



**A STUDY TO DETERMINE THE EXAM ANXIETY OF UNIVERSITY STUDENTS: THE
CASE OF AFYON KOCATEPE UNIVERSITY**

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ABSTRACT

Exam anxiety, which is an element affecting the success of exams in school terms, is a situation that students face from the first years of their education. The students who are introduced to the exam in the first time when they start school, face the exam continuously during their life. Especially university students, who are going to start their business life, compete with their friends in a competitive environment in order to achieve their goals for the future and to be in a good position in their professions. As a matter of fact, the anxiety in the exams to reach the goals in this race affects the success. For this purpose, a field study was conducted on the students of Vocational School of Afyon Kocatepe University to determine the test anxiety and the relationship between various variables. The main problematic of the study is the level of exam anxiety of vocational high school students and how they differ according to socio-demographic characteristics. In order to collect data, a questionnaire consisting of 34 questions was used. The first 5 questions in the questionnaire aimed to reveal the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

Exam anxiety is a negative situation experienced by students during the education process. This situation may affect students negatively. Many factors affect students' anxiety before the exam. These factors include; family attitudes and behaviors, working environment, financial conditions, friend relations, socialization, teacher-student relations and expectations. Therefore, in order to minimize exam anxiety, considering the above factors, besides families and trainers; It is recommended that students be made aware of these issues from an early age.

As a result of the study, it was concluded that the students' test anxiety levels were high, while demographic factors did not show any difference on the test anxiety.

Keywords: Exam anxiety, Behaviour, Habit

**ÜNİVERSİTE ÖĞRENCİLERİNİN SINAV KAYGISINI BELİRLEMeye YÖNELİK BİR
ÇALIŞMA: AFYON KOCATEPE ÜNİVERSİTESİ ÖRNEĞİ**

ÖZ

Okul dönemlerinde sınavlardaki başarıyı etkileyen bir unsur olan sınav kaygısı, öğrencilerin eğitimöğretim hayatlarının ilk yıllarından itibaren karşılaştıkları bir durumdur. Okula başladıkları ilk zamanlarında sınav ile tanışan öğrenciler hayatlarının devamında sürekli sınavla karşı karşıya kalmaktadırlar. Özellikle artık iş hayatına atılacak olan üniversite öğrencileri, geleceğe yönelik hedeflerini gerçekleştirmek mesleklerinde iyi bir konuma gelebilmek için arkadaşlarıyla rekabet ortamına yarışmaktadırlar. Nitekim bu yarış içerisinde

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hedeflere ulaşmak için girilen sınavlarda duyulan kaygının başarıyı etkilemesi söz konusudur. Bu amaçla Afyon Kocatepe Üniversitesi Meslek Yüksekokulu öğrencilerinin sınav kaygılarını belirlemek ve çeşitli değişkenler arasındaki ilişkiyi tespit etmek üzere meslek yüksekokulu öğrencileri üzerinde bir saha araştırması gerçekleştirilmiştir. Araştırmanın ana sorunsalını meslek yüksekokulu öğrencilerinin sınav kaygılarının ne düzeyde olduğu ve sosyo-demografik özelliklere göre nasıl farklılık gösterdiği oluşturmaktadır. Araştırmada veri toplamak için, toplam 34 sorudan oluşan anket formundan faydalanılmıştır. Soru formunda ilk 5 soru ile katılımcıların sosyo-demografik özelliklerini ortaya koymak amaçlanmıştır.

Sınav kaygısı öğrencilerin eğitim sürecinde yaşadığı olumsuz bir durumdur. Bu durum öğrencilerin olumsuz yönde etkileyebilmektedir. Öğrencilerde sınavdan önce oluşan kaygı duygusuna birçok faktör etki etmektedir. Bu faktörler arasında; aile tutum ve davranışları, çalışma ortamı, maddi koşullar, arkadaş ilişkileri, sosyalleşme, öğretmen-öğrenci ilişkileri, beklentiler yer almaktadır. Dolayısıyla sınav kaygısını minimize edebilmek amacıyla yukarıdaki faktörler göz önünde bulundurularak ailelerin ve eğitimcilerin yanı sıra; öğrencilere küçük yaştan itibaren bu konularda bilinçlendirilmesi önerilmektedir.

