Studying the Relationship between Personality Characteristics and Homesickness in Dormitory Students of Zabol University

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Abstract- Homesickness presents a complex motivational-cognitive state which is originally centered on sense of loss and homesickness towards family, friends and living environment which can create a stressful experience for young people .Now with respect to the purpose of the issue, the purpose of the present research is to study relationship between personality characteristics and homesickness of Zabol University students who are studying in 2012. For this purpose, 352 students (148 male and 204 female students) participated in this research by completing NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) test and homesickness questionnaire with random stratified sampling method considering population size of dormitory students and the required sample size using Morgan schedule and the obtained information was analyzed using statistical methods of t-test, correlation and regression test and the following results were obtained: There is a significant difference between two groups of males and females only in personality agreeability factor and also there is a significant difference between two groups of males and females in homesickness. The mean scores of boys homesickness are significantly lower than those of females .There is a positive and significant correlation between neuroticism and homesickness and there is not any relationship between other factors and neuroticism factor and extroversion factor can foresee homesickness in students.

Keywords- *students, personality characteristics, homesickness*

I. INTRODUCTION

Students are regarded as fundamental bases of progress, promotion and ability of each society in terms of human resources. On the other hand, the youth is one of the most impressive life periods due to special physical and mental[1], Although entering university is almost regarded as an important and positive event in youth, this event is accompanied by many changes such as living alone in a new city, finding new friends, familiarity with environment of university, compatibility with new positions and lifestyles without the presence of parents and old friends[2],which can challenge mental security of person, physical comfort and ability to enjoy pleasant activities. Homesickness is a common phenomenon which these people experience. Homesickness means a complex motivational-cognitive state which is originally centered on sense of loss and homesickness towards family, friends and living environment which can create a stressful experience for young people[3].This phenomenon which is usually a natural reaction against new environment is a debilitating potential phenomenon which affects people of all cultures and age groups. Although differences have been reported in prevalence of homesickness, homesickness is a common phenomenon in student population. Phenomenon of homesickness in adulthood is similar to separation anxiety phenomenon in childhood and the fourth Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM-III-R, 1994) has also introduced it as a form of separation anxiety, of course, the difference is that separation anxiety relates to separation from attachment figure and homesickness relates to family and environment. Theory of cognitive stress suggests that situational and personal antecedent factors lead to immediate and long-term consequences due to cognition intermediary factors (evaluation and coping). On this basis, leaving home disrupts balance between personal sources and new situation demands, therefore, person evaluates this lack of balance (problem with adaptation) and starts coping in case of threat. If the coping is not successful (for example, obsessive-rumination about the previous environment), immediate consequences which are signs of homesickness are created and in case homesickness continues, we will have its long term effects i.e. depression and anxiety. But there are people who easily adapt to these situations and pass crises of environmental growth and changes period effectively. Study of psychological variables relating to personal differences can help understand this subject, for this reason, it requires recognition of personal differences and study of personality characteristics of people and interaction with other psychological variables. We believe that personality of any person is unique that is anyone has unique characteristics which distinguish between him and others in addition to the similarities between people. In this regard, we consider personality as set of stable and unique characteristic in routine life which may change in response to different situations[4].One of the most important and influential models in study of personality traits in recent decades was five-factor model which has mostly studied personality[5].Costa, P. T, & McCrae using factor analysis method concluded that one can consider five main dimensions in personality characteristics. Extraversion (E) means tendency of the person to be positive, courage, be energetic and

sincerity. Openness experience (o) means tendency of person to curiosity, love for art, artistry, flexibility and wisdom. Agreeableness (A) means tendency of person to generosity, kindness, magnanimity, intimacy, consultation, altruism and trust. Conscientiousness (C) means tendency of person to be punctual, efficiency, reliability, self-regulation, achievement orientation, being logical and being relax. Neuroticism(N) means tendency of person to experience anxiety, stress, hostility, Impulsiveness, depression and low self-esteem[6, 7] in a research entitled relationship between homesickness and mental health among students: moderating role of personality factors specified that personality as a moderating variable had considerable effect on relationship between homesickness and mental health so that the people with high compatibility showed significant correlation between homesickness and mental health in limit of r=0.345 and introversion and neuroticism in limit of r=0.372 and r=-0.351(α<0.01). Research findings [8, 9] have shown that women are more emotional than men in establishment of interpersonal relations especially with family members. Therefore, women are emotionally more affected in separation. Homesickness can be one of the manifestations of this effect though there are many personality characteristics[10],in a research entitled homesickness and personality dimensions of NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) test found that there is positive and significant correlation between general score of homesickness and dimensions of Neuroticism, openness experience, Agreeableness and conscientiousness. It has no negative and significant correlation with extraversion. Mean of homesickness among the female students is higher than that of boys and this difference is significant. In study of difference between personality dimensions between female and male students, there is significant difference between dimensions of openness experience, aagreeableness and conscientiousness. There was no significant difference between dimensions of Neuroticism and extraversion. Personality dimensions in NEO test are significant in prediction of homesickness in all dimensions but conscientiousness in prediction of homesickness[11] also reported that European and Asian students who study in America will suffer from stress and homesickness due to separation from family and lingual problems which indicates effect of cultural factors because language of a nation has close relationship with its culture[12]

Achieved contradictory results about the recent findings. He believes that openness experience exposes him to pleasant and unpleasant experiences. People with high scores are more susceptible to homesickness[13].

