

Original Article

The Relationship between Job-Finding Anxiety and Academic Engagement: A Study on Undergraduate Students In Faculty of Sports Sciences

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Keywords: *University students, job finding anxiety, academic engagement.***Abstract**

This study aimed to determine the relationship between the job-finding anxiety and the academic engagement of undergraduate students studying in the field of sports sciences. The “Scale of Job Finding Anxiety of Sports Science Students” developed by Aslan and Ugras (2021) and the “Academic Engagement Scale” developed by Kızılkaya and Dogan (2022) were used to collect data. Descriptive statistics, correlation, and regression analyses were used in the analysis of the data. As a result of the analysis, it was observed that the job-finding anxiety had a significant and negative effect on academic engagement ($p < 0.01$). According to these results, it is revealed that it is necessary to take measures to reduce the job-finding anxiety and to develop education policies so that students can have a more productive education process with high academic engagement.

1. Introduction

In recent years, it is thought that the concerns of young adults begin with the university preparation process and continue with various factors such as accommodation, adaptation, exams, etc. during the university period. The most striking of these factors is the job-finding anxiety. There are many studies in the literature about job-finding anxiety in different fields (Cevik, & Öneren, 2019; Dursun, & Aytac, 2009; Karatas, & Oktem, 2022; Kim, Oh, & Rajaguru, 2022; Tekin-Tayfun, & Korkmaz, 2016; Tektas, 2014). It can be said that job-finding anxiety has become a process for young adults, starting from the time they study at university and continuing after they graduate (Cetinceli, & Tüzün, 2022).

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Spielberger (1972) defines anxiety as follows: “[an] unpleasant emotional state or condition which is characterized by subjective feelings of tension, apprehension, and worry, and by activation or arousal of the autonomic nervous system (p. 482)”. Spielberger (1966, p. 9) suggests that there are two types of anxiety: state anxiety and trait anxiety. State anxiety is related to a temporary situation and is the subjective anxiety felt by the individual due to the stressful situation he/she is in. Trait anxiety is a type of long-term anxiety experienced as a result of the individual feeling that he or she is in danger even though there is no danger in reality. We think that job-finding anxiety is included in the trait anxiety type.

Spielberger (2013) stated that the concept of anxiety has increased its importance as a powerful influence in contemporary life and argued that the effects of anxiety are present everywhere. Based on this, it can be said that anxiety affects the individual in many ways. In this state of constant anxiety, young individuals may not be able to get high results from their university education and social life. For the individual, a career means more than having a job. Career advancement means gaining more income, responsibility, and higher professional and social prestige. In this sense, career is closely related to many issues such as the feeling of success, the opportunities that can be encountered, psychological rewards, and a better lifestyle (Demirbilek, 1994). Young individuals may isolate themselves from the higher education institution and the courses they take, thinking that they will not be able to have a career in the field they are studying. College is the exploratory phase of career choice for many students, and undergraduates often choose majors with specific interests in mind (Martens, & Lee, 1998). However, young individuals who are worried about finding a job may not feel like they belong to the institution they are studying at because they are worried about having a career in the field they are studying. This situation prevents them from getting high results from the university where they spend a limited time and may negatively affect their academic success.

The concept of engagement is when an individual identifies himself with a family, society, school, etc. It can be explained as the state of seeing and feeling as part of a person. Duru (2015) defined the concept of engagement as “the individual’s perception of himself/herself as a meaningful, valuable and important part of the environment he/she is in.” Axelson and Flick (2010) define academic engagement as “the degree to which students are involved or interested in their learning process and how committed they are to their classroom, school, and each other.” Schaufeli, Martinez, Pinto, Salanova, and Bakker (2002) conceptually define academic engagement as “a positive, satisfying, work-related state of mind characterized by strength, dedication, and concentration.” Academic engagement can be expressed as the student sees himself/herself as an important part of the school. If these young individuals see themselves as a part of the educational institution, their participation in classes will increase and, accordingly, their academic success will likely increase. The concept of engagement is a broad phenomenon that covers both the academic and social aspects of student life (Kizilkaya, & Dogan, 2022). Students with high levels of academic engagement participate in extracurricular social activities at the university and spend a lot of

time at the university.

In the literature, studies have reported that many young adults spend a lot of time searching for jobs on job search portals and the internet, as well as receiving employment counseling (Au, Kim, Lee, & Chung, 2011; Hwang, & Park, 2015). Job-finding anxiety can be transferred from graduates to university students through word of mouth. Job-finding anxiety can affect students' academic sense of engagement, which can reduce students' academic success. Therefore, there is a need for new research on what kind of relationship exists between Job-finding anxiety and academic engagement.