Çalışmanın sonucunda öğrencilerin sınav kaygı düzeylerinin yüksek olduğu tespit edilirken demografik faktörlerin sınav kaygısı üzerinde farklılık göstermediği sonucuna varılmıştır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sınav Kaygısı, Davranış, Alışkanlık

Introduction

An anxious thought can be caused by many factors, which are defined as anxiety. It is stated that if you see something as dangerous or intimidating, the belief that you should engage your mind with it and be concerned causes anxiety. In addition, it is also stated that such irrational beliefs "I must always be successful"; "I cannot tolerate embarrassment or humiliation in people "; It is impossible for me to successfully engage and struggle with any situation. " and "I have to worry about the uncertainty of the future. " cause anxiety (Guler & Cakir, 2013: 83). The abilities of the people, the value they attach to themselves, self-esteem are in relation to their expectations of success. For example, self-esteem, talented and self-recognizing individuals can create a high level of expectation appropriate to the situation. These expectations are positively affected by their progress. High expectation of success supports competition and may help the individual to motivate himself. But often the individual does not achieve the expected success and stress affects the success in a negative way (Küçük, 2010: 39). A sense of anxiety and fear gives three simple messages to the person experiencing that feeling. The first one is faced with a problem or danger, the second is not enough to deal with this problem and danger, and the third will be fear and take care of yourself! The greatest benefit of anxiety is that it keeps people alive and makes them ready to mobilize (Sekman, 2016: 65). For every person to be successful, some anxiety is essential. If you have no worries about it, you cannot take action. Because enough anxiety motivates you to form a goal and to move towards this goal (Yesilyurt, 2007: 16). Exam anxiety is the state of emotion that an individual experiences many times during his / her education. This situation can be explained as anxiety and trouble in the person who is expected to perform before and during the exam for many reasons such as not being adequately prepared for the exam, not knowing the efficient working methods, having the expectation of success above the competency level, bad experiences of the past, lack of self-confidence.

Exams are important processes in shaping students' lives, which may increase their anxiety. The anxiety caused by the exams may affect the attitude and success of the students towards the lessons negatively (Dündar et al., 2008). According to Spielberger (1972) Exam anxiety; It is an unpleasant state of emotion with cognitive, affective and behavioral characteristics that creates tension in the individual, which prevents the individual from performing his / her actual performance (Spielberger, 1972). At this point, the exam anxiety is a special type of anxiety and it is a feeling of uneasiness mixed with the fear felt when evaluating the individual.

1. Related Literature

When the related literature is examined, it is seen that different studies have been conducted. Researchers working on the subject have achieved remarkable results. Demirci, Erden (2016) found no significant difference between the exam anxiety levels of the participants in the experimental and control groups. Cognitive Behavioral Therapies (CBT) have become one of the leading approaches in psychotherapy. Hypothesis was developed that the group counseling program applied in the study would reduce the anxiety of the participants. Many treatment approaches have been applied to reduce exam anxiety. Studies based on behavioral approach such as systematic desensitization, relaxation exercise, biofeedback, modeling; studies based on cognitive approach such as cognitive restructuring and rational emotional therapy.

Buyukyılmaz, Astı and Cakmak (2009) examined exam anxiety levels of nursing school students and the factors affecting this and it was concluded that there was no statistically significant difference between the mean scores of Students' choice of profession from the situations that may affect the exam anxiety, General Academic Grade Point Average, the presence / absence of failed courses, the presence / absence of methods used in situations that cause anxiety about education, the presence / absence of the study room, the effect of the targeted position on the test anxiety, exam work situation and exam anxiety.

Guleç, Bağceli Kahraman and Onur Sezer (2013) examined the relationship between pre-service teachers' time management skills and exam anxiety levels according to their academic achievement, and as a result of this study, there was a significant difference between pre-service teachers' academic achievement and time management skills and sub-dimensions. It was detected. It is stated that pre-service teachers who have higher General Academic Grade Point Average manage time better and are more successful in academic life.

Demirtas and Ozer (2007) found a positive and meaningful relationship between pre-service teachers' time management scores and academic achievement. In other words, the fact that there is a difference between the low and high pre-service teachers in the sub-dimension of time attitudes indicates that pre-service teachers who use time well have higher academic achievement. A significant difference between the time wasters sub-dimension is explained by the fact that teacher candidates think that wasted time will negatively affect academic achievement.

