



# Relationship Between Homesickness and Resilience Among Students of Arak University of Medical Sciences in 2018

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## Abstract

**Background:** Despite facing new opportunities, entering a university and changing family life into student life create tension. This tension generates psychological problems such as anxiety, depression, and homesickness for the students.

**Objectives:** The purpose of this study was to investigate the role of resilience in homesickness among students of Arak University of Medical Sciences.

**Methods:** In this cross-sectional research, the study population included all bachelor students of Arak University of Medical Sciences in 2018. In total, 205 students were randomly selected to participate in the study. For data gathering, the homesickness questionnaire by Zare and Aminpour and the Connor-Davidson resilience scale were used. Pearson correlation and regression analysis were used to analyze the data.

**Results:** The results indicated a significant relationship between homesickness and resilience ( $P = 0.000$ ,  $R = -0.62$ ). Furthermore, resilience could explain 38.9% of the variance of homesickness in the students.

**Conclusions:** This study indicated a relationship between homesickness and resilience among students of medical sciences. Thus, it is recommended to provide students with resilience training at the beginning of university education.

**Keywords:** Homesickness, Resilience, Students of Medical Sciences

## 1. Background

Entering the university is often regarded as a positive event that faces students with new opportunities. However, the changes which are caused by transient transformation from the family life into the university life can be the source of stress to the students, which often leads to homesickness and strong desire to return home (1). Additionally, since it is the first time for most students to live away from their homes, it becomes difficult for them to adjust to the atmosphere of the university. Studies indicate that psychological pressure is in its climax during the early period of entering the university due to the factors such as losing social support and having difficulties in adapting with the unknown social and cultural atmosphere (2). Some of the students cannot adjust themselves and they often experience problems such as anxiety, depression, and homesickness (3). Almost 60% to 70% of the individuals who travel and settle at the universities experience homesickness and approximately 7% to 10% face new challenges regarding homesickness (4). Homesickness can be a critical, effective factor in creating compatibility and adjust-

ment among students (5). Homesickness is a specific complex, cognitive, emotional, motivational, condition that is associated with mental disorder, anxiety, performance disorder, and desire to return to the previous environment and it is resulted from the distance from home, missing home, and dependence on people like father and mother (6, 7), life environment changes, being away from family, and losing family supports (8).

The cognitive stress theory argues that predetermined factors (positional and individual) due to intervening cognitive factors (evaluation and confronting) lead to long-term and short-term consequences. Accordingly, leaving home leads to the violation of the balance between individual resources and new environmental demands. The individual tries to evaluate this misbalance (adaptation problems); if it is regarded as a threat, the person resorts to counteraction; if the counteraction was successful, the consequence will be the homesickness (like loneliness); if the feeling of homesickness continues, its long-term effects, depression and anxiety, will be generated (9). Thurber and Walton showed that individuals who feel homesickness irregularly experience depression, anx-

ity, reticence, and difficulties. Focusing on issues unrelated to home and homesickness can worsen anxiety disorders, misbehavior, physical and mental problems and occasionally lead to drop out (7). One of the factors protecting against homesickness is resilience (10). Resilience is a promising concept, which is regarded as a protective factor against social problems such as addiction (11) and mental disorder (12). Many researchers have defined resilience as the ability to cope with a tough transient event that assists people in encountering these problems and protects them against the potential dangers during the individuals' lives (13). Researchers believe that resilience as a fundamental sense of control helps individuals to consider opportunities to fulfill their issues. As a source of resistance and protective shield, it plays an important role in coping with stressful events and problems caused by the sense of homesickness (14).

## 2. Objectives

The aim of the present study was to predict the feeling of homesickness based on resilience.

## 3. Methods

The present research was a cross-sectional study. The study population included all bachelor students of Arak University of Medical Sciences in 2018. The participants included 205 randomly selected students of medical sciences. After explaining the study procedure and gaining informed consent, the homesickness questionnaire of Zare and Aminpour (15) and the Connor-Davidson resilience scale (16) were distributed to the participants. For being a participant in the study, the person must be at least a first-semester bachelor student with informed consent.

