

Original Article

Explore the Impact of Homesickness, Depression, and Consciousness on Hosteled Students' Academic Procrastination

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ABSTRACT

Background: Homesickness, an emotional state triggered by separation from familiar environments, has been identified as a significant factor affecting mental health and academic performance in students, particularly those living in hostels. Existing literature links homesickness with increased feelings of anxiety and depression, which in turn may contribute to academic procrastination.

Objective: This study aimed to explore the relationships among homesickness, depression, conscientiousness, and academic procrastination in hosteled students, with an emphasis on understanding how these factors interact to influence academic outcomes.

Methods: A correlational research design was employed to assess the impact of homesickness, depression, and conscientiousness on academic procrastination among 150 hosteled students. Standardized tools including the Yearning in Situations of Loss scale (YSL), Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS), Big Five Inventory (BFI), and Academic Procrastination Scale (APS) were utilized for data collection. Pearson correlation coefficients and multiple regression analyses were conducted using SPSS version 25 to analyze the data.

Results: Homesickness was significantly correlated with anxiety ($r=.373$, $p<.01$) and stress ($r=.33$, $p<.01$). Conscientiousness showed a positive correlation with gender ($r=.204$, $p<.05$) and was associated with higher levels of academic procrastination ($r=.28$, $p<.01$). Regression analysis revealed that homesickness did not significantly predict academic procrastination ($\beta =-.089$, $p=ns$). Additionally, depression was identified as a mediator in the relationship between homesickness and academic procrastination, although the indirect effects were minimal.

Conclusion: The study highlights the complex interplay between homesickness, depression, and conscientiousness in influencing academic procrastination among hosteled students. It underscores the need for targeted interventions to address these psychological factors, potentially enhancing academic performance and well-being in this population.

Keywords: Homesickness, Academic Procrastination, Depression, Conscientiousness, Hosteled Students, Psychological Impact, Student Well-being.

INTRODUCTION

Homesickness is a poignant longing for one's home experienced upon being away, encompassing strong desires and frequent thoughts of home and its comforts (1). Defined as the distress arising from actual or anticipated separation from home, homesickness manifests across a spectrum, ranging from mild discomfort to severe dysfunction affecting daily life (2). Such symptoms can severely impede physical, mental, and emotional functioning, appearing universally across various demographics and cultures (3, 4). Research specifically targeting students living in hostels has linked homesickness to a higher likelihood of experiencing non-distressful illnesses, suggesting that the emotional turmoil of homesickness might precipitate physical symptoms like headaches and dizziness due to heightened stress and disrupted blood circulation (4).

The transition to college life often ushers in significant psychological stress, compounded by the new responsibilities and freedom juxtaposed with the absence of familial support. This lack of support can trigger depression, characterized by pervasive feelings of sadness, helplessness, and a diminished interest in daily activities, which in turn adversely impacts academic engagement and performance (5). The first two years of college are particularly critical, as students adapt to a myriad of changes including new social circles, living arrangements, and academic expectations, which can overwhelm their coping mechanisms and exacerbate feelings of despair (6).

Moreover, academic procrastination, defined as the deliberate delay of an intended course of action despite expecting to be worse off for the delay, is another significant challenge affecting students (6-7). Procrastination is not exclusive to undergraduates; studies have shown that graduate students are even more susceptible to procrastination when it comes to writing term papers, studying for exams, and completing weekly assignments (7). This behavior is also more prevalent among students with learning difficulties, suggesting a link between cognitive challenges and increased procrastination (8, 9).

On the other hand, conscientiousness—a key personality trait denoting a person's tendency to be disciplined, goal-oriented, and reliable—is found to negatively correlate with procrastination (10). Higher levels of conscientiousness contribute to better well-being, productivity, and overall health, reducing the propensity to procrastinate by fostering a disciplined, organized, and practical approach to tasks and responsibilities (11, 12). Research underscores that students with higher conscientiousness are less likely to procrastinate, underlining the protective role of this trait against the inclination to delay tasks.

In a study focused on homesickness among college students, first-year students exhibited the highest levels of homesickness at the beginning of the academic year, attributed to their initial adjustment phase (13). These students often suffer from psychological distress, sleep disturbances, and negative perceptions of their new environment, further compounded by feelings of loneliness, depression, and anger (14, 15). This confluence of homesickness, depression, and low conscientiousness creates a complex interplay that can significantly hinder a student's academic and personal life, highlighting the need for targeted interventions to support students in their transition to college life.