Bilicioglu and Yilmaz (2017) made an international comparison of students' exam anxiety and variables of interest and parental support for science and analyzed

the example of Singapore and Turkey, students in Singapore taking the PISA 2015 exam, according to the students in Turkey taking the PISA 2015 exam, have found a significant difference between the interest and concern to science exam but there was no significant difference between the two countries for parental support.

Gencdogan (2006) examines the relationship between high school students' exam anxiety and submission levels and perception of social support, findings of increased submissiveness as the test anxiety increases, "Rather than relying on the knowledge of students for exams, they show that they behave towards their destiny in the face of an authoritarian power".

Genc(2013) states that as class grades increase, exam anxiety generally increases, but this does not make a difference in terms of gender. However, in the study of Genc et al. (1999), the anxiety levels of the students who were going to take the student selection exam were examined and they found that the anxiety level of girls was significantly higher than the boys. Kapikiran (2002), in his study, examined the relationship between university students' test anxiety and some psycho-social variables and stated that female students had higher test anxiety. According to the data examined in terms of gender, girls have more test anxiety than boys. As a result of the findings obtained in the study, it is seen that the students' anxiety increases as they move to the upper classes. Anxiety levels increased without gender differences. Eser, Burdur (2017) conducted the research on the anxiety of the students of the vocational school in the case of Nazilli Vocational School, and it was found that female students had a higher rate of exam anxiety than male students. When exam anxiety characteristics of students are examined on the basis of whether parents are together or separated; as in the case of gender, it was observed that there was too much difference in the dimension of exam anxiety.

Kapikiran (2002) conducted a study on the relationship between university students' test anxiety and some psychosocial variables. Again, anxiety can be directed towards transferring the general anxiety status of the parents to the child; It is expressed that will cause.

Cicek and Tanhan (2018) found that there is a relationship between the perception of limitation and exam anxiety among high school senior students preparing for university, this situation is attributed to the fact that individuals feel limited, dependent and cannot change their own conditions, and believe that they are not in the hands of the possibility of transforming and developing their social and individual relations.

Piji Kucuk (2010) found a negative correlation between music teacher candidates' exam anxiety levels and instrument education achievement grades, and between exam anxiety levels and self-esteem levels. There was no significant relationship between music teacher candidates' self-esteem scores and instrument education achievement grades, and test anxiety scores did not make a significant difference in terms of gender, grade, and type of school graduated. Karaman, Ay, Özböler, Karahan (2015) The results of this study conducted with second year students at the Faculty of Dentistry reveal that there is a significant negative correlation between academic achievement and exam anxiety.

Dundar, Yapici and Topcu (2008) examined the anxiety of the exam according to some personality traits of university students, exam anxiety levels, personality adjustment levels and the relationship between personality traits and exam anxiety of the students were examined. As a result of the study, it was determined that there was an inverse significant relationship between exam anxiety and personality general, social and personal adjustment values. As the adjustment level of the students related to these personality traits increases, the anxiety level of the exam decreases. Family characteristics, social relationships, antisocial tendencies, emotional stability and neurotic tendencies are the personal characteristics that affect the exam anxiety. It was concluded that there was an inverse meaningful relationship between personality traits, family relations, social relations, antisocial tendencies, emotional stability and neurotic tendencies.

Ayranci and Oge(2011) stated that exam anxiety showed itself as a combination of different elements in students, one of these elements stated that there was an examination tension that addressed the trouble and tension before, during and after the exam and included physical reactions such as nausea. The other element is the mental confusion that involves students forgetting what they know, confusing them, and shifting their minds out of exam subjects. The only issue that affected both elements and therefore the whole test anxiety was the gender of the students. On the other hand, when exam anxiety elements are not considered as a whole but separately, it is seen that mental confusion is not influenced by gender, being or not working, and degree of happiness.

Erozkan (2004) investigated the anxiety and coping behaviors of university students, and found a significant difference in terms of gender in terms of coping with stress, seeking external aid, escaping-emotional / operational-dimensions. According to this, girls are more likely to seek external aid and escape behavior than boys. There was no difference between the chapters on deluded attitudes towards exam anxiety. However, there was a difference in affective attitudes towards exam anxiety. There was a statistically significant difference between the departments on active planning regarding coping with stress.

