



Differences in Homesickness in Terms of Coping Strategies for Cadets in Merchant Marine Polytechnic in Makassar.

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ABSTRACT

College students, especially those in dormitories, are prone to experience homesickness. One of the causes of homesickness is having difficulty to make adjustments. One way to reduce homesickness is to use coping strategies. The aims of this study were to determine the differences in homesickness in terms of coping strategies for Cadets in Merchant Marine Polytechnic in Makassar. Sampling technique used in this study was incidental sampling with 104 respondents. The data analysis method used is t-test analysis. The result of this study showed that there were differences in homesickness in terms of coping strategies for PIP cadets in Makassar ($p = 0.029 < 0.05$). The homesickness felt by PIP cadets in Makassar was in the medium category, while those who used many coping strategies use a lot of problem focused coping.

Keywords: Cadets, College Student, Coping Strategy, Homesickness

Introduction

The younger generation engages in various efforts to acquire knowledge and gain experience, one of which is by pursuing higher education at a university. Education plays a crucial role for every individual, as it contributes to the improvement of human resource quality and serves as a vital asset for the future. When individuals decide to pursue their education in a setting that is distant from their place of origin, they are likely to encounter a range of potential challenges and adjustments in the new environment. Kegel (2009) stated that in pursuing academic opportunities away from home, students who migrate for education often experience feelings of sadness due to longing for people or places from their hometown. Individuals are required to establish new social relationships, adapt to different cultures, and meet the demands of a new environment. Separation from a familiar setting or place of origin may trigger psychological reactions in the form of emotions, cognitions, and physical responses through behavior. Such reactions are referred to as *homesickness* (Vingerhoets, as cited in Wenita, 2017).

From both medical and psychological perspectives, homesickness presents with observable physical, cognitive, and behavioral symptoms. Individuals experiencing homesickness often report gastrointestinal discomfort, sleep disturbances, headaches, fatigue, and eating disorders. Additionally, homesickness is associated with cognitive and behavioral symptoms, such as longing that tends to lead to emotional problems including mood disturbances, feelings of insecurity, loneliness, nervousness, a lack of control, and even depression (Hack & Polay, 2012). Thurber and Walton (2007) stated that individuals who are most likely to experience homesickness are those who are just beginning their college education, particularly during the first year. Furthermore, Thurber and Walton (2012) emphasized that most students who are away from home or their hometown for the first time are at a high risk of experiencing homesickness.

Stroebe et al. (2002) stated that common assumptions often suggest that females are more likely to experience homesickness when leaving home for college. However, several findings do not support this assumption. Brewin, Furnham, and Howes (1989) found that feelings of homesickness are equally prevalent among both male and female students. Nevertheless, coping strategies differ by gender, with females tending to seek more social support compared to males. Archer, Ireland, Amos, Broad, and Currid (1998) reported that female students exhibited higher levels of homesickness, which were mediated by attachment-related factors on homesickness questionnaires. However, there were no gender differences in avoidance responses to homesickness.

Based on preliminary data collected by the researcher through the distribution of questionnaires to 53 first-year female cadets at the Polytechnic of Shipping Science (Politeknik Ilmu Pelayaran), it was found that 81% of the cadets experienced feelings of longing for their families, homes, and friends. The cadets reported experiencing anxiety in the new environment and attempted to cope with problems or avoid stress by remaining silent when issues arose and maintaining their religious practices (19%). Additionally, 20.1% coped with homesickness by sharing their feelings with friends and family or engaging in leisure activities such as reading. Furthermore, the distribution of questionnaires to 53 first-year male cadets at the same institution revealed that 63% experienced homesickness characterized by fatigue and a lack of interest in the new environment. Meanwhile, 20% attempted to accept their

stress and transform it into a positive force to solve problems, and 17% limited their movements to avoid activities associated with stress, aiming to respond or make decisions in a timely and thoughtful manner rather than hastily.

Discussion

Homesickness is described as an obsessive longing for home and a strong desire to return to one's previous environment or hometown (Fisher, 1989; Baier & Welch, 1992; Eurelings-Bontekoe, 1994). It is defined as a form of distress or suffering, accompanied by functional impairment, resulting from separation from home or familiar objects. Individuals commonly experience various forms of anxiety, sadness, restlessness, and, most notably, an obsessive preoccupation with home (Thurber & Walton, 2012). Homesickness is also understood as one of the negative effects or consequences of relocation experienced by individuals (Scopelliti & Tiberio, 2010).

Poylazi and Lopez (2007) stated that homesickness can have a negative impact on the adaptation process, academic performance, and social engagement. Stroebe, Vliet, Hewstone, and Willis (2002) emphasized that, at more severe levels, homesickness can trigger various psychological problems such as stress and depression. Individuals experiencing homesickness tend to cry frequently and may become apathetic and lethargic. Severe homesickness can even lead to suicidal thoughts. Common symptoms also include stomachaches, loss of appetite, sleep disturbances, and headaches. According to Tilburg (as cited in Watt & Badger, 2009), homesickness is also characterized by symptoms similar to adjustment disorders accompanied by depressive mood.

