Homesickness among International Students in Famagusta, North Cyprus

Akpotor Abigail Oghenerhoro

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Approval of the Institute of Graduate Studies and Research

Prof. Dr. Ali Hakan Ulusoy
Director

I certify that this thesis satisfies all the requirements as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Tourism Management.

Prof. Dr. Hasan Kilic
Dean, Faculty of Tourism

We certify that we have read this thesis and that in our opinion it is fully adequate in scope and quality as a thesis for the degree of Master of Science in Tourism Management.

Asst. Prof. Dr. Ilkay Yorganci
Supervisor

Examining Committee

1. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Ali Ozturen

2. Assoc. Prof. Dr. Orhan Uludag

3. Asst. Prof. Dr. Dr. Ilkay Yorganci

ABSTRACT

The study's aim was to examine the issue of homesickness among international students studying in North Cyprus and to educate the entire world especially incoming or new international students on homesickness. These 4 objectives were set to achieve this aims: 1.To establish whether the international students studying in North Cyprus were homesick or not. 2.To determine the reasons for international students' homesickness. 3.To examine the impacts of homesickness on international students; health, academic performance, behavior and character. 4. To understand how international students deal or cope with homesickness.

In order to collect data a qualitative approach to research was adopted, through semi structured interviews; 29 African students who suffered from homesickness were interviewed. The data analysed shows that these international students missed several aspects of their homes like: family, friends, food and many more. Language barrier was identified as one of the main causes of homesickness, it also deprieved international students the opportunity of becoming friends with their fellow students and locals in the community. In some cases language barrier caused problems due to misunderstandings and lack of communication.

Keywords: Homesickness, international students, African students, North Cyprus.

ÖZ

Çalışmanın amacı, Kuzey Kıbrıs'ta okuyan uluslararası öğrenciler arasında ev hastalığı konusunu incelemek ve tüm dünyayı özellikle gelen veya yeni uluslararası öğrencileri ev hastalığı konusunda eğitmekti. Bu 4 hedef bu hedeflere ulaşmak için belirlenmiştir: 1.Kıbrıs'ta eğitim gören uluslararası öğrencilerin evde hasta olup olmadıklarını belirlemek. 2.Uluslararası öğrencilerin ev hastalıklarının nedenlerini belirlemek. 3.Evde hastalığın uluslararası öğrenciler üzerindeki etkilerini incelemek; sağlık, akademik performans, davranış ve karakter. 4. Uluslararası öğrencilerin ev hastalıklarıyla nasıl başa çıktıklarını veya başa çıkmalarını anlamak.

Veri toplamak için yarı yapılandırılmış görüşmeler yoluyla araştırmaya nitel bir yaklaşım benimsenmiştir; Evde hastalıktan muzdarip 29 Afrikalı öğrenci ile görüşme yapılmıştır. Analiz edilen veriler, bu uluslararası öğrencilerin evlerinin aile, arkadaşlar, yiyecekler ve daha pek çok yönünü kaçırdığını göstermektedir. Dil engeli, ev hastalıklarının ana nedenlerinden biri olarak tanımlandı, aynı zamanda uluslararası öğrencilere, toplumdaki diğer öğrenciler ve yerlilerle arkadaş olma fırsatını da mahrum etti. Bazı durumlarda dil engeli yanlış anlaşılmalar ve iletişim eksikliği nedeniyle sorunlara neden oldu.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Ev hastalığı, uluslararası öğrenciler, Afrikalı öğrenciler, Kuzey Kıbrıs.

DEDICATION

I decided to write this thesis mainly because of: how homesick I was, how North Cyprus did not feel like home to me and my MANY experiences with language barrier. I am dedicating this thesis to every international student in various countries all over the world; I want to tell you at some point, you will definitely miss home but I want to let you know that **you are not alone and you will be okay.**

With my thesis, you can know a lot about homesickness and most importantly how best to cope with it. This research will help you know all that.

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INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the Topic

North Cyprus is one of the top summer tourist destinations in Europe; it is very popular because of the three S's: Sun, Sea and Sand. Tourists travel from all over the world to enjoy all of these. A fourth S can be added; which is Safety, North Cyprus is a very safe place to live, visit or study.

> "North Cyprus is worth visiting due to its natural beauty, calm and safe environment as well as its law abiding citizens. It has a tough and strict criminal justice system and the rate of crimes is very low compared to other European countries. People often sought peaceful places to live and study". (Abubakar, Shneikat, & Oday, 2014, p. 61)

Apart from it being a tourist destination, it is also a place to acquire knowledge (educational tourism), thousands and thousands of students from various countries come to North Cyprus for the purpose of schooling.

> "Overseas students have been coming to North Cyprus for higher education since 1982. Afterwards there has been a steady increase in the number of overseas students from more than 68 countries all around the world as more universities were established in the country. Having internationally recognized universities with accredited diplomas in North Cyprus contributes to the image of North Cyprus in the international arena also through international conferences, seminars, social, cultural and sports activities. The higher education sector has now been the most important sector in North Cyprus earning considerable foreign exchange and contributing to this small and non-recognized island state" (Arici, Ertürk, & Orcan, 2014, p. 4).

Educational tourism creates room for self-exploration, personal development (Sun, 2015), self-discovery, good researching skills and higher advantages when seeking for employment (Majid, 2014) but it also comes with a lot of difficulties including homesickness. Homesickness is VERY common among college students and it is a major stressor, most especially when it is intense (Majid, 2014). In fact, research shows that 60% of international students are faced with homesickness (Thomas, 2018). Saravanan, Alias, & Mohamad, (2017) pointed out that studying in a different country "is a major transition period that may create various physical, psychological and social problems for international students" (Saravanan, Alias, & Mohamad, 2017, p 108). The most common psychological problems faced by international students are homesickness and depression (Saravanan, Alias & Mohamad 2017).

> "Homesickness has an adverse effect on the student's psychological health and academic performance. Likewise, negative experiences in a new country/ environment, can cause these students to feel hopeless, and the unrelenting state of hopelessness maybe a manifestation of depression". (Majid, 2014, p. 2&3).

It has been also demonstrated that homesickness can increase the need for counselling among international students. In fact it has been identified as "one of the most frequently reported personal or social counselling needs of international college students" (Kegel, 2015, p.4).

> "This negative feeling state appears to share commonalities with phenomena such as nostalgia, loneliness, grief, and separation anxiety. For international students specifically, homesickness may additionally involve guilt for leaving loved ones behind in the home country. Beyond rumination on missed elements, research suggests homesickness also involves problems assimilating new experiences and maladaptation to new environments" (Kegel, 2015, p.3-4).

Thus, homesickness can cause all forms of adjustment difficulties (Titrek, Hashimi, Ali, & Nguluma, 2016).

1.2 Rationale

The rationale behind the choice of this topic was purely based on personal experiences and also the lack of research on this topic (Abbas, Aqeel, Wenhong, Aman, & Zahra, 2018). As an international student who was deeply affected by homesickness and witnessed many others who were also homesick, I was motivated to do a research on this under researched area.

Although, homesickness is an ailment that affects a great number of college students. But; "there is a lack of literature on homesickness and related psychological constructs for its occurrence, resulting in a substantial gap in researchers' understanding of the phenomena" (Abbas et al., 2018, p. 356).

This was another source of motivation for me.

Furthermore, my aim was not just to understand this phenomenon, I was also interested in helping international students understand what homesickness really is and suggest different ways to cope with it. As pointed out by scholars;

> "Advances in research on this topic may aid in both the development and improvement of treatments, helping students to be more successful academically and socially, which could result in lower college transfer and dropout rates. Furthermore, it can help the students to face the consequences of being away from home. Moreover, it can help them to adjust in a better way in the new place and focus on their studies in a better way". (Abbas et al., 2018, p. 356)

1.3 The Aim and Objectives

The aim of this research was to examine the issue of homesickness among international students studying in North Cyprus and to educate the entire world especially incoming or new international students on homesickness. In order to explore the issue of homesickness four objectives were identified by the researcher. They are as follows:

- To establish whether the international students studying in North Cyprus were homesick or not

- To determine the resons for international students' homesickness

- To examine the impacts of homesickness on the international students; health, academic performance, behavior and character

- To understand how international students deal or cope with homesickness

1.4. Methodology

The main aim of this research was to collect detailed and in-depth information from the participants' perspective in order to understand the issue of homesickness among international students studying in North Cyprus. For the purpose of this research a qualitative methodology was adopted. As Neuman (2014) pointed out qualitative research is very useful when the researcher aims to gather an in-depth understanding of the human behaviour and the reasons that govern such behaviour through participatory means. The data was collected through semi-structured interviews, twenty-nine international students from Africa were interviewed in order to collect data; these students were selected through purposive sampling.

Chapter 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

Travelling abroad is a thing of joy for international students but it also includes leaving a piece of you behind which is: friends and family. It is normal to face challenges in the new environment, "if international students do not prepare themselves adequately for the challenging process of adjustment, the degree of loneliness is bound to escalate, commensurate with the degree of (perceived) separation from home" (Patron, 2014,p.25).

As the old Chinese proverb says, "Everything is easy when you stay home, but everything becomes difficult when you are away from home" (Liu, 2009, p.74).

Thus, adjusting to a new environment is very stressful; it requires lots and lots of time and effort. When international students move to a new environment, the next thing is to start adjusting to this the new environment; this adjustment(s) does not happen in a day, it is a gradual process. It is very normal to experience loneliness and anxiety at first but when they start getting acculturated to the new environment their stay in that environment becomes better and fun. Failure to acculturate brings about homesickness (Akhtar & Kröner-Herwig, 2015).

Having good social support (friends) helps international students cope easily and feel less homesick in a new environment; but having no social support makes

international students homesick, adjustment in the new environment becomes very hard and in extreme cases depression happens (Majid, 2014).

Before moving any further, it is best to clarify the main definitions and concepts.

2.1.1 Educational Tourism and Educational Tourist

Educational tourism is a growing trend, (Kozikoglu & Aslan, 2018) about 3 million students travel to various countries all over the world to achieve a university degree (Thomas, 2018).

> "Seeking academic excellence and future prospective with moving to a new country to study is now a common occurrence. Studying abroad is increasingly becoming a common and expected experience for many young adults. These young people travel abroad trying to gain entry into the 'best' schools and universities to accumulate academic credentials to be successful. It is a "norm that young people are expected to do well i.e. continue their education into tertiary education and achieving a degree" (Majid, 2014, p. 8).

Educational tourism refers to "any type of program in which participants travel to a location either individually or in a group with the primary motive of engaging in or having a learning experience".(Abubakar, Shneikat, & Oday, 2014, p. 58). It is one of the constantly growing tourism trends; it has brought lots and lots of income to the host community and the people in it. Students travel across borders for the purpose of education, the world is a global village and this "global village" needs people who are: experienced, innovative, and competitive to work and run it. Competition for jobs gets intense on a daily basis but studying abroad gives you the edge over other job applicants, it also gives you the competitive and innovative spirit needed to work in this "global village". (Abubakar, Shneikat, & Oday, 2014)

One of the courses I took during my masters degree program taught us some of the many benefits of educational tourism: it is a blessing to the host community; it brings about: income for local businesses, infrastructural development, development or establishment of recreational facilities and shopping opportunities, development of technology, appreciation of local currencies and so on. Countries known for education tourism are very much aware of the many positive effects it brings to their country.

On the other hand;

> "International students are those who temporarily reside in a country other than their country of citizenship or permanent residence in order to participate in international educational exchanges as students, teachers, and researchers" (Titrek, Hashimi, Ali, & Nguluma, 2016, p.148).

2.1.2 Homesickness

> "Although previous literature has not come to an agreement on the precise definition of homesickness, most research describes it through psychological symptoms, such as distress or impairment, caused by the separation from family, friends and other familiar surroundings" (Sun, 2015, p.1-2).

As Verschuur, Eurelings-Bontekoe, & Spinhoven pointed out; "homesickness can be defined as a depression-like reaction to leaving a familiar environment, accompanied by ruminations about and a strong preoccupation with the former environment as well as a strong longing to return to it" (2004, p. 1155).

Fisher and Hood (1987) sees homesickness as "a complex cognitive motivational-emotional state concerned with grieving for, yearning for and being occupied with thoughts of home" (Sun & Hagedorn, 2016, p. 944). Others viewed "homesickness as a "mini-grief" whereby relocation and adjustment to college life may turn into

significant stressors when resources and coping strategies are lacking" (Kegel, 2009, p. 68).

According to Beck, Taylor, & Robbins, (2003) homesickness occurs when a student or individual: (1) leaves his or her strong social support back at home (2) is faced with adjustment difficulties (3) leaves a familiar environment (4) feels a sense of loss in the new environment; (cited in Sun, 2015). Because of these reasons and more international students gets homesick.

Homesickness is related to "missing family, missing friends, feeling lonely, adjustment problems, and with constant ruminations of home, with the presence of feeling extremely insecure with the presence of extreme "disliking the new environment" (Majid, 2014, p. 19-20).

