

# THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN SOCIAL SUPPORT AND HOMESICKNESS AMONG NON-LOCAL STUDENTS IN JAKARTA'S PRIVATE UNIVERSITIES

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## ABSTRACT

*Education is a fundamental aspect of every individual's life, and pursuing higher education is a common societal aspiration. However, a key challenge in this journey is migration, driven largely by the uneven distribution of educational facilities in Indonesia. Many regions lack higher education institutions, compelling high school graduates to move far from their hometowns to continue their studies. The growing demand for higher education has also encouraged young adults to migrate to major cities like Jakarta, known for its numerous quality private universities and scholarship opportunities. Despite the benefits, relocating often causes homesickness, an emotional condition marked by deep longing for home experienced by individuals in unfamiliar environments. Social support, defined as the presence of dependable individuals offering care, appreciation, and love, plays a critical role in alleviating homesickness. This study investigates the relationship between social support and homesickness among non-local students at private universities in Jakarta. Using a quantitative survey of 151 students, the research employs the Utrecht Homesickness Scale and Bentuk Dukungan Sosial to measure these variables. Correlation analysis with the Spearman-rank test reveals a significant negative correlation between social support and homesickness. The findings suggest that higher social support reduces feelings of homesickness among students living away from home, whereas lower social support correlates with increased homesickness. This study highlights the importance of building strong social networks to help non-local students adapt to new environments and maintain emotional well-being during their educational journey.*

**Keywords:** social support, homesickness, non-local students

## 1. PREFACE

Education is a very important element and cannot be separated from each individual. Higher education is gaining global attention, with significant increases in participation in the regions of East Asia, Southeast Asia, and Latin America and the Caribbean (UNESCO, 2020). Based on data from Badan Pusat Statistik (2023) there are more than 2,900 private universities in Indonesia and Jakarta occupies the third position as the city with the most private universities in Indonesia after West Java and East Java. The distribution of the best private universities with many scholarships in Jakarta, as well as the availability of many employment and networking opportunities can be a factor for students to move to Jakarta for higher education.

Pursuing higher education is one of the hopes of society, and sometimes in carrying out this step, people are faced with a series of challenges, one of which is moving to another city or region. One of the reasons people move to another city is that education in Indonesia is not evenly distributed (Halim & Dariyo, 2016). Sometimes, higher education facilities are not available in certain areas, so young high school graduates must move to areas relatively far from their hometowns to pursue higher education and become non-local students. Students who move to pursue education in another environment far from their home area will face experiencing various possibilities that will occur in a new place (Istanto & Engry, 2019). The process of leaving home, whether through migration or moving, is often associated with emotional distress known as 'homesickness' (Thurber & Walton, 2007). Based on previous research by Fisher (1989) shows

that 50-75% of the general population has encountered homesickness at least once, while severe homesickness is estimated to affect 10-15% of these cases. Research conducted previously by van Tilburg et al. (1999) that 51% of individuals who experience chronic homesickness still feel homesickness even after 3 years.

Homesickness refers to a common emotional distress felt by individuals who are away from home and find themselves in an unfamiliar environment (van Tilburg et al., 1996). Homesickness is also a common response for individuals who move away from their home, whether for education, employment, or both domestic and international migration (Watt & Badger, 2009). This feeling of homesickness can be experienced by people of all cultures and ages (Thurber & Walton, 2007). Generally, this condition is characterized by a deep longing for home (Thurber & Walton, 2007). While experiencing homesickness, individuals feel an intense yearning and persistent thoughts about their home (Baier & Welch, 1992).

Feelings of homesickness can negatively impact an individual's ability to adjust to their new social environment (English et al., 2017). Intense homesickness can be extremely distressing and exhausting (Fisher, 1989). Furthermore, individuals who experience homesickness often report more physical complaints and exhibit more internal and external behavioural issues than those who do not suffer from homesickness (Thurber, 1995). Earlier studies by Burt (1993) also indicated that first-year students dealing with homesickness are three times more likely to leave school compared to those who do not experience it. Concentration difficulties can also happen among those who experience homesickness (Fisher et al., 1985; Fisher & Hood, 1987).

According to Thurber & Walton (2007), homesickness is influenced by various factors. One of them is the feeling of distress caused by separation from home or from people with strong emotional bonds, such as family. This feeling often arises when someone is in a foreign place or far from things that provide a sense of safety and comfort, which can lead to anxiety and difficulty adapting. In addition, experience plays an important role, where individuals with more experience tend to experience less homesickness (Thurber & Walton, 2007). For example, a child who is used to being away from home may feel less homesick compared to a child who rarely experiences it. However, negative past experiences can create negative expectations for future separations (Thurber & Walton, 2007).

