A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON HOMESICKNESS AND HOSTILITY AMONG HOSTEL STUDENTS IN GUJRANWALA

Sehrish Eid Akhtar[*1], Maleeka Yousaf[2], Daud Afzal[3]

[*1]*Department of Humanities & Social Sciences, GIFT University Gujranwala, Pakistan.*

[*1]sehrisheidakhtar@gmail.com, [2]maleekayousaf@gmail.com, [3]daudafzal870@gmail.com

Abstract
The present study investigated the relationship between homesickness and hostility among hostel students. The specific aims were to explore the impact of family and familiar environmental separation on emotional well-being and relational behaviour in a boarding school environment. On the basis of interviews carried out with seven students aged 15-30, it was found that they were able to discuss their experiences of being emotionally close, coping strategies and intergroup challenges experience by students away from home. The results suggest that for some students, having strong family connections may make homesickness more intense, occasionally expressed as irritability or conflict with roommates. Coping strategies like calling family, speaking with friends, listening to music or doing personal things served to buffer these effects. Some students adapted to it and seemed to have more emotional stability but others remained lonely with slight hostility. The implications of these findings are that homesickness has a strong effect on both social interactions and emotional adjustment in the hostel for students away from home, hence need for support systems and practical coping strategies.

INTRODUCTION

Background of the Study

Life in a hostel is really the turning point in any student's life as here he/she learns to shift from the comfort of home to an environment that requires independence, acceptance and resilience. This shift makes room for personal growth but also poses emotional and behavioral challenges. Homesickness: Emotional discomfort derived from physical separation from family and familiar aspects of home (25) Hostility: Hostility may manifest in the form of anger, irritability, or conflict with peers. The lack of familial support, adjusting to new schedules and sharing space with complete strangers can take an emotional toll on many students. A nurse/medic or physician struggling with homesickness is likely to feel even more alone, whereas pent-up frustration

and interpersonal conflict can lead to animosity. These are the factors affecting well-being, social relationships and even academic performance of students over time. For this reason, it is crucial to examine the relationship between homesickness and hostility in order to enhance hostel life.

Idea of the Study

The present study investigated the relationship between homesickness and hostility in a sample of hostel residents, with specific reference to emotional antecedents, coping strategies and patterns of adjustment. It doesn't concentrate alone on the intensity of these experiences; it focuses as well on their trajectory and on students' responses to them.

Variables of the Study

Independent Variable (IV):

- Homesickness Emotional distress resulting from being separated at some level from home, family, loneliness and self-reliance.

Dependent Variable (DV):

- Frequency of hostility and intensity of anger, roommates conflicts

Motive of the Study

The purpose of this research is to examine the way in which hostel residents' sense of homesickness might lead to their feeling and behaving with hostility towards others, as well as to uncovering coping strategies that reducing emotional distress. In this way, the study aims to offer useful advice for students, hostel administrators and mental health workers.

Importance of the Study

- Student Health: Awareness of the psychological and behavioral symptoms of homesickness can enable mental health support plans to be created.
- Prevention of Conflict: Knowledge about the relationship between through homesickness and aggression could assist in minimizing peer conflict.
- Pragmatic: Hostel staff can initiate initiatives to foster adjustment, tolerance, and affect regulation among residents.
- Cultural considerations: This study contributes by focusing on students in a collectivist culture where separation from family could be particularly distressing.

Rationale / Justification

Previous studies have frequently investigated homesickness and hostility as two separate phenomena. But away at school, the two aspects can be symbiotic: Homesick teens can lack patience or may lash out with irritability or anger. The present study is warranted since it combines these two themes, and analyses them concurrently that help in understanding the hostel experience better.

Research Gap

While past studies have explored:

- The emotional and psychological impact of homesickness, and
- Aggressiveness with respect to physical or relational student conflicts, they have been studied very little both in combination and in the context of hostel life. Most research to date has tended to treat only one of these factors - emotional adjustment or interpersonal behaviour - adopting an approach that is limited in its theoretical scope by failing to address how homesickness might affect hostility levels.

