



Exploring the Relationship Between Personality Traits and Homesickness Among International Students

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ABSTRACT

Globally, international education has emerged as a phenomenon that supports the development of several cultural perspectives. However, there are many challenges for students who study abroad. They often have to adapt and get used to new environments, which may be stressful and cause homesickness. The purpose of the current study aimed to investigate the relation between homesickness and personality traits (extraversion, agreeableness, openness to experience, consciousness, and neuroticism among international students. A sample of 110 students (55 men and 55 females) from a number of ethnic backgrounds, including Middle Eastern, Asian, and African descent, were recruited for the study. Pearson Correlation was

calculated to test the hypothesis. The results found a significant positive correlation between homesickness and personality traits (agreeableness, extraversion, consciousness, and openness to experiences). However, homesickness was shown to be negatively correlated with the neuroticism trait. The objective of the research aims to understand the psychological aspects of international students and to provide personalized therapies that will facilitate a seamless transition while focusing on their adjustment and well-being in a new setting.

Keywords: Openness to experience, Consciousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, Neuroticism and Homesickness

INTRODUCTION

For the majority of the 20th century, young adults were observed to have the tendency to leave home in order to obtain education, job, or marriage, yet there seem to always have been variations in the moving process of young people from diverse socioeconomic and cultural origins (Beer & Faulkner 2011).

An individual's education plays a crucial part in their life as it gives them access to a world of knowledge (Glaser, 1984), helps them develop critical thinking abilities (Dunne, 2015), empowers them to actively participate in their communities (Pavlova, 2008), and helps them strengthen the community (Samah & Aref, 2009). While obtaining an academic qualification and breaking away from one's family may be a thrilling and encouraging experience (Thurber & Walton, 2012), moving to a new place can cause disruptions to everyday life and expose individuals to settings they are unfamiliar with, which can present challenges. Homesickness has been defined as the discomfort people feel throughout this transition (Smith et al., 2015). Individuals might not continue receiving the care and social support that comes from friends and family (Fisher et al., 1985). Every person grows psychologically when they relocate from

home or into a new environment, and this is frequently seen as a critical developmental milestone.

Homesickness

According to Nugraha and Riani (2023), homesickness is an “undesirable emotional condition mostly brought on by being away from one's family and loved ones.” It is accompanied by grief and trouble acclimating to a new environment. Duvén (2018) conceptualized homesickness as a cyclical developmental process. Van Tilburg (2005) defines homesickness as a “negative emotional state that follows the departure from one's home or place of residence, accompanied by negative thoughts about one's home and physical symptoms.”

According to Fisher and Hood (1988), adolescents who exhibited homesickness also reported greater levels of psychological distress. Adolescents even showed physical symptoms like despair. In order to understand homesickness' multifaceted nature and impact on college students' one needs to examine personal factors like age (Kazantzis & Flett, 1998), gender (Onuoha et al., 2013), culture (Stroebe et al., 2002), and personality traits (Sünbül & Çekici, 2018). Additionally, environmental factors like social surroundings (Biasi et al., 2018) and parental influences (Nijhof & Engels, 2007) needs to be considered.

When an individual "chooses to pursue higher education," they begin to feel homesick. After making a decision, there is a "time for preparation" during which a person engages in activities to get ready for the experience and difficulties that lie ahead. As one truly begins to "acclimate" to the new surroundings, homesickness progresses. It includes adapting to the new surroundings, which presents a number of intellectual, social, and cultural obstacles. The opportunity to "redefine the self"—a process that gives one the social skills, life experiences, and coping mechanisms they need—is made possible by the problems one faces. The last phase of the cycle occurs when the person achieves a sense of "belonging," at which point their

homesickness has subsided and they have been successfully adjusted to their new surroundings. Duven (2018) emphasized that the developing process is cyclic and subject to several experiences. When the person chooses to return to university after a break, homesickness may also be present.