Regarding personality factors N and E, he achieved similar results of the previous researches. It is necessary to note that factor N is more able to predict homesickness than factor E in all mentioned researches.

II. RESEARCH METHOD

This research is of correlation type. Statistical population of this research includes all dormitory students of University of Zabol. The required sample size was calculated to be 352 using Morgan Table. Statistical population was divided in terms of gender and dormitory and subjects were also selected to include 148 male students and 204 female students with random stratified sampling method.

III. RESEARCH INSTRUMENTS

A. Neo (Neo-Ffi-60)

This questionnaire included 60 questions and the subject obtains scores 0 to 4 in each question. Each one of the questions indicated one of the five great personalities of McCrea and Costa were Neuroticism(N), extraversion (E), openness experience(O), agreeableness(A) and conscientiousness(C) respectively. Each one of the factors covers 12 scale questions. In general, the subject obtains score of 0 to 48 in each scale. Regarding validity of NEO-FFI, results of several studies indicate that NEO-FFI subscales have good internal consistency. For example, Costa and McCrea [5] have reported Cronbach's alpha coefficient of between 0.68(for agreeableness) and 0.86(for Neuroticism). In this research, Cronbach's alpha coefficient is 0.86 for Neuroticism, 0.83 for extraversion, 0.74 for openness experience, 0.76 for agreeableness, 0.87 for conscientiousness and Cronbach's alpha has been obtained to be 0.83. Homesickness Scale questionnaire includes 45 articles which contain 5 factors and has been made [13] is Persian form of this questionnaire which contains 36 articles which has been normalized by Ajehi et al. (2008) in Iran. Five constituent factors of test include: 1- homesickness for the family, 2- loneliness, 3- nostalgia toward friend, 4- problems with adaptation, 5- obsessive- rumination about home. Reliability obtained with Cronbach's alpha coefficient in sample containing 439 students was obtained by Fanvelite [13] for each one of the above factors to be 0.90, 0.85, 0.87, 088 and 0.80 respectively which was high. The test contained five choices and each one of the choices never; low, medium, high and very high was given scores of 1, 2, 3, 4, 5.

Cronbach's alpha for homesickness and its subscales including 1- homesickness, 2- subscale of nostalgia toward family , 3- subscale of tendency to return to home, 4- subscale of loneliness , 5- subscale of incompatibility with new environments , 6- subscale of nostalgia toward intimate friends which are equal to 85.89, 85.0, 82.0, 72.0 and 61% respectively.

IV. DATA COLLECTION METHOD

After preparing questionnaires and coordination with authorities of the university, student dormitories were visited and after the desired students were selected, interviewed and the research and its goal were explained briefly, they were asked to respond the questionnaires carefully and without worry. Spss software was used to analyze the collected questionnaires. To collect the desired information, library and internet references were used.

V. RESULTS

According to Table 1- there is no significant difference between two male and female groups in terms of Neuroticism personality factor based on t-test (two-tailed test , P>0.05, df=344.24, t=-0.503)

There is no significant difference between two male and female groups in terms of Openness experience personality factor based on t-test (two-tailed test, P>0.05, df=350, t=-1.69)

There is no significant difference between two male and female groups in terms of agreeableness personality factor based on t-test (two-tailed test, P<0.05, df=350, t=-2.27). Mean scores of agreeableness factor among boys are significantly lower than those among girls.

There is no significant difference between two male and female groups in terms of Conscientiousness personality factor based on t-test (two-tailed test, P>0.05, df=350, t=-1.69)

There is no significant difference between two male and female groups in terms of extraversion personality factor based on t-test (two-tailed test, P>0.05, df=350, t=-1.29).

According to Table 2- there is significant difference between two male and female groups in terms of homesickness personality factor based on t-test (two-tailed test , P<0.01, df=350, t=-3.05) . Mean scores of homesickness factor among boys are significantly lower than those among girls.

According to Table 3- there is significant and positive difference between neuroticism and homesickness (r=0.32, P<0.01, n=352).

There is no significant correlation between extraversion and homesickness(r=-0.068, n=352, P>0.05).

There is no significant correlation between openness experience and homesickness(r=-0.035, n=352, P>0.05).

There is no significant correlation between agreeableness and homesickness(r=-0.09, n=352, P>0.05).

There is no significant correlation between conscientiousness and homesickness(r=-0.05, n=352, P>0.05).

According to Table 4, adjusted square r=0.11 and F2&349, ρ< 0005 were obtained based on stepwise regression results. Table – provides information about predicting variables which are available in the model. In this way, Neuroticism personality factor was entered in regression in the first step and it explained student's homesickness variance by 10%. In the second step, extroversion factor was entered in the regression which explained homesickness variance by 1.4%. In other words, Neuroticism and extraversion altogether explain 1.4% of homesickness variance.