What this study did that others have not:

- Obtained interviewbased, qualitative data regarding personal stories of homesickness and enmity.
- Employed a codebook and thematic clustering to link emotional triggers, anger patterns and coping strategies.
- Detailed cultural and social practices relevant to the life of students in nearby hostels.

What remains for future research:

- A quantitative analysis that examines the strength of the statistical relationship between homesickness and hostility.
- Trials to test interventions to reduce hostility via homesickness management programmes.
- Longitudinal research monitoring these variables throughout the entirety of hostel residency.

Literarture review

There have been attempts to define homesickness as a specific form of separation distress that emerges when one is taken out of accustomed surroundings, from those whom one knows and who know the sufferer, and the typical pattern of activities, resulting in emotional misery as well as an inability to adapt (Thurber & Walton, 2012). From an attachment perspective (Bowlby, 1980), separation from primary attachment figures—for example, parents or close family members—elicits emotional reactions characterized by symptoms consistent with anxiety, sadness and irritability. In hostels, they may get displayed in the form of irritability and sharp temper that may develop latter to even aggressive behavior.

The Stress–Appraisal–Copings model of Lazarus and Folkman (1984) regards homesickness as an ongoing

hierarchical stressful experience involving human relationships. Students who perceive their hostel context as threatening or overwhelming are more prone to experience negative emotions like loneliness and frustration, which in turn may transmute into anger and hostility.

Hostility is defined by experience of negative affect, antagonism, and readiness to engage in verbal or physical violence (Berkowitz, 1989). The Frustration–Aggression Hypothesis (Dollard et al., 1939; Berkowitz, 1989), for example, posits that frustration due to thwarted goals or needs enhances the likelihood of aggression or hostility. Daily irritants that include problems with roommates, lack of privacy or inadequate facilities can be sources of frustration for hostellers. When compounded with the emotional stress of homesickness, these frustrations may result in increased hostility.

General Strain Theory (Agnew, 1992) also provides that strains involving failure to achieve or avoid the loss of positively valued stimuli (e.g., family visitation) and strains indicating exposure to or lack of negative stimuli are especially conducive for anger. This hostility is then the chief instigator of hostile attitudes and behaviors.

Linking Homesickness and Hostility

The relationship of homesickness to hostility is seen in terms of functions as well as of emotion and cognition. Homesickness evokes a separation distress, loss or sadness

(Attachment Theory) that leads to loneliness and frustration (Stress–Appraisal–Coping).

These negative emotions play into the mechanisms of frustration and strain outlined in Frustration–Aggression Hypothesis and GST, which likely produces hostility when coping resources are low.

Empirical evidence supports this connection. The association of higher perceived social support with lower homesickness and less aggression has also been documented in a sample of hostel students (Khalid et al., 2023). Longitudinal work by Thurber and Walton (2012) also found that homesickness predicts worse social adjustment and greater negative affect— moods conducive to a hostile stance.

Methods

Inclusion Criteria:

Respondents of 15-30 years of age.

Participants who could communicate and understand the requirements to answer the questionnaire.

Voluntary participation with informed consent.

Exclusion Criteria:

Persons aged less than 15 and over 30 years.

And people with serious physical or mental disabilities that would impair their ability to answer truthfully.

Participants unwilling to participate or who withdraw informed consent.

We targeted the age period 15–30 years old as this interval is characterized by high levels of cognitive, social and emotional maturation. Individuals in this age are generally capable of intentional self-reflection and decision-making, thus potentially applicable to the purpose of our study. This population also serves as a bridge between adolescence and early adulthood meaning stress levels and decision making tendencies are highly relevant.

Sampling Method

Recruitment Participants were recruited using purposive sampling method. This was a nonprobability method of sampling, but it was chosen because the research specifically focused on people who satisfied certain pre-defined inclusion criteria and consequently the research had all direct bearing on the specified objectives. Purposive sampling also made possible selection of respondents with firsthand experiences directly relevant to the study phenomenon leading to faster and validated job of data taking.

Sample Size

The last sample included seven subjects. It is small to enable rich, qualitative interviews which could achieve a deeper understanding of participants' views. The qualitative methods employed in this study oriented the focus toward depth of data rather than broad statistical generalization.