For the purposes of this research, homesickness will be defined as missing home as a result of one or more challenges faced in the new environment.

2.2 Types of Homesickness

There are 2 forms of homesickness; mild and severe homesickness (Sun & Hagedorn, 2016). Mild homesickness is a light form of homesickness while severe homesickness is an extreme form of homesickness. Mild homesickness is the regular or normal type of homesickness, depression and suicidal thoughts are very less, severe homesickness as the name implies is the very extreme type of homesickness; the student's or individual's life might be at stake.

> "Although a mild form of homesickness may improve healthy attachment behaviors and coping skills, intense homesickness can result in anguish and lead to a lack of concentration and ability to perform". "Severe homesickness in college students can produce less adaptability to the new

environment and higher levels of psychological disturbance and absentmindedness". (Sun & Hagedorn, 2016, p 943).

Sun & Hagedorn, (2016) combined the knowledge of other scholars to give us the basic differences between mild and severe homesickness. Table 1 below shows the differences between the mild and severe type(s) of homesickness.

Table 1: Types of Homesickness

Mild Homesickness	Severe Homesickness
Frequent thoughts of home	CONSTANT thoughts of home
Mild absentmindedness	Severe absent mindedness
Mild anxiety, distress and grief	Severe anxiety, distress and grief
Some or little sadness	Extreme sadness
Some feeling of helplessness	Strong feeling of helplessness
Partake in some activities	Withdrawal from most activities

(Sun & Hagedorn, 2016, p. 945).

When talking about types of homesickness, others refer to "cat-type" and "dog-type" homesickness (Vingerhoets, 2005).

> "Vingerhoets (2005) wrote about "cat-type" and "dog-type" homesickness. Just as dogs attach more strongly to people than places, one part of homesickness is missing people; and just as cats strongly attach to places and the physical environment, another part of homesickness is missing the physical place". (Watt & Badger, 2009, p. 517; Vingerhoets, 2005).

Homesickness is a combination of missing people and place; dogs miss people and cats miss the physical space or place. Basically, cats are strongly attached to their physical environment while dogs are strongly attached to persons or people.

> "After a move a cat may run away and attempt to return to the former home. Dogs by contrast reportedly generally show more signs of distress when being separated from their owner and they apparently seem to appreciate being united with their owners". (Vingerhoets, 2005, p. 5)

An example was given in (Vingerhoets, 2005) study to prove the cat and dog type connection to homesickness, with emphasis on the dog type. There was a puppy that lived in a laboratory; this puppy was very familiar with the person who owns him/her, which is normal. After a while, the puppy was later sold to a new family; while this puppy was living with this new family the puppy refused to eat, sleep or drink because it was homesick. After 5 days the new family had to return the puppy to his/her original owners because they were afraid the puppy might die if it continues staying with them. When the puppy returned home it got back to its original self in a few hours.

This practical example proves that homesickness does not only happen to human beings, it happens to animals as well; the cat and dog type of homesickness proves that. When an individual or an international student changes his or her environment for whatever reason, they either miss the physical environment (cat type) or the people in it (dog type) or both the physical environment and the people (cat and dog type).

2.3 Stages of Homesickness

The U curve by Lysgaard explains the stages individuals or international students go through in order to adjust to a new environment. (Omachinski, 2014).

Illustration 1: U curve by Lysgaard
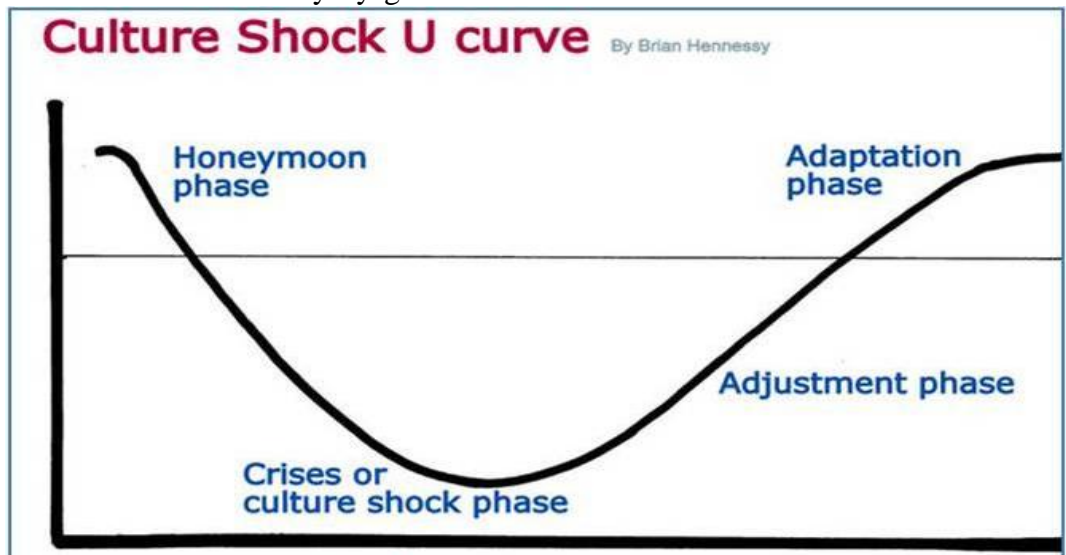
The first stage is the honeymoon stage; it is the sweet, fun and exciting feeling that comes with international students changing their environment, experiencing a new culture and meeting new friends; this stage is normally experienced during the first few weeks of school. After the first weeks of being happy in the new environment (mid semester) the second stage happens, which is the culture shock stage. This stage is at the bottom of the U Curve; it is the stage where they have to relate with people in the new environment, make new friends and get familiar with the locals. In most cases, the international student or individual feels lost in the new environment because of racism, language barrier, no sense of belonging and other problems; these makes them: sad, lonely, anxious, depressed, isolated, not able to make friends ("friendless") and homesick. IF they are interested in adjusting to the new

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environment the third stage which is the adjustment stage happens. Because of their interest in adjusting to the new environment, they start to learn the local language, eat the local food, be friends with the locals and learn about the host community's culture, tradition, way of life and so on; in very few cases they dress like the locals, all these helps them to easily adjust to the new environment and make new friends easily. If all three stages are successful, they proceed to the final stage which is the adaption stage. At this stage, the international student or individual has successfully adjusted to the new environment and feels a sense of belonging. (Omachinski, 2014).

2.4 Impacts of Homesickness

Homesickness is as complex as it sounds; leaving an old environment to a new one comes with a lot of negative thoughts and emotions (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, Van Heck, & Kirschbaum, 1999). It is positively related to: difficulties in meeting new friends, fear of heights, little or no club membership(s), avoiding romantic relationship(s) with the opposite sex and less going out. (Binfet & Passmore, 2016)

Research has also found out that homesickness is strongly related to depression, specifically reactive depression. Reactive depression is not the normal depression we all know about, it is caused by a current stressful event or situation in one's life (Majid, 2014). Also (Beck, Taylor, & Robbins, 2003) relates homesickness to Adjustment Disorder with Depressed Mood (ADDM), which is a feeling of hopelessness and sadness after a stressful event. Examples of these stressful events are: separation from family and friends, no sense of belonging in the new environment, language barrier (reactive depression), change of environment, relocation (ADDM) and so on; homesickness happens when one or more of these stressful events occur.

Other negative effects of homesickness are: nervousness, a high level of tearfulness, eating and sleeping disorders, (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune,2011), poor decision making, poor academic performance, anxiety, withdrawal from fun activities, low self-esteem, isolation, bitterness, loneliness, depression, stress, fear, self-depreciation, dissatisfaction with life, anxiety, self-doubt and many more. (Majid, 2014)

2.5 Causes of Homesickness

Homesickness consists of 5 things according to (Kegel, 2009, p. 68): "missing family, missing friends, feeling lonely, adjustment problems, and home ruminations".

Homesickness is missing family: being far away from your family makes it impossible to see (physically), feel, hug or touch them; this makes one feel homesick and sad, the only means of communicating with them is through phone calls and the internet. Missing friends: this is understandable because friends left behind are people one is already familiar with and "very used" to; making new friends in a new environment is not an easy thing, I personally consider it a very stressful activity; you have to start talking about yourself over and over and over again, you start getting asked questions like: What is your name? Where are you from? What do you like to do during your spare time? What are your likes and dislikes? Can I have your phone number? ; friends in one's home country already know the answers to these questions. Feeling lonely: being apart from family and "old friends" makes international students feel lonely. Adjustment problem: being in a new environment comes along with adjusting to it, adjusting to a new environment is not as easy as it sounds; you have to eat the local food(s), learn the local language, listen to their

music and many other adjustments. Home rumination: constantly thinking of home makes international students miss home more and this makes them sad, lonely and depressed.

2.6 Dealing with Unfamiliar Environment

There are different theories that best explains the ability of an individual to adjust to a new environment, one of them is the Attachment Theory.

The Attachment Theory "suggests that differences in how parents relate to their children during infancy and early childhood may provide a psychological advantage or liability to an individual's ability to comfortably deal with an unfamiliar environment" (Hannigan, 2007, p.67). According to this theory; the availability, care and support parents or guardians show towards their child or ward determines the behaviour of the child/ward and how well the child/ward will adapt in a new environment.

The different types of attachment according to this theory are: (1) Secure attachment: the child or ward knows that their parents or guardians are constantly supportive and available no matter what happens. (2) Anxious resistant attachment: the parents' or guardians' "constant" support and availability is not certain. This brings about tendencies of separation, anxiety and abandonment. (3) Anxious avoidant attachment: the child or ward knows for a fact that their parents or guardians are constantly not supportive and available and because of this reason they are narcissist in nature. (Hannigan, 2007).

Relating this to adults and homesickness; individuals or international students categorized under the secure attachment type feel less homesick in a new

environment, the anxious resistant attachment type experience difficulties while adjusting to the new environment and the anxious avoidant attachment type are dependent on themselves alone. The anxious resistant attachment type are likely to be more homesick than the other two attachment types because they prefer to be friends with themselves rather than be friends with people who will help them adjust to the environment and feel less homesick. (Hannigan, 2007)

2.7 Factors Which Determines Homesickness

2.7.1 Demographic Factors

2.7.1.1 Gender

Female international students have a higher level of homesickness than the male international students and the female international students also have more adjustment difficulties than the male international students in a new environment (Sun, 2015); this means that the male international students adjust better and feel less homesick in a new environment than the female international students.

Research shows that when the female international students have reliable social support in the new environment; it helps reduce their level of anxiety, depression and homesickness. In the case of the male international students, social support does not have that much impact on their level of anxiety, depression and homesickness. (Sümer, Poyrazli, & Grahame, 2008).

2.7.1.2 Age

The younger international students are more homesick than the older ones (Sümer, Poyrazli, & Grahame, 2008). It is manly the younger people who usually choose to study abroad while the older once prefer to study in their countries of birth because

they love to be with their families. In short, there is a lower incidence of homesickness amongst older international students.

2.7.1.3 Marital Status

International students who are married have lesser adjustment problems and stress in the new environment than the ones who are unmarried (Akhtar & Kröner-Herwig, 2015). It may as well be that, international students who are married have their spouses to talk to when they are bored, lonely or homesick in the new environment. This helps to reduce their level of homesickness, stress and loneliness.

2.7.1.4 Race

Race is also one of the factors that contributes to homesickness in the lives of international students.

> "Homesickness can be exacerbated among minority racial groups because of students' level of perceived discrimination. When the college environment is dominated by the white middle-class culture, non-white students may have a higher level of perceived discrimination than their white peers, such as the feelings of alienation and isolation, which result in an increased difficulty of college adjustment and a higher level of homesickness". (Sun, 2015, p.19-20).

The level of discrimination in the host community determines the international student's level of homesickness and their ability to adjust to the new environment (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). For example in (Akhtar & Kröner-Herwig, 2015) study, African "international" students often complained of racial discrimination (being treated unfairly, intimidated and being spoken to less frequently because of their skin colour and countries of origin). Many of these students are hurt by these actions and it apparently made them homesick and adjustment to the new environment became more difficult for them.

2.7.1.5 Internationality

Various researches have proven that international students face a higher level of homesickness than domestic students because international students are in a foreign land and because of this reason they are exposed to many challenges; such as a language barrier and racism, which in the long run makes them: homesick, lonely, sad, and isolated (Sun, 2015).

2.7.2 Psychological Traits

2.7.2.1 Social Support

Friends are social support; they make staying in a new environment: fun, comfortable and satisfying. Social support determines an international student's level of homesickness (Sun, 2015), good social support help to reduce the thoughts of missing home; through their provision of positive energy, encouragement, companionship and fun activities. Having no social support equals: homesickness, boredom, depression and anxiety. Strong social support reduces homesickness while weak or no social support increases homesickness (Liu, 2009).