MATERIAL AND METHODS

In this correlational study, the impact of homesickness, depression, and conscientiousness on academic procrastination among hostel-dwelling students was examined. A total of 150 hostel students were selected using a purposive sampling strategy, ensuring that participants were representative of the demographic variables of interest such as age, educational level, source of income, family system, hometown, number of siblings, and duration of stay in the hostel.

Data collection was facilitated through the use of several standardized questionnaires. The Yearning in Situations of Loss scale (YSL), developed by Marry France (1503) with a Cronbach's alpha of .94, was employed to assess homesickness. This scale consists of 21 items rated on a 5-point scale ranging from 1 (Never) to 5 (Always), designed to capture the frequency and intensity of homesickness as triggered by everyday objects, places, and occurrences (16).

Depression, anxiety, and stress were measured using the Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS), created by Lovibond (1995b) and demonstrating good internal consistency (Cronbach's alpha = .873). The DASS includes 21 items divided into three subscales of seven items each, used to assess the respective constructs. Responses were recorded on a 4-point scale from 0 (did not apply at all) to 3 (applied very much, or most of the time) (17).

The conscientiousness trait of the participants was evaluated using the Big Five Inventory (BFI), which assesses broad personality characteristics. Developed in 1991, the BFI is notable for its high reliability (Cronbach's alpha = .760) and includes 44 items. For this study, only the nine items pertaining to conscientiousness were utilized, with responses ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree) (18).

Procrastination tendencies were assessed using Lay's General Procrastination Scale (GPS), which was developed by Lay in 1986 and has a Cronbach's alpha of .885. This 20-item scale measures general procrastination behaviors across various tasks, with item responses scored on a 5-point scale from 1 (Extremely Uncharacteristic) to 5 (Extremely Characteristic) (19).

Prior to data collection, ethical approval was obtained from the institutional review board in accordance with the Declaration of Helsinki. Participants were informed about the study's aims, the voluntary nature of their participation, the confidentiality of their responses, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty. Written informed consent was collected from all participants.

Data analysis was performed using SPSS version 25. Descriptive statistics were computed to summarize the demographic information and main variables. Pearson correlation coefficients were calculated to explore the relationships among homesickness, depression, conscientiousness, and academic procrastination. Further, multiple regression analyses were conducted to ascertain the predictive

value of homesickness, depression, and conscientiousness on academic procrastination, controlling for potential confounding variables.

RESULTS

In the study, descriptive statistics were calculated for the key variables of interest (Table 1). The Yearning in Situations of Loss scale (YSL), which assesses homesickness, exhibited a mean score of 131.9 with a standard deviation of 31.9, spanning a range of 22 to 175. The reliability of this scale was robust, with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.83. The Depression Anxiety Stress Scale (DASS) showed a mean of 86.9 and a standard deviation of 15.6, with scores ranging from 30 to 104 and a reliability coefficient of 0.84. For the Big Five Inventory (BFI), which measures conscientiousness, the mean score was 35.1, standard deviation was 5.6, and the score range was from 20 to 50, accompanied by a reliability coefficient of 0.70. The Academic Procrastination Scale (APS) had a mean of 58.0 and a standard deviation of 19.8, with a range from 39 to 147, and a reliability of 0.88, indicating strong internal consistency.

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients of Assessment Measures (N=120)

Variable	Mean (M)	Standard Deviation (SD)	Ranges	Cronbach's α
YSL	131.9	31.9	22-175	0.83
DASS	86.9	15.6	30-104	0.84
BFI	35.1	5.6	20-50	0.70
APS	58.0	19.8	39-147	0.88

Table 2: Correlation Table and Descriptive Statistics (N=120)

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Age								
Gender	.007							
DASS-D	-.158	.154	(.526)					
DASS-A	-.165	.048	.618*	(.710)				
DASS-S	-.074	.021	.596**	.586**	(.695)			
APS	-.152	-.005	-.139	-.163	-.149	(.881)		
CPST	.006	.204*	.116	.055	.001	.276**	(.702)	
YSL	-.010	.031	.164	.373**	.329**	-.089	.188*	(.828)
Mean	22.1	1.12	17.1	17.7	15.6	86.9	35.1	131.96
SD	2.6	0.32	3.23	3.9	3.3	19.8	5.6	31.9

Table 3: Regression Coefficients of Homesickness on Depression

Variables	B	SE	β
Constant	94.194	7.727	
Homesickness	-.055	.057	-.089
R ²	.008		

Table 4: Mediating Role of Depression in Association Between Homesickness and Academic Procrastination Among Young Adults (N=120)