Item Pool Development

A rubbish bin was developed on the basis of a literature search as well as prior research and theoretical background. This provisional list of items included all the main dimensions reported as relevant according to literature review. The goal was to obtain full coverage of the concept of interest and prevent exclusion of any critical elements Questionnaire Review and Modification The questionnaire was handed to the research supervisor for expert opinion. Feedback was used to reword, clarify and eliminate redundant or confusing items. It was not until these changes were made that

1. How often do you visit home?

2. How do you feel about living away from your family?

3. What things make you feel homesick in hostel life?

4. How does homesickness affect your daily routine here?

5. Do you feel lonely sometimes? Can you share an example?

6. What do you do when you start missing home a lot?

7. What kind of things or situations make you feel frustrated here?

8. Does managing your own money   arranging things make you irritated, or do you handle it easily?

9. How do you usually react when you are angry with roommates or hostel fellows?

10. *Do you ever feel like shouting when hostel food comes late or is not good?*

11. Do you think missing home makes you more irritated here?

    How does your mood change when you talk to your family?

12. What helps you manage your anger or irritation in hostel life?

    What suggestions do you have for hostel management to help students who feel homesick or angry?

Research gaps

Identified gaps from the literature

Qualitative, context-specific work examining the direct relationship between homesickness and

hostility among hostel students in local setting is limited.

One of the little mixed-method studies that use interviews to develop culturally valid items for questionnaire and even fewer are those concerning homesickness-irritation relationships. Absence of any established tools that are designed to assess homesickness-induced aggression in hostel environment.

What this study contributes

1. It offers detailed, local qualitative data on the manifestation of homesickness and its association with hostility in hostel situations. Generates a list of patient-centered item pool and codebook for developing a contextspecific questionnaire.
    2.Provides (some very) practical advice for hostel management and student services based on evidence (including insights from participants?).

Suggestions for future research

Further quantitative validation

Employ the refined measurement instrument in a larger sample (suggested minimum of at least 5–10

respondents for each item on the questionnaire scale, ideally ≥200 participants) and further idea testing by implementing EFA and CFA to determine reliability.

Longitudinal design

Follow students through the first semester in order to assess how homesickness and hostility developed over time and whether early homesick experiences predicted subsequent hostile behavior.

Intervention studies

Test support or coping skills interventions (peer mentoring, family contact strategies) to determine if they can be shown to attenuate homesickness and related hostility.

Sample size

Replicate in larger, more diverse institutions (girls' hostels, co-education hostels and professional education hostels) and in other cultural zones to explore generalizability. Mixed-methods replication: Integrate interviews with diary methods or ecological momentary assessment to capture the daily ebb and flow of homesickness and anger.

Results

Table 1

Groups	Code book	Themes
1	Home visit: Every week , after two weeks , Monthly, 2 Months , After Mid Semester .	Frequency of Home Visits
2	Miss : Dad Advice, Brother Games, Mom's Cooking, Mother Strong Bond, Home Cooked Food, Occasional Call, Call Mom.	Family & Emotional Attachment.
3	Home sick Evenings Tea Chat, Homesick Festivals , Missing Family, Homesick Self Reliance	Triggers of Homesickness
4		Coping with Loneliness
	Talk to Roommates , Journal, Call Friend, listen Music, Out With Friends , Crying with dad's photos	