Poyrazli & Lopez, (2007) believes that international students with "plenty of social support" are less likely to feel homesick.

> "In particular, students with higher social support tended to experience higher adjustment levels and lower levels of depression and acculturative stress. Results suggest that social support might serve as a buffer and help students cope more effectively with challenges they encounter". (Sümer, Poyrazli, & Grahame 2008,p. 431).

Social support also determines how well international students will adjust to their new environment. International students adjust to the new environment faster and more easily when they have a GOOD social support in the new environment.

2.7.2.2 Perceived Acceptance

The degree of acceptance of international students in the "new" community determines their level of homesickness (Sun, 2015), you cannot be happy in an environment where you are discriminated or not accepted.

> "The acceptance by the larger community rather the small circle of close friends predicted the participants' homesickness. No matter how supportive the circle of close friends is, if the newcomers feel being rejected in the larger community, they will have a higher chance of becoming homesick". (Sun, 2015, p. 22)

2.7.2.3 Interpersonal Trust

This trust is "strongly" related to parental rearing. The level of the international student's parental support can determine their level of homesickness. International students who are children of supportive parents are likely to feel less homesick in the new environment because they will naturally be able to relate with others, make friends conveniently and most importantly be able to build trust with others. On the contrary, international students who are children of unsupportive parents will be homesick because they will not see the need to get familiar with their new environment or the people in it (Sun, 2015).

2.7.2.4 Dependency on Others

> "Dependency on others has been shown to be another important predictor of homesickness. Students with a higher level of dependency on family are more inclined to separation anxiety, resulting in a higher level of homesickness compared to the students with lower dependency on others" (Sun, 2015, p. 23-24).

2.7.2.5 Self-efficacy and Self Esteem

International Students with a high level of self-efficacy and self-esteem will feel less homesick while international students with a low level of self-efficacy and self-esteem will have a high level of homesickness. (Sun, 2015)

2.7.3 Environmental Variables

2.7.3.1 Decision Control

Decision control in this context is the willingness of the international student to study abroad. Was it your choice to study abroad? Or you were forced to study abroad? "If students had little control over the choice to leave, then they would experience more homesickness than those who can make the choice by themselves" (Sun, 2015, p.25).

2.7.3.2 Contact with Home

Contact with home determines the international students level of homesickness,

> "Watt and Badger (2009) conducted two studies to ascertain the effect on students of making phone calls to people in their countries of origin. A positive relationship was found between such phone calls and homesickness. However, no relationship was found between phone calls received and homesickness, Watt and Badger (2009). This led them to suggest that contact with homes did not necessarily reduce the level of homesickness, but acted as a natural response to intense homesick feelings". (Sun, 2015, p. 26&27; Watt & Badger, 2009).

CONTACT WITH HOME INCREASES HOMESICKNESS RATHER THAN REDUCE IT.

2.7.3.3 Social Activity

The more the international students participates in social activities the lower their level of homesickness. Also belonging to a club, group or association that represents your interest, passion, goals and beliefs helps reduce homesickness as well (Sun, 2015). For example, a student who likes reading books joining the book club, this reduces the student's thoughts of home.

2.8 Reasons for Homesickness

2.8.1 Racial Discrimination

Racism is one of the strongest predictors of homesickness (Tartakovsky, 2007), it could be as a result of: skin colour, gender and religious or economical differences.

The level of racial discrimination in the host community determines the international student's level of homesickness; the higher the level of racial discrimination the higher the level of homesickness and the lower the level of discrimination the lower the international student's level of homesickness. (De Araujo, 2011).

Poyrazli & Lopez, hypothesized that the "level of perceived discrimination will predict the level of homesickness that international students experience" (2007, p.268), it was tested and supported. "Furthermore, students who perceive discrimination may isolate themselves socially, which could lead to higher levels of homesickness" (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007, p.275).

The following are examples of research interviews that addressed the different kinds of racism international students faced in various countries in the world: (1) (Kozikoglu & Aslan, 2018) study was a focus group interview held with Syrian students in Turkey. (2) (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011) a study done in Southern California with international students from different countries. (3) (Boafo-Arthur, 2014) an international student's interview done in the USA.

2.8.2 Lack of Social Support

Lack of social support in the new environment is also one of the reasons why international students miss home (Sun & Hagedorn, 2016), when they have friends or people to talk to in the new environment thoughts of home is reduced but when the student doesn't have friends in the new environment; the thoughts of home keeps building up and reoccurring on a daily. That is why it is best for international students to relate and make friends with people in the new environment rather than be isolated or alone.

Social support influences the level of depression of international students in their new environment(s) (De Araujo, 2011). Furthermore, a good and quality social support reduces stress and homesickness in a new environment (Yeh & Inose, 2003).

> "A lack of social support is a significant contributor to problematic adjustment paradigms. This is because international students who feel an intense loss of social support, intimate relationships, and a rupture of their social networks through relocation may present with psychological ailments that include stressors such as academic stress, loneliness, particularly amongst newcomers to the campuses, eating disorders, drug and alcohol addiction and a host of other troubling conditions that preclude them from performing to their best ability" (Patron, 2014, p. 28-29).

2.8.3 Language Barrier

This is one of the constant problems international students face in a new destination, it is one of the major reasons why international students get homesick. (Sandhu, 1994) refers to those international students who do not understand the local language as the "silent minority".

Results in Poyrazli & Lopez, (2007) further proved that language barrier limits international students from developing friendships or relationships with a lot of students and locals in the new environment. Also, it increases homesickness.

2.8.4 Low Emotional Intelligence

Emotional intelligence is the ability to identify and manage one's own emotions, as well as the emotions of others. Abbas et al., (2018) came to the conclusion that emotional intelligence combats homesickness, the higher the level of emotional intelligence, the lower the level of homesickness and vice versa.

2.9 Types of International Student Friendships

1. Co-national friendships: it means friends from the same country, for example a Nigerian student being friends with a fellow Nigerian (Brown, 2009). This is the

most common type of friendship among international students; it is formed naturally in the early weeks of the international student's arrival.

> "These co-national friendships give students an opportunity to enhance their understanding of the new culture through discussions, social interaction, and intellectual exchange with other students who are experiencing the same emotions". (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011, p. 282)

Majority of international students prefer to be friends with their co-nationals rather than others (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune 2011). This is understandable because they share or have a lot of things in common: language, food, clothing, culture and tradition, this type of friendship gives international students that "home-like" feeling and that feeling that you are with one of your own (Majid, 2014). It is a warm and comforting friendship, it has so many advantages or benefits attached to it; it helps the international students cope easily in the new environment, feel less lonely and less homesick; (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007) it also increases their self-esteem. Co-national friendship is more like a brother and sister bond, the difference in this case is there are no blood relations. Co-nationals defend, support and help each other.

On the contrary, according to (Brown, 2009) study; some international students felt that relating with their fellow co-nationals was not really a good thing for them; they felt that being friends with them: gave them that home feeling (which they did not want), it limited them from being friends with students from other countries, it stopped them from exploring and getting to know the host community. International students who have difficulties speaking or understanding English and would love to learn how to; when they socialize mainly with co-nationals it makes learning English more difficult. Furthermore, international students study abroad not only because of

the educational opportunities but also to meet and associate with people from parts of the world which have different cultures.

2. Host national friendships: friendship with people from the host community. International students will encounter locals on a daily basis; they own stores, you meet them in: public buses, banks, universities, grocery stores, ATM and so on. Being friends with them is very important, "international students who had more contact with host nationals reported higher levels of satisfaction, less homesickness, and less loneliness in their study abroad experience". (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune 2011, p. 283).

If international students want to enjoy their stay in a new environment, it is essential and helpful for them to be friends with the locals. This type of friendship helps international students to be comfortable in the new environment, adapt easily, learn the local language, eat the local food, know more about the host community's culture and traditions have a sense of belonging and feel less homesick (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune 2011).

> "International students with proportionately more host national individuals in their friendship network relative to co-nationals will report higher levels of satisfaction and contentment and report feeling less homesick" (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune 2011, p.285).

Host national friendships provide great social support for international students in a new environment (Tartakovsky, 2007). However, this kind of friendship is not often formed because of language barrier, discrimination and so many other reasons (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune 2011). Kozikoglu & Aslan (2018) cited examples of how locals treated some international students badly.

If international students see and know that the local community accepts them, they will have a sense of belonging and their level of homesickness will be less, of course if the locals treat international students badly they will feel homesick (Thomas, 2018). International students acceptance by the host community is as important as the trip itself; the locals have a major role to play in making their study experience worthwhile.

3. Multinational friendships: friends with people from different countries. Educational tourism brings together millions of students from different countries, race and religions; it promotes unity in diversity, in the sense that it unifies all these differences into one. The advantages of this type of friendship, apart from it being a unifying factor are: the international students will learn about the cultures of different countries, learn different languages, and encounter different types of clothing, music, dance, food and way of life. In addition, (Sun, 2015) with this kind of friendship; international students adjust to the environment more easily, feel a sense of belonging, feel less lonely, less suicidal, less depressed and less homesick.

2.10 Impacts on the Relationship with Others

2.10.1 Language Barrier

Educational tourism brings about unity between races, religions & sexes. But this unity cannot materialize due to so many problems, one of this "many" problems is LANGUAGE BARRIER; because of this language barrier international students and domestic students including members of the host community are unable to communicate and understand each other's language.

> "Despite the massive influx of international students, many of them encounter numerous difficulties in the process of acquiring a degree in a foreign country. Amidst all the problems faced, the language difficulty

happens to be one of the greatest academic challenges hindering easy study for international students" (Elega & Özad, 2017, p.488).

According to the data collected through questionnaires in (Malaklolunthu & Selan, 2011) study, language adjustment or barrier was ranked the 5th problem international students face in a new environment.

Countries where courses are taught in English are also faced with language barrier; for students whose first language is not English, a minimum score as been set for all English tests, as part of the admission requirements; still yet there is still language barrier (Mori, 2000). There are several English tests such as Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL), International English Language Testing System (IELTS), Pearson Test of English (PTE) and so on, they are done to help examine an individual's level of English in various areas (speaking, writing, reading and listening). But it is still not guaranteed that a student who passes this test will be able to speak, write or understand English (Mori, 2000). To be able to speak, understand and write English takes many years of constant practice and it is not something you learn in a hurry; learning it for a short period of time is not enough it needs constant practice like I earlier said.

English is widely spoken in various countries all over the world. In North Cyprus the official language is Turkish; English is mostly spoken in the classroom and hardly spoken outside the classroom (stores and supermarkets). This makes it very difficult for international students to communicate with the locals and build friendships in the new environment (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011).

> "Studying in a foreign country with a different language limits the
> monolingual student sojourner to interactions with persons from the

homeland, and in the best of circumstances, to those individuals from other countries with a common linguistic tradition. However without knowledge of the host countries language, there is a strong likelihood that the student sojourner will experience homesickness since the host culture will appear to be particularly foreign." (Hannigan, 2007, p.65).

Language barrier or problem in communication, whatever you choose to call it, brings about: homesickness, adjustment difficulties (Kegel, 2015), (Sun & Hagedorn, 2016) loneliness, no sense of belonging, (Akhtar & Kröner-Herwig, 2015) low self-esteem, anxiety and depression. According to one of the results in (Sümer, Poyrazli, & Grahame, 2008) study, the best remedy for language barrier is a good social support. A good social support will understand and speak your language, be there for you when you need someone to talk to, encourage you to freely express yourself with them, help you communicate with the locals, help you adjust to the new environment and help you reduce the thoughts of missing home.

> "International students with lower levels of English skills had higher levels of homesickness. This result suggests that lower English skills may be a barrier for international students that reduce their likelihood of developing relationships or friendships with people from their host countries" (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007, p.275).

> "The fact that many international students have a poor command of the host language poses difficulties in making host national friends. Spoken English skills are a prominent factor affecting the development of intercultural friendships and in many cases linguistic knowledge inhibits individuals from getting to know each other" (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011, p. 289-290).

Kegel (2009) claimed that international students' satisfaction with their social support in the new environment influences their level of homesickness in the new environment.

How well the international student speaks the host country's language also has an impact on their level of homesickness in the new environment (Hannigan, 2007).

> "The lack of the host countries language locks international students out of many interactions, infantilizes them and sets the stage for homesickness. Some but few, can find a way around the linguistic barrier in the task of establishing friendships which is an important component in overcoming homesickness" (Hannigan 2007, p. 65).

Language barrier influences how many friends the international student will have in a new environment (De Araujo, 2011).

Language barrier influences the adjustment level of the international students in a new environment. When the official language in the international student's home country is not the same as that of the host community, the international student is likely to experience difficulties while adjusting to the new environment and a high level of homesickness but if the international student's home country's language is the same as that of the host community; there will be less homesickness, a better, smoother and easier adjustment to the new environment. (Sümer, Poyrazli, & Grahame, 2008)

Language barrier determines the international students' level of satisfaction with their new environment. If international students are not faced with language barrier they will more likely be satisfied with their new environment, be less homesick and have a sense of belonging but if international students are faced with language barrier they will less likely be satisfied with their new environment, they will have no sense of belonging and their level of homesickness will be high. When international students are not satisfied with their new environment they start to wonder if travelling abroad was a right decision to make. (De Araujo, 2011).