The aim of this study is to examine the effect of job-finding anxiety on academic engagement, focusing on undergraduate students studying in the field of sports sciences. For this purpose, students' job-finding anxiety and academic engagement levels will be determined and, accordingly, it will be revealed to what extent job-finding anxiety affects academic engagement.

2. Material and methods

In this study, the convenience sampling method was preferred. Convenience sampling is a non-probability sampling method in which units are selected for inclusion in the sample that are easy for the researcher to access. Within the framework of this method, in this study, students of the Faculty of Sports Sciences of a university located in the western region of Turkey were selected as a sample.

423 students participated in the study voluntarily. The surveys were distributed to the students by the interviewers and collected again after a reasonable period of time. The collected surveys were checked, and 12 incompletes and incorrectly filled surveys were separated. In total, 411 surveys were found suitable for analysis.

“Scale of Job Finding Anxiety of Sports Science Students” developed by Aslan and Ugras (2021) and “Academic Engagement Scale” developed by Kizilkaya and Dogan (2022) were used as data collection tools in the study. “Scale of Job Finding Anxiety of Sports Science Students” has 8 items and a single sub-dimension. “Academic Engagement Scale” consists of 25 items and three sub-dimensions (“participation in the course, library, resource access”, “communication with faculty members”, and “participation in scientific and cultural activities). A 5-point Likert scale was used in both scales (from 1=strongly disagree, to 5=strongly agree).

In the analysis of the data obtained, descriptive statistics for demographic characteristics, correlation in the relationships between variables, and hierarchical regression analysis were used to determine the effect of independent variables on the dependent variable.

3. Results and discussions

Demographic properties

Many of the participants are men. The distribution of participants according to classes is more or less close to each other. The sports management department constitutes most of the participants. The average age of the participants is 20.96 ± 2.04 (Table 1).

Table 1. Demographic characteristics

| Demographic variables | | f | % |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------|----------|-----------|
| Gender | Female | 165 | 40.1 |
| | Male | 246 | 59.9 |
| Class | First class | 107 | 26.0 |
| | Second class | 116 | 28.2 |
| | Third class | 99 | 24.1 |
| | Fourth class | 89 | 21.7 |
| Department | Sports coaching | 83 | 20.2 |
| | Physical education and sports | 113 | 27.5 |
| | Recreation | 70 | 17.0 |
| | Sport management | 145 | 35.3 |
| | | X | SS |
| Age | | 20.96 | 2.04 |

Correlation analysis

The correlation analysis result shows that there is a significant and negative relationship between job-finding anxiety and academic engagement ($r=-0.218$; $p<0.01$). There is a significant and negative relationship at the $p<0.05$ level between job-finding anxiety and “participation in the course, library, resource access”, one of the sub-dimensions of academic engagement. On the other hand, there is a relationship between job-finding anxiety and “communication with faculty members” and “participation in scientific and cultural activities” at the level of $p<0.01$. All these results show that as job-finding anxiety increases, academic engagement decreases (Table 2).

Table 2. Results of correlation analysis

| Variables | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 |
|--|---------|--------|-------|---------|--------|--------|--------|
| 1. Gender ^a | 1 | | | | | | |
| 2. Age ^b | .250** | 1 | | | | | |
| 3. Class ^c | .096 | .493** | 1 | | | | |
| 4. Job-finding anxiety | -.130** | -.069 | .080 | 1 | | | |
| 5. Participation in the course, library, resource access | -.060 | .109* | -.064 | -.121* | 1 | | |
| 6. Communication with faculty members | -.024 | .181** | .110* | -.258** | .632** | 1 | |
| 7. Participation in scientific and cultural activities | .037 | .039 | .002 | -.153** | .470** | .506** | 1 |
| 8. Academic engagement | -.016 | .132** | .025 | -.218** | .823** | .863** | .805** |

* Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level. ** Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Key. ^aGender: 1=female, 2=male. ^bAge was measured from 18 to 30 years old. ^cClass: 1=first class student, 2=second class student, 3=third class student, 4=fourth class student.

Hierarchical regression analysis

Hierarchical regression analysis results show that job-finding anxiety significantly and negatively affects academic engagement ($\beta=-0.207$; $p<0.01$).