### 3.1. The Homesickness Questionnaire of Zare and Aminpour

This questionnaire consists of 36 questions with five alternative choices for the components of homesickness, desire to return to the hometown, feeling of loneliness, incompatibility with the new environment, and missing intimate friends. The questions are scored based on a five-point Likert scale. The scores between 36 and 72 indicate lacked homesickness, between 72 and 108 indicate moderate homesickness, and higher than 108 show severe homesickness in a person. Thus, higher scores indicate more homesickness. The validity of the questionnaire was evaluated and confirmed by the assistant professor and consultant of the current study. Using the Cronbach's alpha test, the reliability of the questionnaire was estimated at 0.86 (15).

### 3.2. The Connor-Davidson Resilience Scale

This scale consists of 25 items with five choices (false, rarely true, occasionally true, often true, and always true). The minimum score of this questionnaire is zero and the maximum is 100. The higher the score, the higher the resilience. The cutoff point for this questionnaire is 50. In other words, the scores above 50 represent people who are resilience. The validity (through factor analysis and convergent and divergent validity) and reliability (by retest and Cronbach's alpha) of the questionnaire were obtained by the designers of the questionnaire in different groups (normal and at-risk) (16). The validity and reliability of the questionnaire have been confirmed in Iran (17). The data analysis was conducted using Pearson correlation coefficient and regression analysis in the SPSS23 software.

## 4. Results

In this study, 122 male students with an average age of 19.86 and an average score of 15.64 and 83 female students with an average age of 19.38 and an average score of 16.62 participated. In addition, 100% of the subjects earned scores over 50 on the resilience questionnaire. This finding shows that all participants in the present study had a high level of resilience. Moreover, 194 participants (94.6%) had moderate homesickness and 11 participants (5.4%) had no sense of homesickness (Table 1).

**Table 1.** The Mean and Standard Deviation of Resilience and Homesickness

Variables	Mean $\pm$ SD
Resilience	74.70 $\pm$ 2.09
Homesickness	93.20 $\pm$ 5.80

The results of the regression analysis indicated that there was a significant relationship between resilience and homesickness ( $P = 0.000$ ,  $r = -0.62$ ). These results indicated that an increase in resilience decreased homesickness among the medical sciences students. According to the results, the relationship between resilience and homesickness was significant ( $\beta = -0.62$ ). Generally, resilience explained 38.9% of the variance of homesickness among the students of medical sciences. The regression had a suitable fit ( $F = 128.846$ ,  $P < 0.001$ ).

## 5. Discussion

The aim of the current study was to investigate the relationship between resilience and homesickness in medical sciences students. The results indicated that there was a negative significant relationship between homesickness and resilience among students of medical sciences

and resilience could explain 38.9% of the variance of homesickness. These results are in line with those obtained by Babaei Nadinluei et al. (10) and Khademi and Farshi Aghdam (18). Karami et al. (19) showed that resilience training is effective in the reduction of girl students' homesickness. Thomas (20) in research showed that improving academic and social integration and resilience along with decreasing cellphone involvement are the steps that can be taken to lessen the impact of homesickness on students. There is evidence indicating that resilience is a critical component of dealing with the challenges of studying away from home (21). Khademi and Farshi Aghdam (18) indicated a negative significant relationship between resilience and homesickness. The individuals who have resilience often return to the normal condition by creating positive excitements in themselves. The resilient people overcome stressful events with no reduction in their mental health and no suffer from mental illnesses. In addition, it seems that they succeed and prosper despite their tough experiences (22). Resilient people have self-confidence and the sense of efficacy, which enables them to overcome big life challenges. These people feel less disappointed and are capable of considering problems as something that can be investigated, tolerated, and even changed into a manageable thing; this together with their ability to tolerate problems helps them generate positive feelings and optimism in their lives. Optimism is one of the features of resilient people (23). Individuals with high resilience preserve their mental health while involving in stressful situations, possessing psychological compatibility (24-26). High levels of resilience assist individuals to use positive emotions and excitements to overcome unwelcomed events and return to the favorable state (27).

The present study had some limitations that might have affected its results and conclusion and limited its implication. Due to the cross-sectional nature of the research design, it was not possible to determine the cause-and-effect relationship between resilience and homesickness. Furthermore, since the present study was conducted in Arak University of Medical Sciences' students, cautions must be taken regarding the application of the results on students of other provinces. It is recommended for future studies to use other research approaches (such as eclectic methods) and general assessment methods and consider other important variables in the feeling of homesickness so that the limitation is resolved. In addition, experimental studies to design preventive programs regarding resilience can be useful.

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## Footnotes

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