

Being a University Student and Anxiety About the Future

The university period is a significant phase in which individuals develop their identity, plan their careers and make important life decisions. During this period, students often experience intense concerns known as anxiety about the future. Future anxiety is a state of worry arising from thoughts such as being unable to find a job, failing to achieve financial independence, making the wrong career choice, not meeting societal expectations or not reaching personal goals (Karataş & Yavuzer, 2017). In fact, anxiety is a normal emotion that motivates individuals and helps them prepare for the future (Cüceloğlu, 2019). However, when this emotion becomes intense, it can reduce life satisfaction, negatively affect academic performance and harm psychological well-being (Özden & Sertel-Berk, 2017).

The effects of future anxiety can be observed in cognitive, emotional, behavioral and physiological dimensions. It often occurs as repetitive thoughts such as, “What if I fail?” or “Which profession should I choose?” These thoughts are accompanied by restlessness, pessimism and loss of motivation. Some students may procrastinate, withdraw from social relationships or struggle to take concrete steps toward the future (Sarı, 2019). Physically, symptoms such as irregular sleep, headaches, stomach issues and chronic fatigue may occur (Lazarus & Folkman, 1984).

Completely eliminating anxiety is neither possible nor necessary. Anxiety is an alerting emotion that helps individuals develop themselves and prepare for the future (Pekrun, 2006). The main goal is to recognize anxiety and learn to cope with it. There are several coping strategies that students can use. Firstly, self-awareness is crucial. Students who recognize their interests, values and strengths can make more informed career decisions (Korkut-Owen & Bugay, 2014).

Setting goals is also a fundamental strategy for coping with future anxiety. Creating short-, medium and long-term goals, breaking them down into smaller steps and experiencing success gradually make the process more manageable (Snyder, 2002). Additionally, being flexible and accepting that life does not always go as planned is important. Failures are not the end of the road but a natural part of the learning process (Cüceloğlu, 2019).

Developing time management skills also helps students manage anxiety. Creating daily and weekly schedules, reducing procrastination and starting with small steps make anxiety more controllable (Pekrun, 2006). Social support is another protective factor. Sharing feelings with trusted individuals or using career counseling and psychological counseling services provided by the university facilitates the process (Yalçın, 2011).

Lifestyle also plays an important role in reducing anxiety. Regular sleep, balanced nutrition, exercise and making time for hobbies increase both physical and psychological resilience. In particular, engaging in artistic, sports or social activities helps students balance stress (Özden & Sertel-Berk, 2017).

In conclusion, future anxiety experienced by university students is a natural process and actually indicates that they care about their future. When managed properly, anxiety can be a motivating force for personal development and achieving goals. However, if the level of anxiety significantly affects daily life, academic performance or social relationships, seeking professional support is important. The future is not the result of a single exam, job or choice. It

is a lifelong process that individuals continuously shape and rebuild. Small steps taken by students today can create significant differences in approaching their future with confidence.

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