Yildirim (2004), In the study of exam anxiety, daily troubles and social support as a predictor of depression, it was determined that there were positive relationships between the variables of "test anxiety", "family problems", "friends problems" and "broad environment problems" variables and depression; but, It was determined that there were negative significant relationships between the variables of "family support", "teacher support" and "gender" and depression. Exam anxiety was the first important predictor of depression.

Koruklu, Oner and Oktavlar (2006) examined the effect of the Coping with Anxiety Program in coping with the anxiety of the students preparing for the university entrance exam and found that the program had a positive effect on coping with the test anxiety. It is not the fact that the material to be learned is too difficult, but the meaning of that event for itself, which causes excessive anxiety in students and causes it to fail. The individual develops unrealistic beliefs by thinking that his / her personality is measured, not that his / her knowledge is measured in the exam. Instead of these

unrealistic beliefs, more realistic alternative beliefs can be developed and thought rearranged.

A Study to Determine the Exam Anxiety of University Students: The Case of Afyon Kocatepe University

Method of Research

This study was carried out in order to reveal the relationship between the anxiety levels and anxiety levels of Afyon Kocatepe University Vocational School students and various variables; For this purpose, descriptive research method and questionnaire based field research technique were applied. A questionnaire was prepared and applied to the participants.

Application of the research and sample

A field study was conducted on the students of Vocational School of Afyon Kocatepe University in order to determine the exam anxiety and the relationship between various variables. Therefore, the universe of the study consists of university students studying at Vocational Schools of Afyon Kocatepe University. According to March 2018-2019 data, a total of 10345 students, 3818 of whom are female and 6527 of are male, are studying in Vocational Schools of Afyon Kocatepe University.

In the determination of the sample, the convenience sampling technique, which is easily accessible and voluntarily participated, was preferred and a face-to-face survey was conducted with the students. 722 questionnaires were found suitable for analysis.

Data Collection Tools

In order to collect data, a questionnaire consisting of 34 questions was used. The first 5 questions in the questionnaire aimed to reveal the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants.

In the last part of the questionnaire, a six-factor scale developed by Ayrancı and Oge (2011) was used. In the scale consisting of 29 items, 5-point Likert-type scale was used as "5 = Strongly Agree", "4 = Agree", "3 = Undecided", "2 = Disagree", "1 = Strongly Disagree".

Data Analysis

The research was conducted between January 15, 2019 and March 25, 2019 by face-to-face interview with the participants. Obtained data were processed by using statistical program. According to Buyukozturk (2007), the main point of the analysis is that the scores do not deviate from the normal excess. If the MP falls within the +1, -1 limits, it can be interpreted that the scores do not show a significant deviation from the normal distribution. Therefore, Frequency Analysis was used to determine the demographic characteristics and exam anxiety levels of the participants respectively. The relationship between exam anxiety level and gender was determined by Independent Sample T-Test. The One-Way ANOVA was used to determine whether the test anxiety level of the participants differed according to the department and

residence type. Correlation analysis was used to determine possible differences between the groups.

Research Question

The main research question of the study is the level of exam anxiety of vocational high school students and how they differ according to socio-demographic characteristics.

3. Findings and Interpretation

Under this title, the results of the analysis explaining the socio-demographic characteristics of the participants as well as the exam anxiety and the relationship between anxiety level and various variables are included.

3.1. Characteristics of the participants

Distribution of participants according to gender; 50.7 percent of the respondents were women and 49.3 percent were men. When the departments of participants is examined, 10.3 percent of the participants were studying in the Public Relations department, 6.2 percent were studying in the Department of Business Administration, 11.1 percent were studying in the Department of Office Management, 19.3 percent were studying in the Cadastre Department, 4.2 percent of the participants Tourism and Travel Management / Hotel Management Department student, 5.2 percent were studying in the Computer Programming Department, 5.5 percent were studying in the Accounting Department, 2.3 percent were studying in the Construction Department, 0.7 percent were studying in the Biomedical Department, 10.1 percent of the students were studying in the Department of Local Government, 4.8 percent of the students were studying in the Department of Rail Systems, 1.3 percent of the students were studying in the Mechatronics department, 0.1 percent of the students were studying in the Department of Furniture and Decoration and 19.0 percent of the students were studying in the Department of Electricity.