Attitude also influences homesickness, where individuals who have low expectations of the new environment and negative first impressions tend to experience stronger homesickness. Research by Thurber (1999) supports this, showing that a combination of limited experience, a sense of low control, and high expectations of homesickness can explain much of the intensity of homesickness in children. Furthermore, insecure attachment to primary caregivers is also a common risk factor for homesickness. Children with anxious-ambivalent attachment styles tend to experience significant emotional distress when separated from home. Other personality factors, such as low self-control and feelings of anxiety or depression several months before separation, can also increase the risk of homesickness. On the other hand, family factors, such as low 'decision control,' where a child feels they have little control when forced to be away from home, also play a role. An additional factor that can influence homesickness is the individual's tendency to view home as something positive. Research by Fisher and Hood (1987) showed that individuals who have pleasant experiences at home tend to find it harder to leave home.

In general, individuals who have just finished high school and have just entered college are in the developmental stage of late adolescence towards early adulthood. According to Erikson (1968)

individuals at this stage who are in the age range of 18-25 years, are experiencing a developmental crisis between intimacy vs isolation. At this stage, as individuals have gained self-identity, the need for intimacy will be a top priority for individuals in early adult psychosocial development (Erikson, 1968). The problem at this stage of development is between finding intimacy or isolation in interpersonal relationships. Lack of intimacy can lead to isolation, which can hinder psychological and emotional development (Erikson, 1968). Students who fail to form good social relationships in a new environment can lead to loneliness, low self-esteem, and depression (Arnett, 2000). In fact, they are trying to get an education to improve their lives in the future. It can be stated that social support is very important and can make individuals feel connected and support their psychosocial development at this time.

Social support is defined as the comfort, care, appreciation, recognition or assistance available to a person from other individuals or groups (Uchino, 2004). It also encompasses the presence of social networks that offer psychological and material resources to aid individuals in managing stress (Cohen, 2004). According to Sarafino and Smith (2002) Social support also can be received in five forms such as emotional support which involves expressions of empathy, providing comfort, reassurance, and a sense of being loved and involved. Esteem support, that provided through positive expressions or actions that show appreciation. Instrumental support which involves direct assistance such as helping with tasks or providing material needs, information support which includes offering advice, suggestions, or feedback. And lastly, network support which provides a sense of belonging to a group.

Social support has various benefits, one of which is enhancing physical health (Sarafino, 2011). When individuals feel supported, they are more inclined to adopt healthy behaviors, such as eating well, exercising, and following medical advice. Additionally, social support helps lower stress levels, which in turn positively affects the immune system, reduces blood pressure, and decreases the likelihood of chronic illnesses (Sarafino, 2011). Social support is needed for every individual, in order to help a person feel loved, and supported through a real action, and how the individual's perception when the support is received. Social support also plays a crucial role in assisting individuals cope with the stress and challenges of daily life.

Study has research that social support is related to homesickness in first-year overseas students (Istanto & Engry, 2019). In addition, preliminary interviews were also conducted with the results showing that informants experienced homesickness in the first year, and were caused by feelings of loneliness while in boarding houses. In overcoming this, social support is needed to overcome homesickness. Social support is also an important predictor of loneliness (Zhang & Dong, 2022). In contrast to some previous studies that tend to focus only on first-year students, this study focuses on examining the relationship between social support and homesickness and includes all students who are still studying in college, with an age range of 18-25 years. According to Duven (2018) homesickness remains a part of the students' experience during the semester, and homesickness cannot completely disappear, but rather an emotional process that needs to be faced and passed gradually. Based on this explanation, researchers want to find out more about the relationship between social support and homesickness in non-local students, especially in private universities in Jakarta.

According to the buffering hypothesis, social support can impact health by acting as a buffer, protecting individuals from the negative effects of high stress (Sarafino, 2011). Individuals with high social support may experience less stress compared to those with low social support (Sarafino, 2011). Those supported socially are likely to feel confident in receiving help, such as

direct assistance or advice. Additionally, social support can influence how individuals respond to stress after evaluating a situation (Sarafino, 2011). For instance, those with high social support find solutions and are encouraged to see the positive side of a situation, and those with low social support lack these advantages, making the negative impact of stress greater for them (Sarafino, 2011). When individuals receive adequate and positive social support, it can act as a buffer, preventing prolonged distress or high levels of stress, particularly in the context of homesickness. Thus, the researcher proposes the hypothesis that there is a negative relationship between social support and homesickness among non-local students at private universities in Jakarta. The higher the social support, the lower the homesickness experienced by non-local students at private universities in Jakarta, and vice versa.

