Quantitative Assessment of the Relationship Between Moral Maturity, Depression, Anxiety and Stress (DASS)[1]

Ahlâkî Olgunluk, Depresyon, Anksiyete ve Stres (DASS) Arasındaki İlişkinin Nicel Değerlendirmesi

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ÖZET

Bu araştırmanın temel amacı ahlaki olgunluk düzeyi ile depresyon, anksiyete ve stres (DASS) arasındaki ilişkiyi analiz etmektir. Türkiye'de bir üniversitede Hemşirelik bölümünde öğrenim gören 483 öğrenciden 244'ünün katılımıyla elde edilen veriler istatistiksel olarak analiz edilmiş ve bulgular yorumlanmıştır. 184 kız (%75,4) ve 60 erkek (%24,6) öğrenci katkıda bulunmuş olup; ankete katılan 18 yaş ve üzeri katılımcıların çoğu 21 yaşındadır (%42,6). Analiz sonuçları, kullanılan tüm değişkenler için güvenirlik katsayılarının oldukça yüksek olduğunu göstermiştir. Ahlaki olgunluk ile depresyon ve kaygı arasında anlamlı ve negatif ilişki bulunmuşken stresle ahlaki olgunluk arasında anlamsız bir ilişki elde edilmiştir. Tahmin edildiği ve beklendiği gibi bireylerin ahlaki olgunluk düzeyi arttıkça depresyon ve anksiyete gibi yaygın ve bilinen hastalıklar azalacaktır. Bireyler bu sorunlarla baş etme becerisine sahip oldukları sürece iş ve sosyal yaşamlarında daha sağlıklı, daha kaliteli ve daha olgun bir hayat yaşayacaklardır.

Anahtar Kelimeler:

Ahlak, Ahlaki Olgunluk. Depresyon, Kaygı, Stres

Jel Kodları:

M10, M19

ABSTRACT

The main purpose of this research is to analyze the relationship between the level of moral maturity, depression, anxiety and stress (DASS). Data obtained with the participation of 244 out of 483 students studying in Nursing department at a university in Turkiye were statistically analyzed and the findings were interpreted. 184 female (75.4%) and 60 male (24.6%) students contributed; most participants aged 18 and over were 21 years old (42.6%). Analyzes results showed that the reliability coefficients for all variables used are quite high. While there are significant and negative relationships between moral maturity and depression and anxiety attract attention, there is an insignificant relationship between moral maturity and stress is also found. As assumed and expected, as the level of individuals' moral maturity increases, common and well-known diseases such as depression and anxiety will decrease. As long as individuals have the ability to cope with these problems, they will live a healthier, higher quality and more mature life in their business and social life.

Keywords:

Morality, Moral Maturity, Depression, Anxiety, Stress.

Jel Codes:

M10, M19

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Introduction

The concept of morality, which sets standards about right and wrong in individual life, reveals some beliefs, acceptances and social generalizations about these existing wrongs and truths. Some rules and criterias that are developed and accepted in social life morally affect human life and bring some regulations to individual and social relations. In short, morality is the whole of "must haves" that are related to human life and affect relationships and are closely related to individual behaviors. Güngör (2010) and Ay (2020) emphasized that the area of interest of morality is human behaviors. While individuals' behaviors exhibited in accordance with morality are accepted as "beneficial" by the society; the opposite is also possible.

The state of acting logically and consciously during the development of right and beneficial behaviors, based on the moral rules adopted and accepted by the society, also defines moral maturity (Tekin, 2018). Moral maturity level also helps to interpret the individual and his/her behaviors correctly (Ay, 2020). Otherwise, both the low level of moral maturity and the wrong reactions resulting from the wrongly interpreted emotions and behaviors will lead to some health problems such as depression, anxiety and stress that negatively affect individual life and reduce the life quality.

The fact that these issues are generally evaluated in terms of organizational life and that they are mostly associated with the health sector and that the issue is not handled with the student dimension means insufficient information and explanation in terms of literature review. This naturally creates a gap in relevant literature. This gap will only be filled by researchers focusing on these issues and conducting applied research in the context of different sectors and individuals.

1. Theoretical Framework

The concept of morality refers to a system of behavior. This system evaluates and classify individual behaviors as good-bad, right-wrong, beautiful-ugly...etc. Morality is the set of behaviors that an individual exhibit voluntarily for a certain purpose. Morality is a set of rules that are generally accepted by the society, categorizing individual behaviors with certain attributes (Aydın, 2003). Moral maturity is defined as being the most logical, correct and highest level in terms of emotion, thought and behavior in the development of moral values and having the most necessary qualifications in this regard (Lickona, 1991). In social life, individuals generally accept and adapt to the moral rules that are defined and asked to comply with them. They do not review these defined moral rules and reshape them according to their own point of view (Habermas, 1982). Therefore, he/she arranges his/her behavior in the most logical and most appropriate way within the framework of the rules expected from him/her.