When the residence status of the participants is examined, 2.5 percent live at home alone, 8.9 percent live with friends at home, 16.4 percent live with family, and 72.1 percent live in the dormitory.

When the age distribution of the participants is examined, 16.8 percent are 18 and under, 76.1 percent is 19-22, 5.5 percent is 23-26, 6 percent are in the age group of 27-30, 1.1 percent in the age group 31 and over.

Table I. Socio-Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

	<i>Number</i>	<i>Percentage</i>
Gender		
Female	366	50,7
Male	356	49,3
Age		
18 and under	120	16,8
19-22	543	76,1
23-26	39	5,5

27-30	4	,6
31 and over	8	1,1
Department		
Office management and executive assistance	79	11,1
Cadastral	137	19,3
Public Relations	73	10,3
Business Administration	44	6,2
Tourism and Travel Management / Hotel Management	30	4,2
Computer programming	37	5,2
Accounting	39	5,5
Construction	16	2,3
Local Government department	72	10,1
Biomedical	5	,7
Rail systems	34	4,8
Mechatronics	9	1,3
Furniture and Decoration	1	,1
Electrical Department	135	19,0
Class		
First-grade	507	70,6
Second-grade	210	29,2
Residence Type		
Living alone at home	18	2,5
Living at home with my friends	64	8,9
With my family	118	16,4
In the dormitory	518	72,1

When exam anxiety factors of the participants were examined; values were found as exam tension (AO = 34.83), mental confusion (AO = 15.98), academic achievement anxiety (AO = 10.68), exam career relationship (AO = 8.61) exam alternative (AO = 9.34) and exam future relationship (AO = 6.92).

Table II. Findings on the Exam Anxiety of the Participants

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>
Exam Tension	664	12,00	60,00	34,83	10,44
Mental Confusion	670	5,00	25,00	15,98	4,62
Academic Achievement Anxiety	685	4,00	20,00	10,68	3,23
Exam Career Relationship	690	3,00	15,00	8,61	3,24
Exam Alternative	708	3,00	15,00	9,34	3,06
Exam Future Relationship	715	2,00	10,00	6,92	2,47

The Relationship Between Exam Anxiety Level and Various Variables

Under this heading, descriptive statistical results are given to reveal the test anxiety levels of the students of Afyon Kocatepe University Vocational Schools. The arithmetic mean of the scores given by 595 participants on a scale formed between 1 and 5 points is = 77.00.

Table III. Central Tendency Statistics of Participants' Exam Anxiety Level

	<i>N</i>	<i>Min.</i>	<i>Max.</i>	\bar{X}	<i>SD</i>
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Exam Anxiety Level	595	30,00	130,00	77,00	17,82
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As seen in Table IV, descriptive statistics show that women have the value of (= 81.79) and men (= 72.06) have values in terms of exam anxiety level. The exam anxiety levels and gender of the participants showed a statistically significant difference ($t = 6.92$; $p = ,000$; $p < .05$).

Table IV. Differences in Exam Anxiety Level by Gender

	Gender	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value	Sig.
Exam Anxiety Level	Female	302	81,79	16,97	6,92	,000
	Male	293	72,06	17,34		

When Table 5 is examined; It was found that there was no significant difference between the exam anxiety levels of students according to their departments ($t = ,441$; $Sd. = ,659$; $p > ,05$).

Table V. Differences in Exam Anxiety Level by Departments

	Department	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value	Sig.
Exam Anxiety Level	Verbal	207	77,32	17,35	,441	,659
	Quantitative	381	76,64	18,05		

When Table 6 is examined; It was found that there was a significant difference between exam anxiety levels according to the residence status of students ($F = 3.26$; $Sd. = ,021$; $p > ,05$).

Table VI. Difference in Exam Anxiety Level by Type of Residence

	Residence Type	N	\bar{X}	SD	F	Sig.
Exam Anxiety Level	Living alone at home	14	63,78	21,144	3,26	,021
	With my family	53	75,01	17,420		
	With Relatives	101	76,13	17,949		
	In the dormitory	425	77,90	17,624		

On the other hand, as shown in Table 8, there is no difference between the test anxiety levels of the participants according to their classes ($t = -1.37$; $Sd. = ,17$; $p > .05$).