Language barrier also affects the job opportunities of international students in the new environment, be it in school or outside school (Alazzi & Chiodo, 2006). Turkish is the official language in North Cyprus; in most cases, for international students to be employed in North Cyprus they must be able to speak and understand Turkish to an extent because most people in the host community speak Turkish, those who learn the language are most likely to get employed. Having a job helps international students get used to the environment, learn the local language, make more friends, get to know the locals more, learn to eat the local food and most importantly reduce homesickness; having a job is a coping strategy for homesickness.

Kozikoglu & Aslan (2018) claimed that language barrier affects international students academic performance; this is as regards international students who choose their courses to be taught in English when they themselves are unable to understand, write or speak English. (Mori, 2000), these international students find it hard to take notes or jot things down, ask questions and make contributions during lectures. (Kozikoglu & Aslan, 2018) also added that they have to translate to their home country's language first before they are able to understand what is being taught, some read multiple times before they are able to understand, some say the teachers speak too fast so they are unable to understand, some copy each other's assignments and some do copy and paste.

Alazzi & Chiodo (2006) also added that language barrier is the reason why some students are unable to complete their thesis or dissertation.

According to Elega & Özad (2017) study, Nigerian students in Northern Cyprus; use Goggle translator, iVoice translator and iTranslate to translate Turkish words to English and it also helps them communicate Turkish with the locals.

2.11 Impacts of Homesickness on Academic Performance

"Other studies have found a significant relationship between intensive homesickness and cognitive failures, poor concentration, decreased work quality, lower academic performance, and higher scores on anxiety and depression measures" (Sun & Hagedorn, 2016 ,p.945).

"At its most intense, homesickness can lead to withdrawal from school. Indeed, homesick students are 3 times more likely to drop out of school than those who are not homesick. Other clinical symptoms include difficulty in concentrating, memory lapses, neurotic behavior and social isolation" (Thurber & Walton, 2012, p. 2).

Homesickness most of the time brings about a bad academic performance. Obviously international students who miss home will not fully focus on their education because the thoughts in their head(s) are the thoughts of home. For example: Is my dad fine? Is my mum fine? Have they eaten? Do they miss me? Am I supposed to be here? Did I make a mistake coming here to study? and so on. These thoughts will make them lose focus and they pay little or no attention to school work. (Sun & Hagedorn, 2016) international students who are less distressed or homesick have a better academic performance than international students who are distressed or homesick.

Furthermore, homesickness can cause difficulties in memorizing and concentrating, (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007), absent mindedness, physical complaints, anxiety and many more (Watt & Badger, 2009).

"This study found that students whose parents have more college education were less likely to feel homesick in their first year in college. One possible explanation is that parents who received more College education have a better understanding about college life, thus they are more capable of providing advice and support for their children during transition to college" (Sun & Hagedorn, 2016, p.953).

> "Students whose parents had no college degrees and those whose parents had bachelor's degrees tend to receive lower GPAs when compared to peers whose parents obtained graduate degrees". (Sun & Hagedorn, 2016, p.950).

The first months or the first year in schooling abroad is the most important time in the life of the international student; this period determines their academic performance and their level of adjustment to the new environment. Sun & Hagedorn (2016) believes that the educational level of an international student's parent(s) determines the academic performance of the student and their level of homesickness in the new environment. The international students whose parents have graduate degrees have higher GPA's and lower level of homesickness while international students whose parents have less than a graduate degree have lower GPA's and a higher level of homesickness; the reason being that parents who have a graduate degree have had more exposure of college life and as a result of this exposure they are able to give their children important advice(s) which will help them excel in their academics and feel less homesick all at the same time.

According to the push-pull theory of school disengagement; students can either be pushed or pulled out of school. Push factors are certain behaviours of a student that gives the school no other option but to expel or terminate the student's program; behaviours like constant failures, poor grades, frequently skipping classes and not doing assignments. The Pull factor is the direct opposite of the push factor; this is when certain situations force a student to drop out of school; some of these situations are: **homesickness,** family problems, financial problems, employment, pregnancy and marriage. There is also the fall factor; it is based on the student's feelings towards the school and their new environment. For example, do they like the school?

Is the school boring? Do they have a sense of belonging in the new environment?. (Binfet & Passmore, 2016).

In order to avoid the push, pull or fall factors it is important for the school to help battle homesickness in the lives of these students through: group work, encouraging multinational friendships, social activities, picnics and other interesting activities (Binfet & Passmore, 2016).

If international students are intrinsically motivated they will have a good academic performance, increase in their self-esteem and a low level of homesickness (Baker, 2004). Intrinsic motivation is a type of motivation where the individual is passionate about a particular thing. For example, a student's best course is history and he or she wants to become an historian in the future, if this student goes abroad to study history and international relations; this student will be very happy to be there and will never miss classes because he or she has a passion for history and it is in line with his/her future goals. Because of this passion this student will do exceptionally well in school, he/she will be happy in the new environment, will be willing to adjust to the new environment and will feel less homesick. But if the student is extrinsically motivated, he or she will likely get homesick and his or her academic performance will not be as good as that of the student who are intrinsically motivated.

Extrinsic motivation is a type of motivation that is not based on passion; instead it is based on pay, rewards or recognition; the key point here is that this type of motivation is not based on passion, you are just doing it to get a reward in the end. For example a worker is sent abroad to get a Master's degree and is promised a promotion when he or she gets back. This is a nice offer but that worker is doing it

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not because he or she as a passion for it, the worker is doing it because of the reward attached to it. This individual is more likely to become homesick because he or she is in the new environment because of the reward that was promised, not because he or she "genuinely" wanted to be there. The adjustment level of this worker will be slower than that of a student who is intrinsically motivated; at times the worker can get bored, lonely and homesick.

According to Pfeiffer (2001) homesickness brings about different kinds of stresses to international students and a person who is stressed "negatively" can never be productive. These stresses makes the international students pay less attention to their school work, they will: lack concentration, skip classes, have poor grades and be homesick. This stress is the negative type of stress; positive stress challenges an individual to bring about a good performance but as regards homesickness, the negative type of stress best explains it. Emmanuel, Adom & Solomon (2014) discovered that there is a strong relationship between stress, homesickness and academic performance.

Another very important point is, the facilities and structures in the new environment has an effect on international students academic performance and their level of homesickness (Rienties, Beausaert, Grohnert, Niemantsverdriet, & Kommers, 2012). A good university should have: fast internet, good laboratories, friendly staffs, a help desk for enquires, interesting social activities, classrooms with good air conditioning and so on. The point is having these and more, helps the international student feel relaxed and happy to be in the new environment. For example, if an international student comes from a country where classrooms are overcrowded with students, non-functioning laboratories, no internet, no stable electricity and other problems; it is

very unlikely that this student will be homesick if his or her new school abroad has fast unlimited internet, 10-15 people in a class, stable electricity, air conditioned class rooms, and an up to date library. The fact that all these are present will make the student happy to be there and be very ready to bring his or her A game to everything regarding school work; these things will also help distract the international student from missing home.

Thomas (2018) showed that homesickness can be related to excessive use of cell phones and this as a negative effect on the student's academic performance. According to Patron (2014) students who are homesick tend to use their phones A LOT, some of them get addicted to it and apparently they neglect their studies.

Social support in the new environment improves international students' academic performance; there will also be a sense of belonging and a low level of homesickness when you have social support in the new environment (Rienties et al., 2012) "Interaction with peers is positively associated with many student outcomes such as grade point average (GPA), intellectual self-esteem, and interpersonal skills" (Goguen, Hiester, & Nordstrom, 2010, p. 320).

For example, an international student has a friend with a common academic goal of graduating with high honours; this friend will motivate you to attend classes, read for exams or test, do assignments and also read with you in the library.

> "Having a trustworthy and loyal friend was associated with higher GPA during the first college semester. The importance of trustworthiness and loyalty is consistent with research on college students showing that the social support of friends serves as a buffer to stress as well as reduces homesickness both of which could be associated with greater academic success" (Goguen, Hiester, & Nordstrom 2010, p.332).

Furthermore, the relationship between the lecturers and students determines the international students' academic performance and their level of homesickness (Hamzah, Lucky, & Joarder, 2014). Lecturers or instructors can make international students feel at home in a new environment by being friendly and available, such an approach by lecturers is likely to help reduce their level of homesickness and improve their academic performance.

Another school of thought believes that if a student is bored or homesick, the student tends to spend more time with friends and this can result in a poor academic performance. In the sense that, the student goes out with friends, shops with them, party with them and so on; this socializing can distract the student from studying. (Goguen, Hiester, & Nordstrom, 2010). This is also very understandable; because sometimes friends can be distractions at different points in time, friends can either be a source of support or a distraction.

2.12 Impact of Sense of Belonging on Homesickness

Homesickness can develop where there is no sense of belonging. When an international student has a sense of belonging, it is VERY likely that there will be a low level of homesickness and the student's academic performance will also be good. However, when international students have no sense of belonging; they can become homesick and their school performance can suffer; in some cases such students may not be eligible to move to their next year in school (Sun & Hagedorn , 2016).

2.13 Marital Status

Hamzah, Lucky, & Joarder, (2014) believes that the marital status of the international student's parents has an effect on their academic performance and their level of

homesickness. International students whose parents are happily married, are constantly motivated by both "happy" parents; this results in a good academic performance and less homesickness, while international students whose parents are divorced have poor academic performances and a higher level of homesickness.

2.14 Impacts on Health

"Though homesick feelings are considered culturally universal and a common reaction to leaving one's home environment, intense experiences can precipitate mental health symptoms that warrant clinical attention" (Kegel, 2015, p.19).

"Severe homesickness in college students can produce less adaptability to the new environment and higher levels of psychological disturbance and absent mindedness" (Sun & Hagedorn, 2016, p. 943).

An international student's level of homesickness can be predicted before their arrival into the new country; international students who experience homesickness and depression before leaving their home countries maintain this feeling even when they arrive in the new location. Homesickness is a state of sadness; then depression and anxiety sets in; the more depressed the international student is, the higher their level of homesickness. Homesickness, anxiety, sadness and depression are all family members, they work hand in hand and they all threaten the mental wellbeing of the student or individual. (Saravanan, Alias, & Mohamad, 2017)

"In accord with studies of children and adolescents, studies of university students living away from home suggest that homesickness is most commonly associated with anxiety, depression, and loneliness. Intense homesickness is particularly problematic when it exacerbates preexisting mood and anxiety disorders, or precipitates new mental health or physical health problems, such as insomnia, appetite changes, gastrointestinal upset, and even immune deficiencies and diabetes" (Thurber & Walton, 2012, p.2).

"Separation from home has been acknowledged to be a significant stressor linked to somatic health problems, including deficiencies in the immune system and leukemia, as well as psychological problems, for example depression. A common phenomenon in those who have left home is homesickness. Homesick persons report feelings of unhappiness, being

physically unwell, anxiousness and depression"(Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, Van Heck, & Kirschbaum 1999, p. 189).

"College students who were homesick received low scores on adaptation to the college environment and higher scores on physical complaints, anxiety, and absentmindedness" (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007, p.264).

Homesickness is detrimental to the human health, it should be taken MORE seriously. Apart from the common health problems which homesickness can cause (loneliness and depression); other health problems (Vingerhoets, 2005) can be diabetes mellitus, somatic diseases, (Mori, 2000) dysfunctions in pituitary- adrenal activities, physical tension, high blood pressure, fever, perspiration, sleep disorder, loss of appetite, headaches, ulcer, gastro intestinal problems (due to alcohol intake), fatigue, mental stress, break out, (Watt & Badger, 2009) stomach aches, (Kegel, 2015) suicidal thoughts, (Patron, 2014) high blood pressure, (Sandhu, 1994) insomnia (lack of sleep) and sexual dysfunction (no pleasure or satisfaction during sexual activity). They are all positively associated with homesickness.

In addition, Vingerhoets (2005) found evidence from previous research, "It was shown that as many as 72% in the cancer group had experienced a residential move at some point during the two-year period preceding the onset of the disease" (Vingerhoets, 2005, p. 1-2). Homesickness also has been clearly linked with depression among college students, regardless of levels of emotional stability or self-esteem. Alarmingly, cases of homesickness-fueled suicide have been reported" (Kegel, 2015, p.6).