Personality

Although there are many models to characterize personality, the five-facet (or Big 5) framework is one of the most thoroughly studied, highly valued, and widely acknowledged theoretical frameworks of personality (Azucar et al., 2018). Personality traits are defined as “parameters of variation in dispositions to show persistent patterns of ideas, emotions, and actions” McCrae and Costa (1990, p. 23). According to Gordon Allport (1961), a person's personality is the “dynamic structure inside those psychological processes that determines how he or she responds to his or her environment.” Morton Prince (2006) defined personality as “the sum of a person's biologically derived impulses, inclinations, appetites, and instincts as well as acquired tendencies and dispositions learned through experiences.” Due to its thorough knowledge and quantification, the Big Five of personality is a well-recognized and utilized instrument in studies on personality (Feher & Vernon, 2021). According to modern psychologists, conscientiousness, openness, agreeableness, extraversion, and neuroticism are the “Big 5” personality characteristics (Costa & McCrae, 1992).

Openness to experiences

“Inquisivity, receptivity, and willingness to accept new experiences are all considered aspects of being open to experience” (McCrae & Costa, 2003). According to Allemand et al. (2017) it is the broadest of the five core components of the Five-Factor framework. It comprises a wide range of related traits such as ambiguity tolerance, a need for variety, aesthetic sensitivity,

absorption, unconventionality, and intellectual curiosity. In the opinion of Cucu-Ciuhan and Răban-Motounu (2012), openness to experience is frequently linked with maturation and autonomy ideals, and negatively correlated with accomplishment and restrictive consistency. According to McCrae and Costa (1991), open people have traits like curiosity, exploration, and unconventionality that may help them adjust to new situations and experiences.

Poyrazli et al. (2010) discovered a positive relation among openness and homesickness, suggesting that those who are homesick are more likely to be communicative. Additionally, openness and age had a negative correlation, indicating that younger people are often less resistant to new experiences. Furthermore, cognitive capacities, creativity, curiosity, openness to learning, and flexibility to change have all been connected to receptivity to experience (Woo et al., 2015). Additional research is necessary, even if past studies (Verschuur et al., 2003; van Heck et al., 2007) indicates that being open to new experiences lessens the severity of homesickness.

Conscientiousness

The conscientiousness attribute, according to Costa and McCrae (1992), indicates an inclination for discipline, self-management, driven by success behaviour, and an appreciation for deliberate behaviour over impulsive behaviour. Individual variations in the predisposition for organization, perseverance, working hard, and increase in the goal-driven completion are referred to as conscientiousness (Zhao & Seibert, 2006; DeYoung et al., 2010).

An analysis of the research showed a lack of apparent correlation between homesickness and conscientiousness (Suer, 2015). Fisher (2017) discovered that cognitive processes related to homesickness have an impact on health outcomes, emphasizing the relationship between consciousness and wellbeing during periods of homesickness. Furthermore, it is essential to identify that homesickness is a stress reaction and that consciousness plays a mediating role in

the psychological and physiological reactions that come with being away from one's home (Fontijn, 1990). Bardelle and Lashley (2015) stated in their research that crew members on cruise ships experience homesickness differently depending on their level of consciousness, which highlights the particular dynamics of homesickness in the hospitality sector.

Extraversion

Extraversion is a personality character that represents subjective discrepancies in the tendencies to behave boldly, think clearly, feel and express pleasant affect, and need stimulation from others (Wilt & Revelle, 2016). Individual variations in sociability, assertiveness, positive emotionality, approaching preferences, and motivation based on status are all included in the higher-order dimension of personality variation known as extraversion (Lukaszewski, 2020). Consequently, extraverts display approaching behaviours rooted in the need for greater activation brought on by cognitive under stimulation, while introverts display behaviours of avoidance to avoid excessive stimulation (Walker, 2020).

Prior research has demonstrated the influence of personality factors on undergraduate students' mental health, particularly neuroticism and extraversion, that have a strong connection with homesickness ratings. In particular, extroverted people typically score lower on the homesickness scale (Rafati et al., 2019b). This outcome is consistent with previous studies. Eurelings-Bontekoe et al. (1994) identified a negative correlation between extraversion and homesickness (de Jong et al., 1994). Additionally, a weak but substantial negative connection was shown between extraversion and homesickness.