Unhappiness, sadness, anxiety in daily life, memory difficulties, feeling of emptiness, irritability, unexpected sudden reactions, seeking the blame in other people, etc. that appear and become permanent after some problems (Hackett, 2001; Chima, 2001; Alexander, 2015) are described as depression in both psychology and medical literature. Although it is known that these conditions usually occur in the 20s (Deniz & Sümer, 2010), it is emphasized that this age has been brought forward in recent years.

Individuals with depressive disorder also negatively affect other individuals who are in contact with them in both working life and social life. Disruption of daily routines, deterioration of work-life balance, damage to individual relationships, and most importantly, worsening physical and psychological health status are the most obvious reflections of depression.

On the other hand, anxiety is a condition that negatively affects personal and social life as well as business life and often causes great wounds. Anxiety, which is known as worry and manifests itself as a form of nervous behavior in anxiety and fear situations (Yılmaz, Boz & Arslan, 2017), usually manifests itself as a state of anxiety about the future in individuals (Barlow, 2000). Considering the fact that individuals with anxiety are unhappy and anxious individuals in social life and they do not enjoy life, it can be said that this situation negatively affects their work life as well as their psychological and social life. It has been found that the cost of an individual with anxiety to the organization is many times higher than the cost of an individual who does not continue to work (Greenberg, 1999; Stewart, et al., 2003). Anxiety also negatively affects the motivation and performance of the individual and reduces the productivity of work and life.

Stress, which is defined as a state of ongoing mental tension in the individual (Yılmaz, et al., 2017), is a state of tension and anxiety that individuals feel that they cannot cope with some situations in daily life (Raymond, 2000). In a situation that requires adaptation or in the fulfillment of what is demanded/expected from the individual, the feeling of inadequacy or the anxiety of not being able to cope with the events paves the way for stress. Stress, which negatively affects even the quality of life of individuals with symptoms such as feeling restless and inadequate, sadness, unhappiness, lack of concentration and attention, conflict and lack of communication in the current environment (Dyck, 2001) causes results

such as lack of motivation, decrease in performance, service quality and damage to organizational effectiveness (Hon, Chan & Lu, 2013).

Amid the hustle and bustle of daily life, the individual can often feel tired and helpless in the face of his/her plans and things to do, which brings anxiety and worry. Individuals have to create an emotional balance environment in their inner world, both in social life and in business life, and their approaches to events and perspectives will be more meaningful and mature thanks to this balance. Individuals who are satisfied with their work and have reached a certain level of moral maturity will be more successful in managing anxiety, worry, fear, etc.

According to the Opponent Process Theory; the individual who is in intense anxiety and worry at first in the face of the responsibilities and expectations placed on them, has to act against the real emotional state he/she is in, that is, to deal with and analyze the current situation with maturity in order to cope with this situation and reach the goal by staying calm. For this, he/she draws a very comfortable and calm composition. After reaching his/her goal, he/she enters a state of relaxation. As assumed in this research, the individual who has reached a certain moral maturity will easily cope with situations such as depression, anxiety, fear and anxiety.

2. Methodology and Findings

2.1. Participants

In this study, data were obtained with the participation of 244 out of 483 students studying at a state university through convenience sampling method and survey technique. 184 (75.4%) of the students participating in the study were female and 60 (24.6%) were male. Most of these participants in the 18 and over age group were 21 years old (42.6%) and first year students (110 people; 90.2%).

2.2. Measurement Scales

In order to measure the level of moral maturity, the Moral Maturity Scale developed by Ay (2020) with 17 items and one dimension was used in this study. On the other hand, the short form of the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS), originally developed by Lovibond and Lovibond (1995) and consisting of 42 items, was used to measure depression, anxiety, and stress levels, which were used as dependent variables in the study. The 21-item short form of this scale has been taken from the studies developed by Henry and Crawford (2005) and Mahmoud, et al. (2010); Turkish validity and reliability study of this form was done by Yılmaz, et al. (2017). In this study, a 21-item Turkish-validated Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS21) was used.

2.3. Analyzes and Findings

As a result of the analyzes, the mean of the depression anxiety stress (DASS) variables were respectively found as 2.270; 2.457; 2.700; while it was found as 4.312 for the moral maturity variable. It is expected that the moral maturity average of the participants is high, and it is also expected that the averages of depression, anxiety and stress dimensions will be relatively lower.

In addition, the Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient for the moral maturity scale was found as 0.908 and 0.834 for the depression sub-dimension, 0.928 for the anxiety sub-dimension and 0.903 for the stress sub-dimension in (DASS). While the KMO sample adequacy test result was found to be 0.923 for the DASS scale, this value was found to be 0.869 for the moral maturity scale. KMO test results showed that the number of samples used in this research is statistically sufficient. The fact that this value is greater than 0.5 indicates that these questions are subject to factor analysis.