Depression is strongly connected to homesickness according to the results in (Saravanan, Alias, & Mohamad, 2017) research, there are many reasons why depression and homesickness happen to international students. Saravanan, Alias, & Mohamad (2017) identified two theories that best explains why international students face depression and homesickness in a new environment. (1) The environmental resource theory: states that when international students face environmental factors like: language barrier, no sense of belonging, discrimination, dissatisfaction with the environment and lack of social support, it results to depression which later leads to homesickness. (2) The person–environment congruence model: maintains that international students come to a new environment with a lot of expectations; which could be recreational (having fun), interpersonal (making new friends), financial (making more money) and so on. If these expectations are not met or they are faced with language barrier, no sense of belonging and other problems; they can become depressed, sad, lonely and homesick.

According to Watt & Badger (2009) Homesickness, when severe, can result in suicidal thoughts which sometimes leads to suicide. "People whose belonging needs are not met in the new environment may surrender to feelings of distress. Feeling socially accepted in the community is an important component to fulfill the need to belong" (Sun, 2016, p.947). "International students who hold intolerant attitudes toward host nationals may experience greater depression and other mental health concerns" (Kegel, 2015, p.9).

2.15 Impacts on Emotions/Behaviour

Homesickness is a combination of anxiety and depression, (Verschuur, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Spinhoven, & Duijsens 2004) calls it ("Cothymia").

"Living away from home for the first time can add anxiety of being separated from existing family bonds for many new college students. In addition to the changes in family support, college students are also distanced from their previous network of friends and forced to face the challenge of forming a new social network" (Sun & Hagedorn, 2016, p.944).

Homesickness comes with a lot of emotions especially negative; some of them are:

2.15.1 Mood Swings

Abbas, Aqeel, Wenhong, Aman, & Zahra (2018) described mood swing(s) as the first symptom to identify homesickness; it is also the first and most important after effect of homesickness.

"Mood swings are the rapid change of the mood in a short period of time. It occurs usually in extreme forms. It is also defined as the change in mood in a short period of time with no specific reason. These mood swings may be once in a week or periodically which may lead to severe psychological disorder" (Abbas et al., 2018, p. 357).

Results in (Abbas et al., 2018) showed that homesickness brings about mood swings, negative mood swings to be precise. Mood swings cannot be controlled neither can they be understood; they occur anywhere and at any time of the day. When an international student is homesick; mood swings can occur and reoccur several times a day but if the homesickness is severe, it can last for several hours during the day. The higher the level of homesickness the more frequent the mood swing episodes.

2.15.2 Anger

Anger is an emotion characterized by antagonism towards someone or something you feel has deliberately done you wrong. Anger is one of the emotional responses to homesickness (Verschuur, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Spinhoven, & Duijsens, 2004).

"From clinical practice it is well known that separation anxiety and anxious attachment frequently go together with intense, non integrated feelings of anger. Moreover, anger and aggression are well-known emotional reactions to separation and bereavement both in animals as well as in humans" (Verschuur, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Spinhoven, & Duijsens, 2004, p.1156).

Some of the results in (Verschuur, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Spinhoven, & Duijsens, 2004, p.1161) study demonstrated that:

- Men are more depressed and anxious than females but the men control the anger that comes with homesickness better than the women.

- Students who live alone control their anger more than those who live with people.

- The unmarried students get angrier than the married ones.

2.15.3 Intake of Alcohol and Smoking/Drug use

Alcohol sometimes has a way of helping an individual forget about his or her problems for a short period of time. Msengi (2007) stated that some international students smoked cigarettes and pipes, "three percent currently smoked less than 10 cigarettes per day, 2% smoked 11-19 cigarettes per day, and 1% smoked at least 20 or more cigarettes a day" (Msengi, 2007, p.59).

> "In terms of drug use, 5% of the students reported to have used at one point in time marijuana, opium, cocaine or methamphetamine. In terms of alcohol use, 38% of the respondents drank either wine, beer or some liquor 1-3 times a week. At each sitting, 28% reported drinking 1-2 glasses of wine, beers and liquor and 9% of all respondents had 4 or more drinks per sitting for each kind of alcohol drink" (Msengi, 2007, p.59).

2.15.4 Disappointment

Going abroad is a big deal and it comes with a lot of high expectations; these expectations or pre conceived belief(s) according to this writer arises from pictures, social media and Hollywood movies. If the reality is somewhat different from these images or expectations, the students in question can experience feelings of disappointment which can later lead to homesickness (Khawaja & Stallman ,2011).

2.15.5 Inferiority Complex

> "Students especially from Africa reported feel too intimidated to participate in social activities and have no sense of belongingness with the host community. Based on their responses to the questionnaires, many students

reported that people seem to be reluctant to associate with them because of their ethnicity. They reveal to feel rejected when others seemingly do not appreciate their cultural values. Some students also reported to feel sometimes inferior because of their cultural background" (Akhtar & Kröner-Herwig, 2015, p.810).

Language barrier, income level, race, religion, dress sense, educational qualifications are some of the reasons why international students feel inferior in a new environment.

2.15.6 Isolation and loneliness

These are some of the things homesickness does to you; it isolates you from everyone and makes you VERY lonely (Mori, 2000). According to the results in Msengi (2007), unmarried students feel lonelier than once who are married.

2.15.7 Other Impacts

Other international students behaviours as a result of homesickness are:

Irritation: when international student are homesick everything and anything will irritate them in the new environment; they do not like the new environment and they do not want to be there, so things that will normally not irritate them will irritate them a lot in the new environment (Mori, 2000).

Crying: International students who are homesick cry a lot (Abbas et al., 2018).

Feelings of Guilt: Homesick international students begin to see leaving their home countries as a mistake; they start to regret IF their decision to study abroad instead of their home countries was the right decision. Travelling miles away from home to be faced with a lot of problems in the new environment can make the international student feel guilty about leaving home (Mori, 2000).

Fighting: Some homesick international students engage in physical or verbal fights and then they transfer the aggression of being homesick to anybody who offends them or does something they do not like (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck, 1996).

Frustration and sadness: International students who are homesick get frustrated and sad (Mori, 2000).

Loss of appetite and lack of proper sleep: Homesick international students have problems with eating and sleeping because they are busy thinking about home (Mori, 2000).

Antisocial: Homesick international students show little or no interest in making friends and participating in social activities (Verschuur, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Spinhoven, & Duijsens, 2003).

Homesick international students are vulnerable, rigid, disorganized, depressed and unstable, (Verschuur, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Spinhoven, & Duijsens 2003).

2.16 Coping Strategies

International students must be able to develop coping strategies to help them feel less homesick in the new environment (Majid, 2014). Some of them are:

2.16.1 Romantic Relationship

Patron (2014) claims that being in a romantic relationship is an effective coping strategy for homesickness. Msengi (2007) indicated that in America, 53% used this as a strategy to cope with stress. Kegel (2015) suggests that being in a romantic relationship with someone from the host community guarantees a higher chance of

adjusting to the new environment and a lower level of homesickness; they spend a lot of time together, shop together and visit places together; these activities will help the international student to: learn the local language, eat the local food, relate more with the locals, have the locals as friends, adjust or get familiar with the environment at a very fast pace and feel less homesick.

2.16.2 Religion

"Religion is an important predictor of physical and mental health across many societies and culture, with personal religious beliefs and affiliation are classically powerful predictors of being depressed and homesick (Majid, 2014, p.83&84). "It is believed that religion presents its positive consequences with providing coping skills that will help individuals during stressful events" (Majid, 2014, p.21)

Religion can also been seen as a successful means of coping with homesickness in a new environment. Msengi (2007) research proved that 52 percent of the participants use religion as a stress reliever. "Turning to religion is an effective way of coping and has been found to even keep the feelings of homesick in control" (Majid, 2014, p.83). Hannigan (2007) mentioned that at a place of worship; be it a church or mosque, helps international students meet new people, make friends and they are provided with a sense of unity because the people at the place of worship share the same religion; questions can be asked, problems can be shared and there can be a sense of belonging. All of these factors can help to combat homesickness.

"Studies conducted in Muslim universities such as Iran, Egypt, Algeria, Kuwait and Qatar indicated a positive correlation between religiosity and mental health and psychological well-being" (Majid, 2014, p.24). Religion reduces depression, the

higher the level of faith and belief in God, the lower the level of depression and homesickness (Majid, 2014).

2.16.3 Employment Opportunities

Hannigan (2007) agrees that working alongside schooling helps to reduce the thoughts of missing home. In most cases (if not in all cases) international students love to work part time while schooling, so as to earn money to take care of themselves and pay bills; during the summer break most especially they work full time and longer hours because there is no school during this period.

While working (full time or part time) international students get to relate with the locals including their employers, make more friends, learn the host language, adjust to the new environment, eat the local food and know more about the host community's culture and traditions. Students who are unemployed have all the time in the world to think and miss home while those who are employed are focused on work, this gives them less time to miss or think of home (Hannigan, 2007).

2.16.4 Counselling or Therapy

Counselling helps international students cope with homesickness and stress (Mori, 2000). According to Hannigan (2007) these professionals listen to the international students talk about their concerns or complaints. When homesick students talk about these matters, it makes them feel better but the majority of them do not use this as a coping strategy because of the stigma attached to it. These professionals will not only listen to them speak; they encourage them and give them suggestions to help them feel less homesick. Such suggestions include: exercising, making more friends, exchanging phone numbers, going out, having a weekend getaway, meditation, resting and so on.

2.16.5 Social Support

According to Patron

> "First, establishing social support networks is undeniably one of the most valuable strategies that international students can employ in order to integrate successfully into the host society. Supportive social relationships are integral to their psychological and academic integration" (2014, p.37).

For Brisset, Safdar, Lewis, & Sabatier (2010) social support is another strategy to help international students cope with homesickness, little or no social support creates room for depression, stress, and homesickness. Good social support helps international students cope with the many problems in the host community no matter how many they are; no man is an island. To be able to blend into a new environment international students have to make friends in order to aid this process.

Mori (2000) emphasized that being friends with co nationals is very important, it should never be seen as unnecessary or not important, they can help with a thing or two. The co national and the host national friendship are also very important to help international students cope and feel less homesick in the new environment; according to this writer, co national friendships help to improve the international students psychological wellbeing and reduce depression while the host national friendship helps the international student deal with living in the society, relating with the locals, learning the local language and adapting to the new environment (Brisset, Safdar, Lewis, & Sabatier, 2010).

On a general note, all the types of international students friendship: co national, host national and multinational friendship; helps these students reduce homesickness and cope with stress in the new environment (Msengi, 2007). Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets,

& Van Heck, (1996) pointed out that the more the social support the lower the level of homesickness.

2.16.6 Living with a Host Family or Student(s)

Meloni (1986) claims that living with a friendly host family or students from the host community helps international students cope in a new environment, it: reduces homesickness, helps the international student: learn the local language, be aware of the host community's culture and tradition, listen to their music and understand their way of life. Through this means, international students become very comfortable in the new environment, they get to attend social functions, feel less homesick and visit places including tourist attractions. There will definitely be a sense of belonging because the international student will be treated like family not some stranger.

2.16.7 Physical Activities and Belonging to Associations

Msengi (2007) showed that physical activities like: jogging, walking and bicycling helps to reduce international students level of homesickness and stress. Also, belonging to clubs and associations helps international students reduce the thoughts of home because they both create avenues for international students to meet new friends (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011).

2.16.8 Contacting Home

Calling or contacting home (family and friends) helps international students reduce homesickness and loneliness (Tan & Winkelman, 2010). Thanks to technology international students can hear the voices and see the faces of those back at home. This is an effective therapy for homesickness.

2.16.9 Internet

The internet is a very good means of helping international students reduce their thoughts of home and loneliness. The internet helps international students meet new

friends on various social media platforms like: Twitter, Snapchat, Whatsapp, Facebook, Instagram, Thriller and so on; the internet entertains you too. When international student are lonely or homesick they could just go online and mingle, this will definitely help them feel less lonely and homesick (Patron, 2014).

Homesick students spend more time with themselves than others; while they are alone the internet becomes their best friend and best buddy (Patron, 2014). International students who are lonely or homesick use the internet more than those who are not.

In some cases international students get obsessed and addicted to the internet; then it becomes a problem because they will not see the need to make friends in the new environment because they have "online friends", they will also not care about adjusting to the new environment and in some cases they pay less attention to their academics (Patron, 2014).

2.16.10 Positive Thinking

Focusing on the positive rather than the negative parts in the new environment helps international students cope with homesickness (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck, 1997).

2.16.11 Studying

As mentioned before, female international students are more homesick than male international students but what most female international students do is transfer this "homesick" feeling into studying; they study SO hard and this results in them having higher GPA'S than the male international students because studying distracts them from missing home. When they choose to focus on studying they have little or no

time to miss home, this way homesickness is reduced (Shaikh, Kahloon, Kazmi, Khalid, Nawaz, Khan, & Khan, 2004).

2.16.12 Establishing a Relationship with Instructors and Advisors

Some lecturers or instructors have a very good way of making international student feel less homesick and more comfortable in a new environment; they listen to their problems and gladly help to solve them. They offer encouragement when needed; they emit positive energy and are welcoming regardless of the students' race, sex or nationality (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011).