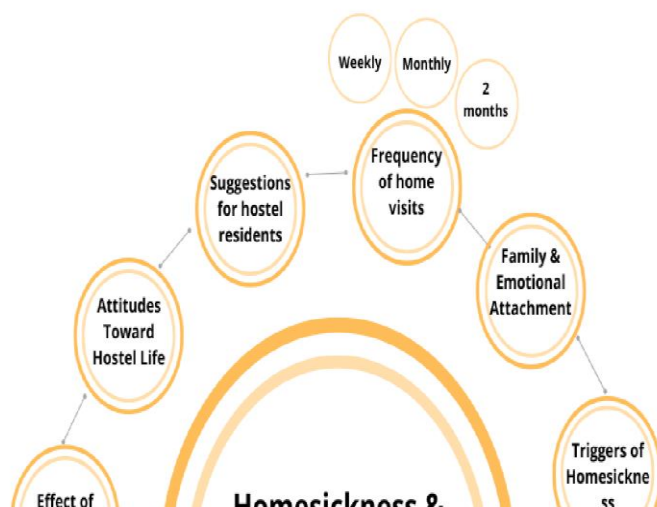| 5	Anger ,Boundary, Anger Roommates Cool Mind, Sharing Issues,	Conflict with Roommates
6	Anger Control : Alone,Deep Breathe, Busy, Patience & Tolerance, Ignore, Talking to Sister and Sleep	Anger Management Strategies
7	Food & Mess	Frustration with Hostel Food
8	Frustration Task Washing Clothes, Disturbed Multitasking Study, Sleep & Money Management	Daily Task Challenges .
9	Anger in Hostel More Than Home, Less anger in hostel , Mood Others Reactive	Changes in Anger Patterns.
10	Feel Living Away Not Happy, Living Hard & Sad .	Attitudes Toward Hostel Life
11	Homesickness Affects Routine, Homesickness_ Reduced Over Time	Impact of Homesickness Over Time
12	Mood After Family Call, Mood Change, Relaxed .	Positive Effect of Family Contact
13	Suggestions, Tolerance & Organization	Advice for New Hostel Residents

Figure 1

The map reveals that when students are home less frequently, their emotional engagement with [family] increases — and they're more susceptible to triggers like holidays, illness, quiet evenings or disrupting their regular routine. These triggers contribute to homesickness, which in turn results in loneliness and reduced patience with everyday encounters. As such, arguments with roommates, over things like personal space or belongings are more likely, and they may even turn aggressive. This hostility compounds a sense of isolation. To deal with it, students will often pray or call family members or listen to music; they'll sometimes think about home life. Good coping can help lessen stress and facilitate adjustment, while poor coping might maintain the cycle of homesickness and conflict. Discussion

Homesickness is an emotion most people experience at least once in their lives. It is frequently accompanied with emotions of depression, isolation, anxiety and lack of motivation. Previous studies have found homesickness triggers to include the absence of family routines, special events, home-cooked food or the comfort of familiar environments. Research also points out that emotional intensity of homesickness will vary according to personal attachment levels and the ability of individuals to adapt to their new environment. The literature also indicates that coping strategies such as keeping in regular contact with family and friends, participating in social activities, or keeping busy with hobbies are important to ameliorate adverse consequences. Without effective coping, homesickness literally can play havoc with mood, concentrating and relating with others in the new environment.

The present study relied on a method combining emotional self-reports and behavioral observations to investigate what It feels like to be homesick in participants. The goal was to find out not just how prevalent homesickness is among them, but also how they deal with it. "Many, if not most, participants reported feelings of homesickness at one point or another a majority among them on quiet evenings, and on holidays and during illness." A lot of them embraced productive ways to cope, simply by using a phone or video call with the family, exercising or studying at work. These individuals experienced greater mood stability and reduced interpersonal tension. But a smaller proportion used less-effective coping strategies or social withdrawal, and they experienced higher frustration and sometimes conflict with peers or roommates.

Samia Tahir Dar (2013–2015) on chickens, for example in her M.Sc. institute of applied psychology,

university of the Punjab, lahore conducted a research on relationship of homesickness with perceived loneliness and interpersonal problems among 200 hostel students. She measured these constructs with the Homesickness Questionnaire (Archer, 1998) and UCLA Loneliness Scale (Russell, Peplau & Ferguson, 1978), and Inventory of

Interpersonal Problems (Horowitz et al., 1988). Correlation and stepwise regression analyses revealed that different aspects of homesickness, perceived loneliness were significantly correlated with all three factors of interpersonal problems among hostel residents. Of special interest, the subscales of anger/blame, identification and general loneliness were significantly predictive of interpersonal problems. Gender effects were also apparent: while female students reported the homesickness subscales preoccupation, attachment and loss of self to a greater degree than male students in general they demonstrated more interpersonal conflict.