Coping refers to the ability to manage new situations that may potentially be threatening, frustrating, or challenging. Coping involves specific thoughts and behaviors employed by individuals to regulate the demands or pressures arising from their interaction with the environment, particularly in relation to their well-being (Folkman & Lazarus, 1998). Baron and Byrne (1991) stated that coping is an individual's response to dealing with problems, involving thoughts and feelings aimed at controlling, tolerating, or reducing the negative effects of the situation being faced. Folkman and Lazarus (1987) stated that coping strategies refer to the constantly changing cognitive and behavioral efforts employed by individuals to manage specific internal or external demands that are perceived as taxing or exceeding their available resources. Coping strategies involve both cognitive and behavioral efforts aimed at reducing, overcoming, or accepting the problems that arise, whether they are internal or external and stress-inducing. According to Baron and Byrne (1991), coping strategies can take the form of thoughts and emotions directed at managing, enduring, or minimizing the negative effects of threatening situations.

Methods and Techniques

The sampling technique used in this study was incidental sampling. According to Sugiyono (2013), incidental sampling is a technique for determining samples based on chance, in which any individual who happens to be encountered by the researcher and is willing to participate can be selected as a research subject. The total number of respondents in this study was 104. The data collection technique used in this study was a Likert-scale questionnaire. According to Siregar (2013), the Likert scale is a measurement tool that can be used to assess individuals' attitudes, perceptions, and opinions regarding a particular phenomenon or object. The Likert scale used in this study consisted of two types of statements: favorable and unfavorable, each comprising several items with five response options: Strongly Disagree (SD), Disagree (D), Neutral (N), Agree (A), and Strongly Agree (SA).

Results and Discuccion

The Homesickness Scale consisted of 36 items with a score range from 1 to 5. The hypothetical data indicated a mean score of 89 with a standard deviation of 12. The maximum possible score on the homesickness variable was 180, while the minimum score was 36. The results showed that 23 cadets (22%) were categorized as experiencing high levels of homesickness, 66 cadets (64%) fell into the moderate category, and 15 cadets (14%) were in the low category. These percentages indicate that the majority of cadets at PIP Makassar experienced a moderate level of homesickness, with 64% (66 individuals) falling into this category.

The Coping Strategy Scale consisted of 20 items with a score range from 1 to 5. The hypothetical data indicated a mean score of 60 with a standard deviation of 3. The maximum possible score for the coping strategy variable was 100, while the minimum score was 20. The results showed that 23 participants (20%) exhibited a high level of coping strategies, 0 participants (0%) were categorized as having a moderate level, and 81 participants (78%) demonstrated a low level of coping strategies. These percentages indicate that the majority of cadets at PIP Makassar fell into the low coping strategy category, with 78% or 81 individuals in this group.

Based on the research findings, 23 cadets (22%) were categorized as experiencing a high level of homesickness, 66 cadets (64%) were in the moderate category, and 15 cadets (14%) were in the low category. In some cases, homesickness also tends to involve feelings of anger. According to Jersild (1963), such anger may emerge as a form of protest against the necessity of leaving home or as a reaction toward people or conditions in the new environment. Individuals experiencing homesickness require appropriate methods or strategies to cope with the issue. The percentage results indicate that the majority of cadets at PIP Makassar, with 64%, experienced homesickness at a moderate level.

In this study, cadets at PIP Makassar demonstrated varying coping strategies, with 44 participants (42.30%) employing emotion-focused coping and 60 participants (57.69%) utilizing problem-focused coping. According to Andrews (as cited in Amartiwi, 2008), problem-focused coping is considered an appropriate and effective coping behavior, as it involves directly addressing and resolving emerging problems rather than avoiding them.

Based on the research findings, 23 participants (20%) exhibited a high level of coping strategies, 81 participants (78%) demonstrated a low level, and none of the participants fell into the moderate category. Effective coping strategies for managing stress include seeking support from friends, planning, building positive relationships with colleagues, risk management, time management, and broad communication (Anne, Deborah, & Philip, 2004). Friedman (1998) stated that coping strategies are behaviors or processes used for adaptation in response to pressure or perceived threats.

The results of hypothesis testing using the t-test showed a significance value of $0.029 < 0.05$, which indicates that there is a statistically significant difference in homesickness among PIP Makassar cadets based on the coping strategies they employed. The percentage data further revealed that the majority of cadets at PIP Makassar tended to use problem-focused coping strategies. Problem-focused coping refers to efforts aimed at changing the situation, goals, or objectives by altering something in the environment or the way an individual interacts with it.

According to Aldwin and Revenson (1997), coping strategies are methods used by individuals to manage and control situations or problems that are perceived as obstacles, painful challenges, or harmful threats. Taylor (2015) stated that during the coping process, individuals assess whether their efforts reduce emotional distress or effectively address the problems they face.

However, this study has several limitations. The number of subjects was limited, which restricted the depth of analysis regarding the variables studied. Furthermore, several influencing factors, such as gender and situational context, were not considered in this research.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the study, it can be concluded that there are differences in homesickness when viewed from the coping strategies used by cadets at the Polytechnic of Shipping Science (PIP) in Makassar. The level of homesickness experienced by the cadets was categorized as moderate. Furthermore, the majority of the cadets employed problem-focused coping strategies in dealing with their experiences of homesickness.

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