## **2. RESEARCH METHOD**

### **Samples**

The method used in this study is a quantitative correlational approach with a non-experimental design. Social support as the independent variable and homesickness as the dependent variable. Sample of the participants of this study were 151 college students, from all semesters with an age range of 18-25 years old who were enrolled in various private universities in Jakarta. The participants consisting 49 males (32.5%) and 102 females (67.5%) with the majority aged 21 years (43.7%), and the least aged 25 years (0.7%). The duration of moving away to other city was dominated by participants who had moved away for 2 years (34.4%) and followed by participants who had moved away for 3 years (33.8%). Participants who returned home in one year were dominated by 2 times (40.4%) participants who returned only once (21.9%). This study used a quantitative correlational approach with a non-experimental design.

### **Utrecht Homesickness Scale**

The measuring instrument to measure homesickness in this study used the Utrecht Homesickness Scale by Stroebe et al., (2002). This instrument measures 5 dimensions of homesickness including missing family, loneliness, missing friends, adjustment difficulties, and ruminations about home. This instrument consists of 20 statement items, each dimension measures 4 statement items, using the 5-point likert scale, with a description of the answer options, including including: (1) Not, (2) Weak, (3) Moderate, (4) Strong, and (5) Very Strong.

### **Bentuk Dukungan Sosial Scale**

The instrument used for social support is Bentuk Dukungan Sosial adapted by Mulyadi (2020). The instrument was designed based on Sarafino and Smith (2002) social support theory, consist of emotional support, esteem support, instrumental support, information support, and network support. The instrument consists of 36 items, which include 8 items for appreciation support, 8 items for emotional support, 7 items for instrumental support, 8 items for information support, and 5 items for network support. The instrument contains 36 statement items, with 18 positive and 18 negative items, and using the 5-point likert scale.

## **3. RESULT AND DISCUSSION**

Data processing was conducted using the SPSS version 25.0. First of all, the validity and reliability of the measurement instrument were tested first. In this study, researchers conducted a reliability test on each dimension of the measuring instrument for social support. Based on the results of testing the reliability of the measuring instrument for forms of social support, the five dimensions of the measuring instrument are reliable. The complete data can be seen in table 1.

**Table 1**

*Reliability and Validity of Bentuk Dukungan Sosial and Utrecht Homesickness Scale (UHS)*

<i>Measurement</i>	<i>Dimensions</i>	<i><math>\alpha</math></i>	<i>Validity</i>
Bentuk Dukungan Sosial	Emotional Support	0.912	0.633 - 0.811
	Instrumental Support	0.850	0.319 – 0.743
	Informational Support	0.882	0.562 – 0.763
	Esteem Support	0.894	0.477 – 0.758
	Network Support	0.808	0.294 – 0.722
Utrecht Homesickness Scale	Missing Family	0.910	0.679 – 0.893
	Missing Friends	0.836	0.586 – 0.741
	Loneliness	0.891	0.680 – 0.807
	Adjustment Difficulties	0.925	0.753 – 0.881
	Ruminations about Home	0.831	0.626 – 0.713

An overview of homesickness variables using the Utrecht Homesickness Scale (UHS) measuring instrument with a Likert scale of 1-5. Based on the scale, the hypothetical mean is at a value of 3 as the midpoint. The empirical mean value is at a value of 2.9 which is almost close to the hypothetical mean. Through this data, it can be concluded that homesickness as a whole can be said to be moderate. The description of the social support variable was measured using *Bentuk Dukungan Sosial* Scale with a Likert scale from 1 to 5. Based on the scale, the hypothetical mean is set at 3 as the midpoint. The empirical mean is 3.8, which is higher than the average. From this data, it can be concluded that the level of social support is considered high. The complete data can be seen in table 2.

**Table 2**

*Descriptive Statistical Analysis Result*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>Min</i>	<i>Max</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Social Support	151	1.59	4.87	3.8	.729
Homesickness	151	1.45	4.80	2.9	.813

Data normality was tested using the one-sample Kolmogorov-smirnov. Results shows that social support with  $p = 0.000 < 0.05$ , which means that the data is not normally distributed, and homesickness with  $p = 0.200 > 0.05$ , which means the data is normally distributed. Through these results, the data is concluded to be abnormally distributed. For complete data can be seen in table 3.