In the (exploratory) factor analysis, two scales used in this research were analyzed simultaneously and principal component analysis and varimax axis rotation technique were used. Since the number of factors desired to be obtained from the items was known, the fixed number of factors method was chosen. The item factor loadings of the moral maturity scale and the DASS scale were determined to be above 0.50, and no item removal was required.

Table 1. Reliability coefficients

SCALE/DIMENSION	Items	Cronbach's Alpha (α)	KMO	Mean
Moral Maturity	17	0,908	0,869	4,312
Depression	7	0,834	DASS 0,923	2,270
Anxiety	7	0,928		2,457
Stress	7	0,903		2,700

According to the results of the correlation analysis, there is a significant and positive relationship between stress and depression (r=0.710, **p<0.01). A significant and positive relationship was observed between stress and anxiety (r=0.694, **p<0.01). A significant and positive relationship emerged between anxiety and depression (r=0.591, **p<0.01). A

significant and negative relationship was detected between moral maturity and anxiety (r=-0.253, **p<0.01). A significant and negative relationship emerged between moral maturity and depression (r=-0.197, *p<0.05). The relationship between moral maturity and stress was insignificant.

The analyzes showed that while there was a significant and negative relationship between moral maturity and depression and anxiety; there is no significant relationship between moral maturity and stress. On the other hand, there are positive and significant relationships between depression, anxiety and stress.

Table 2. Correlation analysis results

Variables	Depr.	Anx.	Stress	Moral M.
Depr.	1			
Anx.	,591**	1		
Stres	,710**	,694**	1	
Moral M.	-,197*	-,253**	-,155	1

* p<0,05   ** p<0,01

The ratio of the independent variable to the dependent variable explaining depression was found to be $R^2 = .039$. This result shows that 3.9% of the change in depression can be explained by moral maturity. The ratio of the independent variable explaining the dependent variable anxiety was found to be $R^2 = .064$. This result shows that 6.4% of the change in anxiety can be explained by moral maturity. The ratio of the independent variable explaining the dependent variable stress was found to be $R^2 = .024$. This result shows that 2.4% of the change in stress can be explained by moral maturity.

The results of the regression analysis showed that there are statistically inverse relationships between moral maturity and depression, anxiety and stress. But here, the relationship between moral maturity and stress was insignificant. As the moral maturity level of the individual increases, health problems such as depression and anxiety will decrease, but the relationship between this situation and stress cannot be interpreted.

Table 3. Regression analysis results

Dependent Variables	R^2	β	p
Depr.	,039	-,197	,030
Anx.	,064	-,253	,005
Stress	,024	-,155	,088
Indep. Variable: Moral Maturity			

Conclusion and Discussion

Ethics and moral rules are a structure that is adopted by the society and regulates both the direction and shape of individuals' own behaviors and their communication and interactions with other individuals. The best and most logical form of behavior in this structure emphasizes "moral maturity". The individual who acts according to the value judgments and moral rules accepted and supported by the society will feel better. With moral maturity, logical and consistent behaviors will bring individual happiness and reduce the likelihood of encountering health problems such as depression, anxiety and stress. Happy and healthy individuals will create happy and healthy societies. From this point of view, the findings obtained in this study reflect the assumed and expected results.

According to the results of the analysis, the increase in the moral maturity level of individuals will reduce the possibility of encountering depression and anxiety. The study also concluded that there is no significant relationship between moral maturity and stress. Morally mature individuals may know how to deal with depression and anxiety, but since stress is a situation that can be experienced completely momentarily, it can be concluded that it will not have a meaningful relationship with moral maturity. In the struggle with depression, which is known as the advanced stage of stress, the individual can use his/her moral competencies more easily and reflect them in his/her decisions.

The fact that these scales, which measure the moral maturity and depression, anxiety and stress levels of individuals and used in this research, have not been used in many studies before, made it difficult to compare the results of the analysis. In addition, the fact that the individuals participating in the research are university students and the majority of them are first-year students is another limitation. On the other hand, the small number of participants creates a limitation for the research results as well.

It is recommended to consider these limitations in future studies, to conduct comparative analyzes in different sectors, and to reach more participants. In order to obtain more efficient and expected results from the applied studies in the future, it is recommended to reach more participants working/studying in different sectors and departments and to conduct

applications, as well as to add different variables to the analyzes and examine the relationships between them, and to focus on why the relationship between moral maturity and stress is meaningless.

Ethical Declarations and Disclosures

1. Conflict of Interest Declaration

There is no conflict of interest between the authors.

2. Author Contribution Rate Declaration

The authors acted with a common purpose; each contributed equally (100%).

3. Ethics Committee Information Statement

There is no activity/study in this scientific research conducted by us that would require an ethics committee decision.

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