Agreeableness

According to Costa and McCrae (1985), agreeableness is the characteristic that defines "one's relationship perspective along a trajectory from compassionate to aggressiveness in attitudes,

emotions, and acts making it one of the Big Five personality characteristics.” Accordingly, those with high agreeableness seem to be outgoing, social and those with low agreeableness acts opposite, acting cynical, rude, suspicious, uncooperative, vengeful, ruthless, and irritable (Costa & McCrae, 1985).

According to a study by Sünbül and Çekici (2018), agreeableness is one character attribute that significantly contributes to the emergence and sensation of homesickness. Additionally, agreeable individuals are less likely to get homesick and are better equipped to adjust to new situations (Stroebe et al., 2015). In another study it was revealed that stronger social support is correlated with increased level of agreeableness, which in turn reduces feelings of homesickness (Nijhof & Engels, 2007). Furthermore, agreeableness is negatively correlated with homesickness, indicating that people higher in agreeableness seem to experience less homesickness (Biasi et al., 2018). Lastly, another study revealed that higher levels of agreeableness are correlated with decreased intensity of homesickness (Nugraha & Raini, 2023).

Neuroticism

Neuroticism is a temperamental feature marked by increased sensitivity to stress and frequent experiencing of unpleasant emotions. Neuroticism was described by Widiger and Oltmanns (2017) as the propensity to feel “unpleasant emotions, including rage, nervousness, self-awareness irritability, mood swings, and melancholy.” Increased neuroticism makes individual less sensitive to stress in their surroundings, perceives everyday events as dangerous, and can make even small irritations seem utterly overpowering (Widiger et al., 2009).

Homesickness has been found to be significantly predicted by neuroticism in numerous studies (Poyrazli et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2015). This is consistent with research by Bergsma (1963) and Fontijn (1990), who found that among Dutch military conscripts, neuroticism and

homesickness were positively correlated. Homesickness may worsen in such people due to their tendency for ruminating and emotions of uneasiness. The idea that neuroticism makes homesickness worse is generally supported by numerous research studies (van Tilburg et al., 1996; Verschuur et al., 2003; Schmitz, 2005; van Heck et al., 2007; Stroebe et al., 2015).

RATIONALE OF THE STUDY

This study's main focus is on the connection between homesickness and different personality traits. Understanding this association can help us recognize the groups of people who are more likely to experience homesickness and create plans for preventing and treating it so that it doesn't interfere with their ability to perform other tasks. Research on the connection among personality and homesickness additionally supports psychology by illuminating the connections between individual traits, emotions, and social adjustments. It will draw attention to the psychological traits that increase the likelihood of experiencing homesickness. Considering how many individuals are leaving their hometowns to pursue higher education and careers and how little is known about how to deal with homesickness. Although personality research is well-established and homesickness has been well studied, there are still many unanswered questions and large gaps in these two fields.

METHODOLOGY

Objectives

The objective of the present study is

- To examine the correlation between openness to experience, and homesickness.
- To examine the correlation between consciousness and homesickness.
- To examine the correlation between extraversion and homesickness.
- To examine the correlation between agreeableness and homesickness.

- To examine the correlation between neuroticism and homesickness.

Research Questions

The following question was used as a basis to accomplish the objective of the study:

- What is the relationship between personality traits such as Openness to Experience, Conscientiousness, Extraversion, Agreeableness, and Neuroticism and the degree of homesickness experienced by individuals?

Hypotheses

H1: It is expected that there is a significant relation between Openness to experience and Homesickness.

H2: It is expected that there is a significant relation between Conscientiousness and Homesickness.

H3: It is expected that there is a significant relation between Extraversion and Homesickness.

H4: It is expected that there is a significant relation between Agreeableness and Homesickness.

H5: It is expected that there is a significant relation between Neuroticism and Homesickness.

Research Design

A quantitative method has been utilized to accomplish the objectives of this study, whereby questionnaire was employed.