Similarly, job-finding anxiety significantly and negatively affects all sub-dimensions of academic engagement. According to these results, increasing job-finding anxiety can be interpreted as decreasing academic engagement (Table 3).

Table 3. Hierarchical regression analysis among independent and dependent variables

| Independent Variables | Participation in the course, library, resource access | | Communication with faculty members | | Participation in scientific and cultural activities | | Academic Engagement | |
|--------------------------------|---|---------|------------------------------------|--------|---|--------|---------------------|--------|
| | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 1 | Step 2 | Step 1 | Step 2 |
| 1. Age | .186 | .172 | .168 | .131 | .050 | .029 | .159 | .129 |
| 2. Class | -.156 | -.141 | .028 | .066 | -.023 | .000 | -.053 | -.022 |
| 3. Job-finding anxiety | - | -.098** | - | -.255* | - | -.151* | - | -.207* |
| <i>F</i> | 6.369 | 5.610 | 7.071 | 14.552 | .391 | 3.373 | 4.088 | 8.888 |
| <i>R</i> ² | .174 | .199 | .034 | .097 | .002 | .024 | .020 | .061 |
| Adjusted <i>R</i> ² | .030 | .040 | .029 | .090 | -.003 | .017 | .015 | .055 |

Note. Standardized beta values were used, * $p < 0.01$, ** $p < 0.05$

Discussions

Our study focused on sports science faculty students and aimed to determine the effect of job-finding anxiety on academic engagement. The results of our study showed that students' job-finding anxiety had a significant effect on their academic engagement ("participation in the course, library, resource access", "communication with faculty members" and "participation in scientific and cultural activities"). According to these results, it can be said that students with high job-finding anxiety will reduce their efforts to attend classes and access resources, which may negatively affect performance. However, it can be said that students with high job-finding anxiety will reduce communication with faculty members and tend to avoid participation in scientific and cultural events, which may negatively affect students' socialization.

There are studies in the literature that separately investigate the issues of job-finding anxiety (Kim, Oh, & Rajaguru, 2022) and academic engagement (Sadoughi, & Hejazi, 2023). However, no study has been found examining the relationship between both subjects. In this respect, we think that our study will contribute to this gap in the literature.

There is evidence in the literature that anxiety negatively affects academic engagement (Ng, Zhang, Phipps, Zhang, & Hamilton, 2022; Jules, Maynard, Lowe, Lipps, & Gibson, 2020). There are also studies showing that academic engagement significantly and positively affects student success and performance (Kelley, 2008; Martinez, Youssef-Morgan, Chambel, & Marques-Pinto, 2019; Vizoso, Rodríguez, & Arias-Gundín, 2018). We understand from these studies that one of the antecedents of performance is academic engagement, and one of the antecedents of academic engagement is anxiety. Therefore, our study reveals that job-finding anxiety is one of the antecedents of academic engagement.

In summary, our study showed that students' job-finding anxiety has negative effects on their academic engagement. Therefore, it is clear that alleviating students' job-finding anxiety is one of the important issues that higher education institutions should address. One of the most important skills to increase students' adaptation and success is the development of their ability to cope with stress associated with academic challenges and demands (Gallego, Aguilar-Parra, Cangas, Rosado, & Langer, 2016). It is argued that one of the important factors regarding adequate performance and success in higher education is academic engagement (Casuso-Holgado et al., 2013; Gasiewski et al., 2012; Oriol-Granado, Mendoza-Lira, Covarrubias-Apablaza, & Molina-Lopez, 2017; Pike, Smart, & Ethington, 2012). Therefore, keeping academic affiliation strong institutionally can both reduce students' job-finding anxiety and positively affect the success of the institution.

4. Conclusions

Considering that students' job-finding anxiety affects their academic engagement, and academic engagement affects their performance, it can be said that higher education institutions have certain obligations to reduce their job-finding anxiety. Accordingly, higher education institutions can identify sectors with narrow business areas and adjust the quotas of academic units related to this narrow field accordingly. Higher education institutions that produce more graduates than the industry expects may also reduce student quotas for academic units. On the other hand, students' academic engagement can be increased by providing them with training on coping with anxiety.

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Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Ethical clearance: That is especially important when conducting research with humans. The major principle for making sure that no harm is done to any participants in the research. Also, as this was not an interventional study, 'permission form' and 'voluntary confirmation letter' were taken from all the participants. Informed consent of participants was obtained, and they were at liberty to participate and withdraw voluntarily. We also ensured that their responses were anonymous and confidential.

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