VI. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Considering goal of this research which is study of relationship between personality characteristics and homesickness, total results show that there is no significant difference between two male and female groups in factors of

Neuroticism, openness experience, conscientiousness and extraversion and there is significant difference in agreeableness. The result obtained in this research is in line with results of the researches by [10] To explain the view for these findings, index of agreeableness emphasizes on personal tendencies and the agreeable person is altruistic, is willing to show sympathy and help others as the dominant personality characteristics of women. On the contrary, the non-agreeable person is self-centered and is mostly interested in completion rather than cooperation which is one of the dominant characteristics of men which explains high score of female students compared with male students. This research also showed that there was significant difference between male and female students in homesickness and scores of homesickness among boys are significantly lower than those of girls. These findings are in line with result of researches by [3, 14]. Findings of research have shown that women are more emotional than men in interpersonal communication with family members, therefore, they are more emotionally impressed in separations and homesickness can be one of manifestations of this effect. Results of this research show that total score of homesickness has positive and significant relationship with dimension of neuroticism and there is no significant correlation between it and dimensions of extraversion, openness experience, agreeableness and conscientiousness. They also showed relationship between personality dimensions in NEO Five-Factor Inventory (NEO-FFI) test especially dimensions of neuroticism and extraversion and homesickness compared with results of the previous researches. To explain this fact, it can be mentioned that homesickness is an action rusting from personality characteristics and circumstances of a new environment confirm that neurotic and unstable people tend to show homesickness as a reaction to stress resulting from adaptation to a new environment. The avoidant and socially isolated people experience more problems at time of adaptation to new environments. On the contrary, extravert people rarely feel homesick in new environments and more tend to socialize with other people[9].

This result is in line with findings and research, according to cognitive stress theory, long-term consequences of homesickness include anxiety, depression, conditions of entering university and adaptation to new environment can be regarded as a mental stressful factor which requires adaptation to new situations and causes person to suffer from mental disorder[7]. It is also necessary to note that the teenager has ideal imagination of university in his/her mind and when he/she enters university and observes its shortages, he/she is dissatisfied and this dissatisfaction is one of the important factors which causes more homesickness and reduces power of adaptation to new environment of university and neuroticism and extraversion factors explain 1.4% of homesickness variance[15], in a consistent research found that there was a negative significant correlation between homesickness and extraversion which did not have predicting power. Very interesting result of this research is ability to predict homesickness based on anxiety of person. Before entering mood of person (depression , stress and anxiety) , neuroticism personality has the highest power to predict homesickness but

anxiety factor is able to predict homesickness significantly after entering mood factors and despite high beta of Neuroticism. To study what personality dimension is able to predict homesickness, the results indicate that dimensions of Neuroticism and extraversion are able to predict homesickness among students and other dimensions are not able to predict them[16]. In a study on 206 girls and boys found that Neuroticism dimension was the best predicting factor of homesickness which is in line with finings of this research. Considering these studied results and result of the research, it can be explained that people with homesickness tend to be more unstable, anxious, worried, irritable, and stressed. One can identify the susceptible people using the instruments for measuring homesickness to take immediate actions for intervention to control mental stress and prevent suicide and seclusion of students. In addition, considering role of personality factors relating to homesickness, it can be used for designing therapeutic methods such as stress training, coping skills for helping students enter new environment. Of course, considering that the present research has been conducted on students, one should be careful to generalize findings to other people.

TABLE I. INDEPENDENT T-TEST FOR STUDYING DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TWO MALE AND FEMALE GROUPS IN FIVE PERSONALITY FACTORS

t-test (for equality of means)			Five great personality factors
Sig.	Df	T	
0/62	344/24	-0/503	Neuroticism
0/09	350	-1/69	Openness experience
0/024	350	-2/27	Agreeableness
0/13	350	-1/51	Conscientiousness
0/2	350	-1/29	Extraversion

TABLE II. INDEPENDENT T-TEST FOR STUDYING DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TWO MALE AND FEMALE GROUPS IN HOMESICKNESS

t-test (for equality of means)		
Sig.	Df	T
0.002	350	-3.05

TABLE III. PEARSON CORRELATION BETWEEN HOMESICKNESS PERSONALITY FACTORS

Neuroticism factor		Homesickness
Sig.	Correlation coefficient	
0.0005	0.32	
Extraversion		Homesickness
0.201	-0.068	
Openness experience		Homesickness
0.508	-0.035	
Agreeableness		Homesickness
0.11	-0.085	
Conscientiousness		Homesickness
0.4	-0.05	

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TABLE IV.   STEPWISE REGRESSION RESULTS FOR PREDICTING HOMESICKNESS

p	Standard coefficients	nonstandard coefficients		Variation of R^2	adjusted R^2	R	Model
	β	SE B	B				
0.0005	0.39	0.06	0.40	0.100	0.1	0.32	Neuroticism
0.019	0.14	0.07	0.17	0.1.4	0.11	0.34	Extraversion