Sample

A total of 110 students (55 males and 55 females) belonging to Asian, African, and Middle Eastern origins were employed via Purposive Sampling. The requirements for inclusion were

being at least eighteen years old and having competency in the English language, currently studying in a different country than their home country.

Instruments Used:

Big Five Personality Inventory : The scale as developed by John et al. (1991, 2008). The measure used to study major personality domains; conscientiousness, extraversion, agreeableness, openness to new experiences, and neuroticism were evaluated using the Big Five Inventory. There are forty-four brief phrases in the questionnaire. A Likert scale with five points, with 1 denoting "strongly disagree" and 5 denoting "strongly agree," is used to collect responses from participants. This scale's Cronbach alpha reliability is .83, and after a period of three months, test-retest reliability falls between 0.80 to 0.90.

Homesickness and Contentment Scale : The scale as developed by Shin and Abel (1999). The degree of homesickness was measured using the 10-item Homesickness subscale. Participants answered questions on a Likert-type scale with five points spanning from "very often" to "never" for the homesick subscale. A participant's low feeling of homesickness is indicated by a high score on the subscale.

RESULTS

Analytical Review

Students from Asia, Africa, and the Middle East who were studying abroad provided the data. (N=110) ranging from ages 18 to 25. Data Analysis was done by calculating descriptives, Pearson Correlation & Regression Analysis of the variables using SPSS version 26.

Table 1*Demographic Characteristics of the sample*

Gender	n	%
Male	55	50
Female	55	50

Correlational Analyses

The association between homesickness and characteristics of personality was evaluated using the Pearson coefficient, which is listed below.

Table 2*Correlational Analysis between Homesickness and Personality Traits*

Variables	Openness to Experience	Conscientiousness	Extraversion	Agreeableness	Neuroticism	Homesickness
Openness to Experience	-					
Conscientiousness	.305**	-				
Extraversion	.255**	.060	-			
Agreeableness	.281**	.532**	.328**	-		
Neuroticism	-.320**	-.245**	-.600**	-.262**	-	
Homesickness	.305**	.254**	.330**	.251**	-.587**	-

Note: *p<0.05 level (2-tailed), **p<0.01 level

DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

The aim of this study was to examine the relationship between the level of homesickness experienced by foreign students and several personality characters, including conscientiousness, neuroticism, extraversion, agreeableness, and openness to new experiences.

The findings showed that openness to experience ($r = .305$, $p < .01$), conscientiousness ($r = .254$, $p < .01$), agreeableness ($r = .330$, $p < .01$), and extraversion ($r = .251$, $p < .01$) all significantly positively correlated with homesickness. Furthermore, there was a noticeably negative connection between the variables homesickness and neuroticism ($r = -.587$, $p < .01$).

In contrast to earlier research (Fontijn 1990; Bell & Bromnick, 1998; Oshio et al., 2018), which suggested a negative correlation, it was found that personality domain openness to experience had a significant positive relation with the homesickness variable. This is likely as people with increased levels of openness to experience are comparatively more resilient and highly likely to adapt to new environments. Although this quality can encourage self-discovery and development, it might also exacerbate emotions of confusion and homesickness (McCrae & Costa, 1997; Lounsbury et al., 2009). Furthermore, it has been associated with increased emotional reactivity and intensity (McCrae & Costa, 1997). This emotional depth encourages empathy and creativity, but when people are cut off from their regular routines and support systems, it can intensify feelings of loneliness and desire for familiar settings (van Tilburg et al., 2005). Furthermore, even if someone is naturally adventurous, persons who obtain high on the openness to experience scale frequently have deep ties to routines, people, and places they are acquainted with (Costa & McCrae, 1992). As a result, people might feel more homesickness when in strange places because of their increased yearning and nostalgia for the safety and comfort of home (Buecker et al., 2020). Moreover, engaging with unfamiliar ideas and sensations and having an intellectual curiosity are linked to being open to new experiences (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Although this cognitive flexibility might be useful, it can also cause individual to dwell longer on their homesickness by making them more reflective (Lounsbury et al., 2009).

