyorum şeklinde görüş bildirdikleri görülmüştür. Bu bulgular araştırmanın nitel kısmında da geçerlidir. Öte yandan, gelecekte maddi açıdan temel ihtiyaçlarını karşılayamama korkusu yaşayan bireylerin varoluşsal kaygıları beklenildiği üzere daha yüksek, devlete güvenleri ise daha düşüktür. İş konusundaki kaygı durumlarına göre yapılan analizde devlete güven ve iktisadi kaygılar ile varoluşsal kaygılar ve iktisadi kaygılar arasında anlamlı bir farklılık tespit edilmiştir. Bu bulgular araştırmanın nitel kısmında da desteklenmiştir.

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Fikir veya Kavram / <i>Idea or Notion</i>	Araştırma hipotezini veya fikrini oluşturmak / <i>Form the research hypothesis or idea</i>	Emine YÖNEY Özcan GARAN Veysel BOZKURT
Tasarım / <i>Design</i>	Yöntemi, ölçeği ve deseni tasarlamak / <i>Designing method, scale and pattern</i>	Emine YÖNEY Özcan GARAN Veysel BOZKURT
Veri Toplama ve İşleme / <i>Data Collecting and Processing</i>	Verileri toplamak, düzenlemek ve raporlamak / <i>Collecting, organizing and reporting data</i>	Emine YÖNEY Özcan GARAN Veysel BOZKURT
Tartışma ve Yorum / <i>Discussion and Interpretation</i>	Bulguların değerlendirilmesinde ve sonuçlandırılmasında sorumluluk almak / <i>Taking responsibility in evaluating and finalizing the findings</i>	Emine YÖNEY Özcan GARAN Veysel BOZKURT
Literatür Taraması / <i>Literature Review</i>	Çalışma için gerekli literatürü taramak / <i>Review the literature required for the study</i>	Emine YÖNEY Özcan GARAN Veysel BOZKURT