2.16.13 Self-Management

Some international students see being homesick as a form of training; to help develop themselves more, know themselves more and be better (Patron, 2014).

Other ways to cope with homesickness can be found in (Tan & Winkelman, 2010) study, where it is asserted that international students cope with homesickness by: writing letters, talking to friends, meditation, consuming alcohol, watching movies, looking at pictures, (Van Tilburg Vingerhoets, & Van Heck, 1996) sports, games, visiting the museum, learning a skill, music and sleeping (Shaikh et al.,2004).

Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Methodology

For the purposes of this research qualitative research was chosen to guide this study. The reason for this choice was based on the fact that the researcher was very interested in collecting detailed information about the topic from the perspective of the respondents. As Neuman (2014) pointed out qualitative research study phenomenon is in the natural settings and it attempts to make sense or interpret what happens in terms of the meanings that people bring to them. Thus, the aim was to understand the views of the respondents about their homesickness rather than that of the researcher.

3.2 Method

One of the most popular methods of qualitative data collection is through semi-structured interviews. Semi-structured interviews enable researchers to interview respondents in a detailed order and to explore the issues in-depthly (Walker, 1985). Thus, the aim was to get the respondents to talk about their personal feelings, opinions and experiences; through semi-structured interviews, the researcher was able to elicit vivid pictures of the participants perspectives, opinions, feelings and experiences about their homesickness.

3.3 Sampling Technique

The respondents were selected through purposive sampling, the researcher was looking specifically for African students who were feeling homesick. 29 students

who defined themselves as being homesick were identified and interviewed. The number of the respondents was determined by the notion of "level of saturation". In other words, the researcher continued to interview African international students until no additional interview added new information to the study (Neuman, 2014).

3.4 Participants' Profile

The participants for this interview were 29 international students from different parts of Africa. 5 of the participants are married (3 married women and 2 married men); one of the five as a daughter here, the remaining four are not parents yet; plus ONLY one of the married women doesn't have her husband here in North Cyprus, 1 of the participant is in a relationship and the remaining 23 are single. 15 respondents were male students and 14 were female students; 22 participants were from ages 20-29 while 7 participants were from ages 30-38. All participants are African students studying in North Cyprus: 23 participants are Nigerians, 1 participant is from South Africa, 1 participant is from Swaziland, 2 participants are from Gambia, 1 participant is from Eritrea and the final participant is from Cameroun.

Table 2: Demographic information of participants

Respondents	Sex	Age	Length of Stay	Country	Marital Status	Children
1	F	24	5 years	Nigeria	single	
2	F	25	6 years	Nigeria	single	
3	F	20	2 years	South Africa	single	
4	F	24	5 years	Nigeria	single	
5	M	21	3 years	Nigeria	single	

6	F	33	6 years	Nigeria	married	No
7	F	21	5 years	Nigeria	single	
8	F	27	5 years	Nigeria	single	
9	F	27	1 year 2 months	Nigeria	married	no
10	F	21	3 years	Swaziland	single	
11	F	23	1 year 3 months	Gambia	single	
12	M	36	1 year 9 months	Nigeria	single	
13	F	21	3 years	Nigeria	single	
14	M	23	2 years 6 months	Nigeria	single	
15	M	29	2 years 6 months	Eriteria	single	
16	M	28	4 years	Nigeria	single	
17	M	29	4 years	Nigeria	single	
18	F	29	3 months	Gambia	married	no
19	M	30	3 months	Nigeria	single	
20	F	24	4 years	Nigeria	single	
21	M	30	1 year 1 month	Nigeria	single	
22	M	26	6 years	Nigeria	single	
23	M	38	9 years	Nigeria	married	yes
24	M	30	5 years	Nigeria	married	no

25	M	24	5 years	Nigeria	single	
26	M	24	5 years	Nigeria	single	
27	M	23	4 years	Nigeria	In a relationship	
28	M	30	2 years	Cameroun	single	
29	F	22	5 years	Nigeria	single	

3.5 Interview Process

The interview questions were divided into five topics namely: demographic information (5 questions for non-married participants and 6 questions for married participants), homesickness (4 questions), factors affecting homesickness or what are the reasons for being homesick (10 questions), impacts of homesickness (6 questions) and coping strategy (1 question); they were ALL open ended questions. "The confidentiality of the respondents was assured to freely express themselves" (Arici, Ertürk & Orcan, 2014,p.6).

All interviews were more than 500 minutes and 21 questions in total; a lot of the participants had so many things they wanted to let out and I as a patient and smiley interviewer made them feel very comfortable to talk about this things, I smiled a lot with them and listened to them let it all out. All this was done in order to examine these students level of homesickness and have enough evidence to educate the whole wide world on how crucial and important homesickness is (Arici, Ertürk & Orcan, 2014). "The interviews with participants were recorded with smart-phone and then transcribed" (Arici, Ertürk & Orcan, 2014,p.6).

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A pilot study was applied to one of the participants, she is a Nigerian; it was to help test if the questions covered the homesickness topic properly and to find out if there were more questions to add or subtract from the interview questions. She used 10 minutes 21 seconds, it was accepted by my supervisor and then the interviews started properly (Arici, Erturk, & Orcan, 2014).

Chapter 4

DATA ANALYSIS

This quantitative data was analyzed by first identifying codes or themes and then the data was interpreted (Kozikoglu & Aslan, 2018).

> "In this study, these stages were followed in the analysis of qualitative data. The themes were determined in accordance with interview questions, then the data were identified and interpreted based on themes. In addition, the findings were supported with direct quotations" (Kozikoglu & Aslan, 2018, p.706).

The direct quotations used were to clearly see or understand the opinion of the students concerning the subject matter (Kozikoglu, & Aslan, 2018).

4.1 Homesickness

The interviews started by asking a question (do you miss home?), this helped to find out if the students were really missing their homes; all 29 participants said that they "genuinely" miss their homes. Since this research topic is very personal and important to me; while collecting data, I made sure that all the participants that were interviewed "genuinely" miss home and didn't pretend or fake missing home; I asked many detailed questions to establish that. The results show that the participants missed their homes for different reasons.

4.2 Causes of Homesickness

4.2.1 Duration of Stay in North Cyprus

One of the reasons why some of the participants are homesick is because of the duration of time they have been away from home. Concerning their duration of stay

in Cyprus; most of the interviewees (23) have lived in North Cyprus from 2 years to 9 years, four of them have lived here for 1 year and some months and just a tiny few (2 respondent) have lived here for about 3 months.

The participants have not been home for so many years, they said it is one of the reasons why they miss home a lot. As the participants below clearly stated:

> *"Since when I came here 9 years ago, I have not gone back home ... so I really miss home". (R 23)*

> *"Obviously I do, I have not visited home in 5 years". (R 8)*

Majority of those who have lived here less than a year, according to my observation are still in the "honey moon stage"; which is the first stage or phase of the U Curve by Lysgaard, they are still enjoying the fact that they are in a new environment, thoughts of home is still very minimal for them. Majority of those interviewed have not been home for several years, although they have adjusted to the environment but their level of homesickness is still higher than that of the "fresher's" or those in the "honeymoon phase".

When they were questioned about which aspects of home they miss, the answers varied from: missing family, friends, food and many more.

4.2.2 Family

More than majority of the respondents said they miss spending time with family, being with them and sharing family moments (family trips and sessions) with them. The quotations provided below shows this very openly and clearly:

> *"I miss my family; I miss the compound where I stay. I miss my siblings. I miss the joy of being with my siblings. I mean I miss the whole people I have known since my childhood and I miss sharing experiences with them. It's being 6 years and it is not easy being without your family for that number of*

years. Sometimes it makes me wanna cry… like, it makes me want to cry, I miss them so much and sometimes I am just sad." (R 2)

Respondent 22 also clearly stated how much he was missing his family and how much his family members mean to him.

"I miss my family a lot. It has been a while I saw them; last time I saw them was four years ago… so I do miss the family gatherings, my sisters, my dad and my relatives also. My family is the most important thing to me at the moment because every single one of them means a lot to me. Sharing moments and being with them, is actually what makes me feel homesick". (R 22)

Others longed about the things they did together and shared as a family. As respondent 3 pointed out:

"I miss my mum, my dad, my siblings, my nephews and nieces, my mother in law, my father in law. I miss everybody…I miss them a lot because in my family we play together a lot, like they are my best friends and love. We relate a lot; we share things together, eat together, wear dresses together, like we do everything together. During the festive period which is very close now; everybody comes together, eat and enjoy ourselves, you know family stuff. So I miss those periods". (R 6)

Another respondent said that she misses her family the most because everything was taken care of by them and she didn't have to worry about anything. She said:

"I miss the closeness of family, I miss the fact that when I am at home; I know that everything is alright. When I am here… I have to deal with so many things by myself, you have to think about your bills, your responsibility and so on but when you are at home, you have this sense of comfort because you know it is not really your problem. Your family takes care of anything". (R 29)

Others talked about how being away from home for so long, made them miss a lot of important family occasions. As one of the respondents said;

"My family is the most important thing to me at the moment because every single one of them means a lot to me. So not being there to share the

moments and being with them, is actually what makes me feel homesick". (R 22)

Respondent 29 talked about how her little cousins who were born while she was away did not have an idea who she was when she visited home. She talked about the pain and sadness she felt when her little cousins did not recognize her. She said;

> *"Yesterday my uncle just had a baby and I will not be there for such a memorable moment….so yes, I do miss home and I wish I could be a part of that. I came to Cyprus since 2014 and from 2014 till now, my family has had over 4 new children and I wasn't there for their birth". (R 29)*

Others also talked about how much they miss sharing their concerns with their families and loved ones back at home. As one of the respondents said:

> *"I miss my family a lot; having to be together with them, talking with them, sharing my concerns with them and everything". (R 7)*

Others talked about how they miss: the genuine care of family, being with people who always had their best interest at heart and people who were willing to go extra miles to see them happy.

> *"I miss people that genuinely care about you and take care of you when you are sick and the rest". (R 8)*

In fact, 22 out of the 29 participants said that they miss family. They claimed that they miss spending time with their families, being with them, creating memories with them, their "genuine" care and attention towards them, some missed important moments that happened in their families and so many other things related to family.

Missing family was the MAJOR aspect the participants miss about home. Reading through these few quotes above, one can sense the intensity of how much they miss

their families. Staying far away from family and not seeing them for several years, is not easy; it is not a good experience at all and it does a lot to the human being involved. Everyone is a member of a family irrespective of their race, tribe, gender or nationality. Family are the first people a child meets or knows before anyone else, they are the closest people to us and a huge part of our lives. Thus, it is only natural to want to "physically" be with them and spend as much time as you can with them.

4.2.3 Food

When talking about missing home, there were also many comments relating to food. In fact, 21 out of 29 participants said that they miss the food back at home; Food is the second major aspect these participants miss about home after family. Some talked about food in terms of: missing their traditional food, having people cook for them, not thinking about the cost of food they needed to buy or just simply miss eating healthy.

Many participants complained about not being able to find their local food here. Participants who are normally used to eating their local food and loved to eat them, talked about how much they miss their traditional food. This participant in particular misses her Gambian food and spices a lot. She said:

> *"The food here, not to be rude, is "tasteless". So I miss the spices of Africa and the different dishes". (R 18)*

Some of the other responses of participants who miss their local food are;

> *"I miss the food, in terms of my native food from my state. I miss some kind of soup that we cannot find here". (R 22)*

> **"I am a kind of person that loves local food** [Nigerian food]... *not chicken and chips and burger, you can't find local food on a regular here...". (R 19)*

Two of the respondents actually called their traditional food "good food". They said:

> *"I miss the food ... good food you know." (R 4)*

> *"When I was home I eat good food". (R 14)*

Three of the participants emphasized that they did not just miss the taste of their traditional food but they also miss someone preparing it for them and they not paying for it, they said that at home one does not spend their money on food; you just eat for free. As two of the respondent pointed out:

> *"You know back home you don't have to spend your own money you can always get free money from dad and mum and then free food too. You don't even know how they bought it you just know that Aunty Ngozi has gone to the market and she is going to cook oha soup, you will just wait for her to come back and cook the soup and then you eat". (R4)*

> *"Your family takes care of anything, for example if i am hungry, I can walk into the kitchen and find something to eat ... But here if you don't have anything you could basically lack the human needs here... but at home it is impossible". (R 29)*

A few participants said they did not have to worry about buying or preparing food when they are at home, "*Mum was always there to help with that*" (R 8). In North Cyprus, the whole responsibility was on the participants and this made them more aware of the cost of food and what they can afford to buy. A small group of respondents said that they miss their home food because of the high prices of food items here in North Cyprus compared to their home countries.

> *"Anytime I have craving for some food, I miss home more. See fish that is just how much in our country here they will tell you it cost thousands of Turkish Lira if you convert it. I will just miss home instantly". (R 9)*

Respondent 4 who normally eats healthy back at home, cannot eat healthy anymore because of the high prices of the food items here in North Cyprus.