Homesickness and conscientiousness were revealed to be positively correlated. Firstly, conscientious individual usually do their best in routine, comfortable settings where they have

control over their surroundings (Buecker et al., 2020). Due to the absence of habit and predictability, conscientious individual may feel more uncomfortable and disoriented in new or unfamiliar environments, such as when moving away from home. Furthermore, diligent people might find it challenging to adjust to new routines and habits that come with moving (Buecker et al., 2020). Homesickness may worsen when accustomed routines and timetables are absent, causing feelings of instability and anxiety. Moreover, conscientious individual might have high expectations of both their surroundings and themselves (Costa & McCrae, 1992). They may feel more stressed and anxious about living up to their own standards when faced with the difficulties of adjusting to a new setting, which can result in feelings of inadequacy and homesickness.

Additionally, a positive association between extraversion and homesickness was discovered. High level of extraversion has been linked to a higher risk of experiencing homesickness, possibly for a wide range of reasons. First of all, extraverts, who are defined by their outgoing and friendly personalities (McCrae & Costa, 1997), frequently depend significantly on social contacts for their feeling of fulfilment and community (Buecker et al., 2020). Extraverts may find it difficult to get the social stimulation they need when they are put in new or strange situations with little opportunity for social interaction. This can leave them feeling alone and disconnected (Zuckerman, 1994). Furthermore, extremely extraverted people might find it difficult to adjust to stressful or uncomfortable situations (Suls & Martin, 2005). Distress and homesickness can worsen when one is unable to get accustomed to the demands of the new environment, particularly when one does not have familiar social support networks. Extraverts have an extroverted personality, but they can also have deep attachments to people, places, and routines that they are accustomed to (Buecker et al., 2020). Being away from these comforting connections might cause sentiments of desire and nostalgia, which increases homesickness.

The current study indicated a positive correlation between homesickness and the agreeableness trait. In unfamiliar situations, pleasant people could find it difficult to express their demands or preferences; instead, they might put others' comfort and well-being first (Buecker et al., 2020). The tendency to put other people's needs ahead of their own might make them feel dislocated or cut off from their regular support systems, which would exacerbate homesickness. Moreover, those who are pleasant might find it difficult to deal with social difficulties or interpersonal disputes in unfamiliar settings (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Anxiety and homesickness may worsen if you are unable to settle disputes or build deep relationships with people.

In contrast with previous research, neuroticism, the last personality trait, was revealed to have a significant negative correlation with homesickness (Poyrazli et al., 2010; Smith et al., 2015). First of all, since they are more sensitive to potential threats and difficulties, people with high levels of neuroticism might be able to adjust to unfamiliar surroundings and demanding circumstances (Buecker et al., 2020). Additionally, those with high neuroticism could be more used to dealing with extreme negative emotions and suffering (McCrae & Costa, 1997). Consequently, compared to those with lesser degrees of neuroticism, these people may have less intense or unpleasant homesickness-related feelings of loneliness and longing. Additionally, as demonstrated by Duven's (2018) model, students adjust and get ready for the impending transition.

CONCLUSION

This study was aimed at shedding light on how personality traits could affect homesickness experiences in order to develop interventions and support plans that would help people deal with the difficulties of living overseas. The study's conclusions showed that homesickness and a number of personality qualities, including extraversion, conscientiousness, agreeableness,

openness to new experiences, and neuroticism, were significantly correlated. Individuals who score higher on Openness to experience, Conscientiousness, Agreeableness, and Extraversion are highly prone to struggle with homesickness, according to the positive relationships between these personality traits with homesickness. Whereas, the negative correlation among neuroticism and homesickness implies that those with lower neuroticism could be less likely to experience homesickness. By identifying the personality features that may predispose people to homesickness, this study paves the door for the development of targeted therapies intended to mitigate homesickness and facilitate a seamless adjustment to living abroad. Larger sample sizes and long-term research approaches are needed to confirm these results and elucidate the underlying mechanisms of the observed relationships. In the end, these efforts will deepen our understanding of homesickness and guide the creation of useful therapies to help people adjust to new cultural environments.

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