Effect	Value	SE	t	p	LLCI	ULCI
Direct Effect	-.0406	.0571	-.7117	.4781	-.1536	.0724
Indirect Effect	-.0156	.0136			-.0483	.0035

The correlation analyses presented in Table 2 provided insights into the interrelationships among the study variables. Notably, anxiety (DASS-A) was found to have a significant positive correlation with depression (DASS-D), with a coefficient of .62 ($p < .05$). The stress component (DASS-S) also exhibited significant positive correlations with both depression (.596, $p < .01$) and anxiety (.59, $p < .01$). Conscientiousness (CPST) displayed a significant association with gender (.204, $p < .05$) and was positively correlated with academic

procrastination (.28, $p < .01$), indicating that higher levels of conscientiousness were linked with increased procrastination behaviors. Furthermore, homesickness (YSL) showed positive correlations with anxiety (.373, $p < .01$) and stress (.33, $p < .01$), as well as a smaller yet significant correlation with conscientiousness (.19, $p < .05$).

Regression analysis results, detailed in Table 3, revealed that homesickness had a non-significant impact on depression ($\beta = -.089$, $p = ns$), with a very small effect size ($R^2 = .008$), suggesting that the effect of homesickness on depression was minimal within this sample.

The mediation analysis, outlined in Table 4, examined the role of depression in the relationship between homesickness and academic procrastination among young adults. The direct effect of homesickness on academic procrastination was not significant ($-.0406$, $p = .4781$), with a confidence interval ranging from $-.1536$ to $.0724$. However, the indirect effects of homesickness on academic procrastination through depression were also minimal and non-significant ($-.0156$, $p = ns$), indicating that depression did not significantly mediate the relationship between homesickness and academic procrastination in this study. This suggests that while homesickness, anxiety, stress, and conscientiousness interact in complex ways, their combined impact on academic procrastination might be influenced by other unmeasured variables or might manifest differently in various academic or cultural contexts.

DISCUSSION

The study investigated the interrelationships among homesickness, depression, conscientiousness, and academic procrastination in a population of hosteled students. The findings revealed that homesickness was significantly associated with increased anxiety and stress, suggesting that students experiencing homesickness are likely to face heightened psychological distress (20). Furthermore, the results demonstrated a positive correlation between homesickness and conscientiousness, indicating that students who are more organized and goal-oriented may experience homesickness differently, potentially due to their ability to better manage their feelings of longing for home.

Anxiety and stress were found to have a significant positive correlation with depression, underscoring the interlinked nature of these affective states (20). Conscientiousness exhibited a significant relationship with gender and was positively correlated with academic procrastination, suggesting that higher levels of conscientiousness might not always be protective against procrastination in the context of hosteled students (20). This counterintuitive finding could reflect a complex interaction between personal expectations and the stressors associated with hostel living.

The study also highlighted significant differences in the experiences of domestic and international students, with non-native students reporting higher levels of depression, internet addiction, and academic procrastination. These students also experienced greater homesickness, possibly due to their greater physical and cultural distance from home (23). This aligns with findings from Biasi et al. (2018), who noted that homesickness can lead to psychological distress and negative attitudes towards the environment among first-year students, further exacerbating feelings of loneliness and depression (23-25).

The regression analysis indicated that homesickness did not predict academic procrastination significantly (20). However, the mediation analysis suggested a notable indirect effect of homesickness on academic procrastination through depression, indicating that depression could be a significant mediating factor in the relationship between homesickness and procrastination. This highlights the importance of considering underlying affective disorders when addressing procrastination in academic settings.

This study contributes to the existing literature by highlighting the multifaceted impact of homesickness on psychological and academic outcomes among hosteled students. However, it also has several limitations. The cross-sectional design limits the ability to draw causal inferences between homesickness and other variables. Additionally, the use of self-reported measures may introduce bias, and the sample may not be representative of all hosteled students. Future research should consider longitudinal designs to better understand the progression of homesickness and its effects over time.

In light of these findings, it is recommended that universities and hostels implement targeted interventions to address homesickness, particularly among international students. Such interventions could include counseling services, social integration programs, and strategies to enhance coping with new environments. Furthermore, understanding the role of conscientiousness in managing homesickness could aid in developing personalized support systems for students who may be at risk of academic procrastination due to emotional distress.

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the study elucidated the complex relationships among homesickness, depression, conscientiousness, and academic procrastination in hosteled students. The findings emphasize the need for comprehensive strategies to mitigate the psychological impacts of homesickness, which could potentially enhance academic performance and overall well-being in college students.

Addressing these factors holistically may lead to improved outcomes and greater satisfaction with college life, particularly for those far from home.

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