"I just don't get as much fresh and healthy food as I would love to… they are very very very expensive". (R 4)

The unavailability of the food they craved for, made them miss their "mother's food" back at home which in return made them more homesick.

4.2.4 Friends

Friends are the third aspect of home the participants miss, 10 out of 29 participants miss their friends back at home. Participants talked about missing their "*friends back home*" (R 2) or missing their **"***childhood friends*" (R 13). Friends in the new environment can never be compared to friends back at home; friends back at home are irreplaceable no matter where one finds himself or herself.

4.2.5 Country

Almost half of the participants talked about missing certain aspects of their home countries; 12 out of the 29 participants talked about missing "their" country people, the: environment, geographical location, lifestyle in their country and even the weather conditions. Respondent 7 talked about how she misses her country people and their hospitality, she said:

> *"I miss being around people that are from the same culture as you are, similar faces, similar people and I actually miss the niceness and kindness of people back at home because people back at home are friendlier compared to here and it is easier to communicate with people back at home because you are from the same place and you understand each other".* (R 7)

7 participants talked about missing their home environment. They said they miss being in a "*familiar environment*" (R 10). As one of the responded stated:

> *"There is no place like home. The type of freedom you get in your home country is different from the freedom you get in a foreign country and that's why they call it home country".* (R 12)

Others talked about missing the activities they used to do back at home; activities like: hanging out with friends, playing sports, music rehearsal groups, studio sessions and football.

4.2.6 Mum

Six of the 29 participants talked about how much they miss their mum. These six participants have a very strong relationship with their mothers because of this "strong bond" one of these 6 participants is intensely homesick as a result. Furthermore, some respondents mentioned their mums as the main reason why they miss home.

Respondent 20 who is intensely homesick said:

> *"I miss my mum. I am very close to my mum, I am like her friend; we are not just daughter and mother...we are friends. If there is any one I think about in Nigeria, it is her; if I can be with my mum I will never miss anybody at home". (R 20)*

Another respondent claimed:

> *"Sometimes of course there are times when certain things happen you just want to be with your mum and hug her; or certain situations you know if your mum was there she was going to do this or that for you. I can remember there was a time I was ill, of course I had someone with me but you know that motherly love?" (R 2)*

There was a participant who misses "*her husband*" due to personal circumstances, others miss their businesses and jobs back at home. There was also one respondent who said he misses "*everything about home*" (R 23). However, overall results shows that the aspects the respondents miss about home are: family, food and friends respectively.

4.3 Factors Which Reduce Homesickness

4.3.1 Contacting Home

As regards contacting home, more than majority of the participants contact home on a daily basis. Respondent 4 emphasized on how she makes sure she talks to her family members through various platforms on a daily basis; she said:

> *"It is either we talk on Whatsapp, Snapchat, Facebook, Instagram, phone calls.. Everywhere, we are always talking. I might not talk to everybody at the same time but I am either talking to my sister today, tomorrow I am talking to my dad, next tomorrow I am talking to my other sister or my brother or I am talking to my mum". (R 4)*

Other participants responses to how often they contact home are: twice or thrice a week, four times a week and from time to time.

But respondent 13 went further to say that, the reason why she contacts home four times a week is because it helps her miss her family less.

> *"I don't call home too often but I keep in touch because if you keep calling home every single day, you are going to find out that you will be missing them more". (R 13)*

Out of a total of 29 participants; 20 participants call home on a daily, six participants call home twice or thrice a week, one participant calls home four times a week (to avoid being more homesick), one participant calls home once a week and the final participant calls home from time to time. This means that more than majority of the participants (20) contact home on a daily and very few did not contact home on a daily basis. They contacted their family and friends via: video calls, phone calls and social media.

4.3.2 Having Friends in North Cyprus

All 29 participants except one agreed that they have friends here in North Cyprus, ranging from: friends from different countries and friends from the same country. Some of the responses of the participants who have friends from different countries are:

> *"I have friends… a lot; Turkish, Russian, Iranian… I have a lot of friends actually." (R 6)*

> *"I have many friends from different nationalities, some are from: Nigeria, Cameroun, Zimbabwe and so on." (R 11)*

> *"Of course I do; Turkish and different countries."(R 20)*

The participant who does not have a friend in North Cyprus said the friends he had here returned to their home countries after their study, so he is all alone here for now.

The interesting thing here is, some of these African students interviewed are not just friends with their fellow co-nationals, they are also friends with people from different countries. Friends are our support system; it is good to have a good and reliable support system or friends, they help you feel less homesick in a new environment.

All 28 participants who have friends in North Cyprus were asked if these friends helped to reduce their thoughts of missing home. Three responses emerged: yes, no and not really; 19 participants said yes, 7 participants said not really and two participants clearly said no.

These are some of the reasons why more than majority of the participants said **yes:**

Respondent 10 said if she did not have friends here she will be a lot depressed and she will miss home a lot.

> "*Yes they do a lot a lot because I feel like if I don't have friends I will be a lot depressed and lonely because there is no one to talk to you.*" (R 10)

Respondent 11 went further to say, if she doesn't have friends here she will also miss home a lot and will get sick in the process.

> "*Without them I will miss home so bad and I'll get sick. They help a lot.*" (R 11)

Respondent 15 said his friends here distract him from the thoughts of missing home.

> "*Definitely yes because if you have friends you will think less about home and they will make your mind busy, when you chill or go out with them*". (R 15)

Some of the participants who said **"yes"** agreed that being friends with people from the same country helped them reduce their thoughts of missing home.

> "*I have Nigerian friends here so it helps. They are people I can relate and communicate with easily*". (R 16)

> "*I like the company of Gambians, our conversations, our language, our vibe; yes they do help reduce being homesick*". (R 16)

> "*Because they are my fellow Nigerians, you still feel at home*". (R 25)

Participants who said **not really** gave the reasons that: Respondent five for example said "not really" because he only has regular friends here; he defines regular friends as: "*not very close to the once back at home*". When he was asked if these "regular friends" here helped to reduce his thoughts of missing home, he had this to say:

> "*Not really, no because I don't spend too much time with them; I just know them and they know me*". (R 5)

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Respondent 17 and 9 said their friends here help a little but they still miss home.

> *"Yes let say 20% because you cannot compare home with somewhere else."* (R 9)

> *"Yes they try their best, they make me feel at home but you know no matter what you will always miss your family". (R 17)*

Respondent 29 said the friends she has here helped time pass faster but they do not necessarily reduce the thoughts of home.

> *"Not really because they help time pass faster...when you are happy and having fun, time goes faster". (R 29)*

The only two participants, who said **no**, said so because the friends they have here cannot help reduce their thoughts of missing home. Respondent 20 specifically said NOBODY not even her friends here can help reduce her thoughts of missing home.

> *"Missing home is not something anybody can help you to reduce. Despite the fact that I have friends here they cannot reduce my thoughts of missing home". (R 20)*

There are 3 responses to this question because the participants' level of homesickness differs and the strength of their various social supports here to help reduce their thoughts of missing home also differs. I find this very interesting because people or "most research" feel that having friends in a new environment, always helps to reduce the thoughts of missing home but with the few number of participants involved in this research, it can be assumed that friends in the new environment do not "always" help reduce the thoughts of home.

4.3.3 Sense of Belonging or Feeling Accepted in North Cyprus

The answer to whether they feel a sense of belonging or acceptance in North Cyprus created mixed feelings among respondents. 11 participants said they do not feel a sense of belonging in North Cyprus. Two of the respondents (R5 and R20)

complained about the locals not being friendly and smiling a lot with them. However there were no examples of malicious behaviour towards students but rather a separation resulting from the language barrier. As respondent 12 pointed out:

> "*One thing I noticed and understood with them is; when you learn to speak their language they welcome you as their people. So the only way for me to be accepted into their life's and because I wanted to feel at home and accepted; I had no choice than to learn the language*". (R 20)

Another respondent complained about the nepotism they showed towards some customers as was the case experienced by the respondent 3 in the local bank.

The main obstacle to closer relationships with the locals is language barrier. Because of this language barrier respondent 10 and 7, do not have a sense of belonging here, it doesn't give them that home feeling that they love. It also doesn't make them feel like they are a part of the society. Plus, because some of the respondents do not speak or understand the local language, they become suspicious of what the locals might be saying about them and sometimes this lack of friendliness is interpreted as racism.

> "*When you go to the store or somewhere people are staring at you or people are saying things. They are not welcoming because they speak a different language from you so you cannot understand what they say but you just have that feeling when someone is not welcoming towards you even though they speak a different language; may be through their body language or facial expression*".(R 7)

On the other hand respondent 25 believes that it is unfair to get residence permit each year. Respondent 29 also believes that the government should have all of the public signs in Turkish and English. Respondent 28 claims that to feel accepted in the local community there should be more financial opportunities for international students. Respondent 24 and 9 said they don't feel a sense of belonging here because their home is the only place where they feel accepted.

However, there were other participants who felt a sense of belonging and acceptance by the locals in North Cyprus. Some claim that they feel a sense of belonging in North Cyprus because of the friendly behaviour of the locals.

> *"Well… well… well, they are friendly; which means I am accepted". (R 12)*

> *"Well…yes to an extent because some of them are friendly here". (R 13)*

> *"The locals are cool…they are cool…when you attempt to learn their language they always smile because they know I am a foreigner and I am trying to learn their language…so they are cool". (R 18)*

> *"The locals are very cool people and they are friendly" (R 22)*

Others claim that they feel a sense of belonging in North Cyprus because it is a peaceful and safe. They said:

> *"Yeah I like the quietness of the country, it reminds me of my country because we are a small country…I do...I do...it's peaceful, there is no harassment anywhere". (R 18)*

> *"On a general note; it has been good, a peaceful island and very conducive to live". (R 23)*

> **"**Yeah, they have made it conducive for us...it is one of the safest place, I have ever been to in my life…I hardly hear gunshots or that people got robbed on the street…4am people still walk freely". (R 26)*

Respondent 2 feels a sense of belonging here not because of the locals but because of the people she associates herself with;

> *"I feel a sense of belonging because of the people I have come to associate myself with, I know they love me and they got my back any day anytime". (R 2)*

Respondent 14 said he feels a sense of belonging here because he is good with adapting to a new environment, so no matter where he finds himself; he will be just fine.

> *"Of course I feel accepted everywhere I go and it is easy for me to belong because of where I am from, I am from Edo state in Nigeria, anywhere we get to we adapt but there is still that home call it is always there". (R 14)*

Respondent 19 had mixed feelings when he was asked if he has a sense of belonging in North Cyprus, his response was;

> *"I know I have been accepted, if not they would not have allowed me come or given me visa or admission but I don't think i belong here; coupled with the fact that I am new to the place, the cultural differences, the food differences and so many other things." (R 19)*

Respondent 21 and 17 were undecided if they felt accepted or not in North Cyprus.

The overall results shows that out of 29 participants; as regards a sense of belonging in North Cyprus: 11 participants answers were no, 14 participants said yes, 3 participants were undecided and 1 participant had mixed feelings. This result means that more participants involved in this research have a sense of belonging.

4.3.4 Absence of Racism, Discrimination and Language Barriers

A question about their experiences with racism resulted in a variety of answers from the respondents. There were those who claimed that they had had experiences of racism due to their color. Some asserted that there was no racism in North Cyprus. Others suggested that any racism which they had faced in North Cyprus was so mild compared to other countries that it did not count. There was also an apparent confusion between the use of the word racism and discrimination. Some complained about the preferential treatment of locals by other locals as racism whereas others saw this as a form of discrimination. Further, others viewed this preferential treatment as being understandable as it was simply a case of locals giving priority to other locals as it is their own country.

One of the respondents who did not believe that there was much racism in North

Cyprus said:

> *"Not really, racism is everywhere especially when you are not in your own country; you will definitely experience it. Everybody wants their nationality to be given attention first but they are still nice people". (R 6)*

Respondent 6 saw racism as a normal experience and it is something one will

definitely experience if one is not in one's home country. So she doesn't count it as

an experience of racism. On the other hand, respondent 22 said he has not

experienced racism because he feels that the "little racism" that exists in North

Cyprus doesn't really count as much since it is not as severe as in other countries.

> *"No…it is not that severe as other countries". (R 22)*

> **"***Yeah…one thing about it is it in every part of the world. I don't see it like "serious racism" because I have met really good Turkish people". (R 14)*

Another respondent who claimed that he did not experience any form of racism here

declared:

> **"***Not really…. I have not experienced any form of racism". (R 18)*

However there were other students who believed that they had experienced racism

either from the local community or from other international students. Although 22

out of 29 participants claimed to have experienced racism compared to only 7

participants who have never experienced racism here in North Cyprus, it was not

always clear whether these examples were due to not being able to understand the

local language or to nepotism which is rife in the local culture.