**Table 3**

*Normality Test of Bentuk Dukungan Sosial and Utrecht Homesickness Scale (UHS)*

<i>Measurement</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Description</i>
Social Support	0.000	Not Normally Distributed
Homesickness	0.200	Normally Distributed

The results showed that the data was not normally distributed, so the correlational analysis used non-parametric statistics, spearman-rank. The results show the value of  $r = -.540^{**}$ ,  $p 0.000$

$<0.05$  which means that there is a significant negative relationship between social support and homesickness in overseas students at private universities in Jakarta. Based on these results, it can be concluded that the higher the social support obtained by an individual, the lower the homesickness felt, and vice versa. That way, the hypothesis of this study can be accepted. For complete data can be seen in table 4.

**Table 4**

*Correlation between Social Support and Homesickness*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>N</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>
Social Support and Homesickness	151	-0.540**	0.000

In the correlation test between the variables of social support and homesickness, the results showed that social support has a significant negative correlation with three dimensions of homesickness: loneliness, adjustment difficulties, and ruminations about home. Meanwhile, the variable social support does not have a significant negative correlation with the two dimensions of homesickness, which is missing family and missing friends. Therefore, the higher the social support, the lower the loneliness, adjustment difficulties, and ruminations about home. However, the higher the social support, not necessarily the higher the feelings of missing friends and missing family. For complete data can be seen on table 5.

**Table 5**

*Correlation between Social Support Variable and the Dimensions of Homesickness*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Dimensions of Homesickness</i>	<i>r</i>	<i>p</i>	<i>Description</i>
Social Support	Missing Family	0.010	0.902	Not Correlated
	Loneliness	-.676**	0.000	Negative Correlation
	Missing Friends	-.106	0.193	Not Correlated
	Adjustment Difficulties	-.628**	0.000	Negative Correlation
	Ruminations about Home	-.526**	0.000	Negative Correlation

The difference test for the homesickness variable based on gender was conducted using the Kruskal-Wallis method, with a result of  $p = 0.520 > 0.05$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in homesickness when examined based on age. Complete data can be found in Table 6.

**Table 6**

*Difference Test for the Homesickness Variable Based on Gender*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>p</i>
Homesickness	Male	72.69	0.520
	Female	77.59	

The difference test for the homesickness variable based on age was conducted using the Kruskal-Wallis method, with a result of  $p = 0.633 > 0.05$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that there is no significant difference in homesickness when examined based on age. Complete data can be found in Table 7.

**Table 7**

*Difference Test for the Homesickness Variable Based on Age*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>p</i>
Homesickness	18	80.82	0.633
	19	95.56	
	20	67.79	
	21	72.99	
	22	76.21	
	23	86.20	
	24	83.75	
	25	92.50	

The difference test for the homesickness variable based on origin region resulted in  $p = 0.409 > 0.05$ . This indicates that there is no significant difference in homesickness when examined based on region of origin. Complete data can be seen in Table 8.

**Table 8**

*Difference Test for the Homesickness Variable Based on Origin Region*

<i>Variable</i>	<i>Origin Region</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>p</i>
Homesickness	West Indonesia	74.72	0.409
	Central Indonesia	83.38	
	East Indonesia	99.50	

The findings of the hypothesis reveal a significant negative correlation between social support and homesickness in non-local students at private universities in Jakarta. This suggests that the higher the social support received, the lower the homesickness experienced, and vice versa. The study's results confirm that the research hypothesis is supported. However, some previous studies have been conducted and the results are in line with this study. Some previous studies also show that social support is related to the level of homesickness that can be felt in students when moving away to other city or region, and social support can also reduce homesickness and improve student well-being (Istanto & Engry, 2019; Zulkarnain et al., 2020). This study can support previous studies with similar topics that the importance of social support to individuals, especially students who are moving away from their home area. It is important to seek various forms of social support to help minimize the feeling of homesickness.

One of the preventions in dealing with homesickness is to find someone who can listen and talk, so that individuals can feel more comfortable through the social support received (Thurber & Walton, 2007). Lack of social support can be a factor in individuals experiencing high homesickness. In addition, social support can also be a buffer to protect individuals from the impact of high stress by offering a sense of belonging, empathy, and reassurance, social support plays a crucial role in preventing homesickness from becoming severe or escalating over time (Sarafino, 2011). This underscores the importance of fostering supportive relationships, especially for individuals navigating unfamiliar environments and facing the challenges of being away from home.