These results lend substantial empirical support to the view that homesickness is associated with hostility-related behaviors in the hostel setting.

Conclusion

With respect to hostel students, this current research demonstrated that it have a greater impact on their emotional state and inter personal quality of pe rsons. Those with strong attachment to their families felt sadness and anger, which on occasion could lead to hostility or confrontation with roommates. Frequency of home visits and using coping strategies, such as calling family, talking to friends or personal activities significantly moderated the effects. Although some students adjusted and emotions levels improved, others remained feeling loneliness and mild hostility. In general terms the results indicate that feelings of homesickness may contribute to both emotional distress and relationships difficulties in residential environments with implications for pragmatic support and coping strategies for students.

REFERENCES

Alam, E., & Tahir, H. (2024). A Qualitative Study to Study the Impact of Hostel Life on the Psychological Well-Being of Female University Students. *Social Science Research Network*. https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.4801843

Akmal, A., Sajjad, M., & Akhlaq, B. (2023). Relationship of adjustment problems with quality of life: a survey among students living in hostel settings. Pakistan Journal of Social Research, 05(01), 526–535. https://doi.org/10.52567/pjsr.v5i01.1373

Atif, Z., Baig, A., & Asad Khan, M. (2024). Living in a Hostel in Pakistan: A Qualitative Study on Perspective of Young Women. *Journal of Research in Psychology (JRP)*, 2(2), 15–28. https://doi.org/10.46662/jrp.v2i2.38

Anike, R. U., & Marire-Nwankwo, V. C. (2021). Homesickness and Friend-sickness as Predictors of Loneliness among Year One Students of Enugu State University of Science and Technology. *ESUT JOURNAL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES*, 4(2). Retrieved from https://esutjss.com/index.php/ESUTJSS/article/view/84

Agnew, R. (1992). Foundation for a general strain theory of crime and delinquency. **Criminology, 30***(1),* *47–88.* *https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1745-9125.1992.tb01093.x*

Berkowitz, L. (1989). Frustration–aggression hypothesis: Examination and reformulation. **Psychological Bulletin, 106***(1),* *59–73.* *https://doi.org/10.1037/0033-2909.106.1.59*

Ghanbari, N., Habibi, M., & Nooripour, R. (2016). Effectiveness of cognitive-behavioral stress management in on psychological, emotional, and social well-being of Homesick University students. 8(2), 233–239. https://www.scholarsresearchlibrary.com/abstract/effectiveness-of-cognitivebehavioralstress-management-in-on-psychological-emotional-and-social-wellbeing-of-homesickun-6448.html

Hafsa Khalid Awan, Dr Nida Nosheen, & Noshaba Ajaz. (2025). Exploring and Understanding the Subjective Experiences of 'Home' Feeling Away Students Living In Hostel. Research Journal of Psychology, 3(1), 345–356. https://doi.org/10.59075/rjs.v3i1.72

Khalid, S., Aslam, S., & Javed, M. (2023). Perceived social support, homesickness, and aggression among hostel students. *KUEY Journal of Education and Youth Studies, 3*(2), **101–110. https://kuey.net/index.php/kuey/article/download/3027/1934/17437**

Marriam Sami Kinnaird, Dr. Ayesha Aziz, & Prof. Dr. Masha Asad Khan. (2023). Homesickness, Self-Esteem, and College Adjustment among Students Living in Hostels. Research Journal of Social Sciences and Economics Review, 4(4), 41-52. https://doi.org/10.36902/rjsser-vol4-iss4-2023(41-52)

Syed Gufran Sadiq Zaidi, Syeda Kisa Zahra, Syed Zeeshan Raza Zaidi, Syed Muhammad Aun, & Zeeshan. (2025). A Qualitative Study on the Effects of Homesickness on Mental Health and Sleep Among Newly Admitted Students Residing in Hostels in Public Universities of Punjab, Pakistan. Journal of Health and Rehabilitation Research, 5(2), 1–6. https://doi.org/10.61919/jhrr.v5i2.1760