Table VIII. Difference in Exam Anxiety Level by Class

	Cinsiyet	N	\bar{X}	SD	t-value	Sig.
Exam Anxiety	First-grade	415	76,37	18,211	-1,37	,17

Level	Second-grade	177	78,56	16,736		0
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Finally, in Table 9, the relationship between exam anxiety dimensions was examined, while the exam future relationship dimension showed a high positive correlation with the exam alternative dimension ($r = ,702^{**}$, $p < .01$), moderate and low correlation was found between all other dimensions.

Table IX. Correlation Analysis Findings Among Exam Anxiety Factors

	Exam Future Relationship	Exam Alternative	Exam Career Relationship	Academic Achievement Anxiety	Mental Confusion	Exam Tension
Exam Future Relationship	1	,702**	,452**	,302**	,337**	,311**
		,000	,000	,000	,000	,000
	664	628	636	639	656	662
Exam Alternative	,702**	1	,424**	,298**	,411**	,368**
	,000		,000	,000	,000	,000
	628	670	644	651	664	668
Exam Career Relationship	,452**	,424**	1	,408**	,332**	,250**
	,000	,000		,000	,000	,000
	636	644	685	665	681	684
Academic Achievement Anxiety	,302**	,298**	,408**	1	,252**	,148**
	,000	,000	,000		,000	,000
	639	651	665	690	685	688
Mental Confusion	,337**	,411**	,332**	,252**	1	,500**
	,000	,000	,000	,000		,000
	656	664	681	685	708	707
Exam Tension	,311**	,368**	,250**	,148**	,500**	1
	,000	,000	,000	,000	,000	
	662	668	684	688	707	715

$p < .01$

Result

According to the results of the research, test anxiety is seen as a combination of different elements on students. One of these elements is exam tension, which deals with restlessness and tension before, during and after the exam, including physical reactions such as nausea. The other element is the mental confusion that involves students forgetting what they know, confusing them, and shifting their minds out of

exam subjects. Both factors were the gender and residence of the students, affecting the overall exam anxiety. In other words, it was concluded that the gender and residence forms of the students affect the exam anxiety. A significant difference was found between the level of exam anxiety by gender. Female students have a higher average anxiety than male students. Therefore, it can be said that female students are more anxious than male students during exam periods. Similar results were obtained from Kapikiran (2002), Kuçuk (2010) and Genç (2013) but, Chen et al. (2009) found that males had more test anxiety than females in their study over university students. Likewise, Erozkan (2004) states that this situation can be explained by the higher the values attributed to the exams in terms of feeling sufficient and strong by showing the personal competencies of the students and being successful. In addition, when the living conditions in our country are considered; it can be interpreted that from a sociological point of view, the social expectation from the past and the social pressure can increase the level of anxiety of men due to fear of the future and lack of employment.

A significant difference was observed in the level of exam anxiety of the students according to the type of residence (living alone at home, with family, in the dormitory, etc.). It was found that there was a significant difference between living alone at home and staying in the dormitory, and those who were living alone at home showed less anxiety than those living in the dormitory. Accordingly, it can be said that the students staying in the dormitory have higher exam anxiety. On other words, among the reasons for the high anxiety of students staying in the dormitory; It can be shown that working conditions of friends around them affect them psychologically and negative working conditions decrease motivation. In the future studies, the inclusion of psychological and sociological conditions as well as the physical conditions in which students live in the dormitory environment will increase the importance of the research.

The departments of the students were grouped according to their verbal and quantitative basis and statistical analyzes were performed accordingly. Accordingly, it was understood that studying in the verbal or quantitative-based department did not make a significant difference on exam anxiety. Similarly, there was no significant difference between grade and exam anxiety levels.

As a result, exam anxiety is a negative situation experienced by students during the education process. This situation may affect students negatively. Many factors affect students' anxiety before the exam. These factors include; family attitudes and behaviors, working environment, financial conditions, friend relations, socialization, teacher-student relations and expectations. Therefore, in order to minimize exam anxiety, considering the above factors, besides families and trainers; It is recommended that students be made aware of these issues from an early age.

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