Social support can also reduce the impact of stress on individuals due to loss and help the adaptation process, and improve individual well-being because they get positive feelings (English et al., 2017). Individuals who experience homesickness tend to have a low level of adaptation to the environment (Cohen, 2004). In this case, social support can help individuals

adapt by increasing individual well-being because they get positive feelings (Sarafino & Smith, 2002). The availability of social support can make individuals feel more accepted, so they can adapt better in a new environment. When individuals get various forms of social support, it can help them overcome feelings of stress or pressure that refer to homesickness, and accelerate the adjustment process.

Researchers also tested the correlation between social support variables and the dimensions of homesickness which shows the result that social support has a significant negative correlation with the homesickness dimensions including loneliness, adjustment difficulties, and ruminations about home. Meanwhile, it was found that the social support variable is not negatively correlated with the dimensions missing friends and missing family. Therefore, the higher the social support, the lower the loneliness, adjustment difficulties, and ruminations about home. However, the higher the social support, not necessarily the higher the feelings of missing friends and missing family. These results are also in line with research conducted by Zhang and Dong (2022) that social support has a negative relationship with loneliness, and social support is an important predictor of loneliness. In addition, social support can also help the adaptation process in individuals (Sarafino, 2011). Moreover, the social support received by individuals in a new environment can help reduce the tendency to constantly think about home or engage in ruminations about home. This is because the social support received can create a sense of acceptance, security, and being supported. Social support can assist individuals in shifting their attention away from feelings of isolation or the loss of positive interactions in the new environment (Stroebe et al., 2015). Additionally, social support can help individuals redirect their focus from their previous environment to new experiences in their current surroundings.

Furthermore, there is no relationship between social support and the dimensions of missing friends and missing family. Although the level of social support received by migrant students is adequate, the feelings of missing family and missing friends may still be experienced. This occurs because the dimensions of missing family and missing friends do not solely depend on the presence of social support in the new environment but are also influenced by deep emotional bonds. The feeling of missing friends may be difficult to overcome through social support from new friends, as previous friendships possess a unique emotional depth (Weiss, 1973). The friendships formed and the social support received in the new environment cannot fully replace relationships with those left behind or significantly reduce feelings of homesickness (Watt & Badger, 2009).

The results of the difference test for homesickness variables based on age and gender also showed no significant differences. These findings align with the conceptual analysis of homesickness by Baier and Welch (1992), which states that homesickness can be experienced by individuals of various ages, especially when separated from home. Additionally, homesickness can occur regardless of cultural background or gender (van Tilburg et al., 1996). Research conducted by Mohamud et al. (2024) also revealed no significant differences in the level of homesickness based on gender. In this study, no differences in homesickness were found when examined based on age and gender, as other factors, such as experience, may influence the occurrence of homesickness. For example, an 8-year-old child accustomed to being away from home may not experience homesickness in the same way as a 12-year-old child with less experience (Thurber & Walton, 2007).

The results of the difference test for homesickness based on region of origin showed no significant differences in homesickness among non-local students in Jakarta that come from



Western, Central, and Eastern Indonesia. However, these findings still indicate inconsistency, as some previous studies found differences in homesickness based on the distance from home to their region of origin (Stroebe et al., 2015). According to the researchers, several other factors may have influenced these findings, such as the individual's experience of living away from home, their ability to adapt, and the social support they received. These findings are consistent with the study by Brewin et al. (1989), which found no significant differences based on the distance from home. Furthermore, the impact of homesickness on students is influenced more by psychological distance than geographical distance (Sun et al., 2016).

This study has some limitations, the research has limited sample size, which is only 151 college students in Jakarta. The results of the study may not be generalizable to students from other universities other than private universities in Jakarta or with different characteristics. In addition, the measuring instrument used has a large number of items that can cause boredom or bias in answering. Another limitation is the possibility of other factors in social support and homesickness that are not mentioned in this study. Other factors influencing homesickness, such as cultural differences or individual personality traits were not explored in depth and may require further investigation in future studies. Thus, further research can consider expanding the sample of participants and other factors that may influence the relationship between social support and homesickness.

#### 4. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that the research hypothesis is accepted, showing a significant negative relationship with a strong correlation between social support and homesickness. The higher the social support an individual receives, the lower the level of homesickness experienced, and vice versa. This study involved only 151 non-local student samples from private universities in Jakarta. It is suggested that future research consider expanding the sample characteristics and size, such as including participants from the Greater area such as Jabodetabek. Furthermore, future researchers are encouraged to broaden the scope of examining factors related to social support and homesickness so that the research findings can better represent the characteristics of migrant students comprehensively.

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