According to the respondents so called "racism" from local community, mainly came from shopkeepers and shop assistants. Students often complained about the shopkeepers/assistants being rude to them by ignoring them or not being very helpful to them especially when faced with language problems. It was not always clear even to the receivers whether this was a clear case of racism or just rudeness or "stupidity" as alluded to by respondent 8.

> *"Going to a shop and not been seen that one pisses me off like they attend to someone else before attending to you. An example, I walked into a shop and I was not seen; I tried to get their attention but she was so busy discussing. Someone else walked in and she attended to that person. It is not racism it is just stupidity". (R 8)*

Another student complained about not being served because the shopkeeper did not understand what he wanted.

> *"There was a time I was looking for a product or something, I usually ask shop owners; when I ask them they will just tell me to go that they don't understand what I am saying". (R 13)*

Students also complained about queue jumping when priority is given to locals.

> *"When you are on the queue in the bank and someone just comes and speaks Turkish, they attend to the person before you. It has happened like two or three times to me and it is very annoying because I can't speak Turkish…so I have to wait... It is terrible". (R 21)*

There were accusations of similar examples of queue jumping at the bus stop or bus driver not asking to see the ID card of the local people. (R 24)

Another student complained about an occasion where a local child who was smiling and staring at him in a lift was told off by her mother. The mother spoke to her child in Turkish so the respondent did not understand what was said. However, after that, the child stopped staring and smiling at the student. Although the student did not

know what the mother said, he felt it might have been because he was Black. Again this is not very clear whether the mother scolded the child for staring at a stranger or for smiling at a Black person.

Although in some of these cases it was not very clear whether the problem was associated with language problems, misunderstandings, nepotism or pure discrimination, there were other cases of racism where students felt very strongly. One of the main areas of complaint came from the work experiences of students. Some students complained that they were given certain jobs because of their skin color. As one of the respondents complained:

> *"One of my experiences, I remember when I tried to look for a job; the first few months I came. I was with a Moroccan girl, we went to a place to look for a job; both of us don't speak Turkish but they gave the girl, the job of a waitress and they told me, I will be at the back washing plates because she is light skinned and I am dark skinned. I noticed the other girl who works there as a dish washer, is also dark skinned from Sierra Leone or something…. I told them no, I can't do the job". (R 19)*

Others complained about being given jobs because they were viewed as being strong and were not being paid as much as the locals.

> *"Because you are not a part of them they give us the hard job because they think we have the strength and they pay us "small" money compared to what they give to their people". (R 9)*

Again some of these problems were linked with language problems. For example one of the respondents complained about being treated unfairly as a result of not being able to speak the local language. Another participant felt that even though she was more qualified than the locals for the job, there was still favoritism; she said:

> *"I remember somewhere I worked; I have a BSc in tourism, so I am the one who is learned. I am the one who should be in front but because of their myopic thinking they decided to place us at the back and put more of their*

people in front because we didn't learn or understand their language; they forget that communicating with us more will help us know the language". (R 2)

Others complained about being forced to learn the local language.

"I started my internship in one of the hotels here. I will not call the name; the way they treat foreigners… I don't want to use that word "racism" but they were so strict and harsh on us. They pushed me to learn how to speak their language because of their attitude towards foreigners". (R 20)

There were also some complaints regarding accommodation. Some of these participants had very serious accusations about landlords not wanting to rent accommodation to Black students.

"You will go to some places; they will tell you they are not giving that house to blacks. They might have been black people that stayed in the building and messed it up. But, you saying you are not giving the house to blacks; is actually a stereotype thinking, that doesn't mean all blacks are messed up. But for you to but that stereotype out there, that is racial discrimination". (R 25)

Another student complained about the different levels of rent charged to African students and locals and viewed this as a form of racism. He argued:

"You can be in the same house or building with Turkish people, an African will pay more than this Turkish people here in Cyprus". (R 28)

One of the respondents (R 11) complained about a private dormitory, saying that their electricity was turned off as a result of not paying their rent on time due to problems they had with the bank. She also felt that the manager was very rude for asking her to pay her debt in front of her friends. She also explained how her friend was locked out of her room as a result of not paying her rent on time.

Two of the respondents complained about the taxi drivers. One of these complaints was about one of the taxi drivers not giving her change to her and then lying about it to the police (R 29). The other student complained about a taxi driver not stopping to pick her up but stopping to pick a white person. (R 13)

Some of the complaints were based on the gut feeling of the students rather than explicit examples such as the way the people looked at them or their body language. This was explained by a Black Muslim girl.

> *"You can't outwardly say they are racist but you can feel discrimination especially for someone like me that is black to start with and wear the hijab; you can feel the discrimination from a lot of people through their facial expression or body language...you will know they are not okay with what you are wearing or they are judging you; they treat you differently because of the way you are". (R 7)*

Some students also complained about racism being directed at them by other foreign students. One of the students complained about a white student who made *"monkey gesture"* to him (R 21). Another student complained about his female class mate who pretended to not know him at the bus stop (R 17).

Whether some of these experiences were clearly racist acts or examples of nepotism among the locals or misunderstandings due to cultural differences or language, the majority of the students felt uncomfortable and this increased their homesickness. This was very clearly stated by the girl with hijab. She talked about how the discrimination of her wearing her hijab made her miss home because being home means no one judges you and you find people who are dressed in a similar way.

> *"Of course it makes you feel homesick. At home nobody does that to you and then there are a lot of people with similar dressing, everybody has the same skin type as you at home and no one is judging you based on your skin or your dressing". (R 7)*

However not all of the participants who experienced racism agreed that it made them more homesick. One participant claimed that racism or not she misses home.

> *"No...no matter what I miss home. Home is home there's no place like home. Racism or no racism, trust me, I miss home" (R 20).*

Others claimed that their few experiences with racism did not make them get homesick since "*there are a lot of good people here*". (R 21)

4.3.5 Language Barrier

The main factor affecting student's homesickness was linked with language barrier. The majority of the respondents complained about the problems of communicating with other foreign students and locals in the community.

Some participants specifically mentioned they have problems communicating English with the locals because most of the locals do not speak or understand English.

> *"Yes because most of them don't understand English, so it is very very hard to communicate with them". (R 10)*

> *"Yes, the locals they don't understand English; some of them don't understand English like you have to break it down for them to understand". (R 13)*

> *"Very big problem....it is a very big problem ... students to students we still communicate, if we don't understand we use sign language but locals, It is a very big problem". (R 24)*

Some participants have problems communicating in English with the locals as well as fellow students. As one of the respondents said:

> *"Yeah of course, Turkish people and international students; from countries like: Cameroun; some of them don't speak English, they speak French. I face a lot of language barrier, when you are talking you have to start demonstrating like a blind person. So, of course I face a lot of challenges". (R 20)*

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There were also some students who had no problems with communicating with other locals and fellow students because they were able to speak the local language or they communicating in English with people they talk too.

For example, respondent 2 and 28 do not have problems communicating with the locals because they understand and speak Turkish.   Past and present work experiences helped respondent 2 learn Turkish. She said:

> *"Because of where I have worked I have gotten to understand the basic Turkish to an extent , so basic communication in Turkish is not really a problem for me and where I am working now I have learnt Turkish to some extent". (R 2)*

Respondent 28 on the other hand, said he is a fast learner; he was able to use this skill to learn Turkish very quickly.

> *"Not that much because I am a fast learner…I have learnt so many words in Turkish. So it is not too difficult for me to communicate...then most Cypriots here speak English too….so communication is not a problem". (R 28)*

Some students used Goggle translator to communicate with friends or locals who do not understand or speak English.

> *"I have some friends from Iran like they cannot even speak English; I have to say it slowly for them to understand or I will just write it down on Google and then they will just translate it". (R 11)*

The overall results shows that as regards problems communicating English with fellow students or locals in the community, out of 29 participants; 25 said yes and 4 said no; almost all 25 participants have problems communicating English with the locals because the locals don't speak or understand English, 5 participants out of these 25 who have problems communicating English with the locals also identified they have problems communicating with their fellow students. Four participants said

they don't have problems communicating with students or locals because they found different means to communicate with them, like Goggle translator and learning the language.

Some students talked about how language barrier deprived them from making friends with fellow students and locals. Because of this respondent 3 who is very used to making friends, cannot make friends like she wants to and she finds this disturbing due to her "friendly" nature.

> *"I am used to having friends and communicating with people; you cannot just go to class, keep quiet and come back home without talking to anyone. It was kind of DISTURBING for me because I am used to making friends and everything, so it makes it not easy to make friends". (R 3)*

Some participants are deprived from being friends with fellow students or locals in the community because they are unable to understand/ speak the local language. So they do not bother to interact with people who cannot speak English well enough.

> *"It is just easier been able to talk with someone that doesn't misunderstand you every time". (R 5)*

> *"We don't understand each other so how exactly will we communicate? As much as we will like to be friends with locals and foreign students it's very hard because most of them aren't even willing to learn English, so they just tell you "no English". So why should I put in an effort when you're not putting in any effort?" (R 10)*

> *"You have to be able to communicate with someone to be able to be friends with them; if you cannot communicate there is no way you can talk to the person. So the language barrier is definitely a problem of being friends with the locals. (R 16)*

> *"Friendship is about communication; you can't be friends with someone you don't understand or you cannot communicate with and is not willing to put in the same effort that you are putting to understand them". (R 29)*

However, some of the respondents decided to learn the local language and this helped them to be able to communicate in and with the local community. Respondent 4 was inspired to learn Turkish because not being able to be friends with the local people bothered her, so she decided to get close to them and learn their language, rather than push them away; now she is very happy she took that decision.

> *"Me I am a very pessimistic person, when I realized I could not communicate with these people it bothered me and yes it deprived me from making friends in a way and in a way it didn't because the fact that I could not speak their language made me decide to be close to them so i can learn the language. I went closer to them instead of being away from them. I have so many Turkish friends like over 100…a lot. Some of them I cannot even cope with being friends with me because they want to hang out every time but because I am very busy I don't have the time. It wasn't always like this, I started to love them and they decided to love me back they are really nice people if you get to know them". (R 4)*

Some other participants confessed to being friends with their fellow co-nationals because of the language barrier and this made them less friendly with people who could not speak proper English.

> *"I find it stressful translating, I will rather not be friends with people who understand English. "(R 13)*

> *"I barely have Turkish friends…Yeah, so most of my friends speak English". (R 1)*

> *"My circle of friends are from my country or from Africa, they speak English perfectly". (R 22)*

Others did not let language barrier stop them from being friends with fellow students or locals in the community. Respondent 6, 28 and 24 choose to see the good in the situation. They said:

> *"If you are friends with people you are friends with them; just say hi it shows you are polite and responsible even if you cannot speak the language just say "hello" everyone understands "hello"". (R 6)*

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> *"A good person is a good person; no matter the language…you can still make friends with someone who you don't understand his/her language". (R 28)*

> *"We see ourselves as humans, I see the level of their understanding and the way they accommodate people" (R 24)*

On the other hand, respondent 15 saw it as an opportunity to learn a new language.

> *"It is chance to learn each other's language. I teach them English, they teach me Turkish. So it is good for me". (R 15)*

Out of 28 participants, 12 agreed that language barrier prevented them from being friends with the locals and fellow students in the community, 16 participants disagreed. The participants who agreed that language barrier stopped them from being friends either do not speak Turkish or are not interested in being friends with the locals. While those who said that language barrier did not prevent them from being friends were either friends with co-nationals or with people who understand English or they understood Turkish to an extent; so communicating and making friends was not a problem for them.

Most participants involved in this research use goggle translator, as a means to communicate with those who cannot speak or understand English. While some other participants break their English down into simpler terms, so the other party can understand. Some of the participants also use their friends as interpreters.

As a result of language barrier, various means are used to converse with those who cannot speak or understand English. In a total of 28 participants in this aspect, 21 out of 28 use goggle translator, 7 participants use hand gestures and body language, two participants said they were forced to learn Turkish, 12 participants said they

understand the basic Turkish, three participants said they break the English down to help the other party understand, 9 participants use interpreters or friends, 3 participants learnt Turkish and two participants never learnt Turkish.

It is not surprising that many participants claimed that language barrier made them miss home because back at home everyone speaks the same language; their native dialect or English. Many respondents stated:

> *"Of course because in my country we don't speak this kind of language we all communicate either in English or our native dialect(s) but here if you don't know Turkish you don't know anything." (R 6)*

> *"Yes it does because at home everyone speaks the same language and everyone understands you." (R 10)*

> *"Yes because it would be way easier if they understood English, like in Nigeria, everybody understands English instead of you breaking it down or using goggle translate; you can just speak your normal English and they will understand." (R 13)*

> *"Of course it did, self-expression is very essential for every individual; if you feel like you cannot express yourself. You thereby feel like, you are not been heard. And if you feel like you are not being heard, you feel like you have lost your freedom of speech…so to say. Nobody is stopping you from speaking. Yes but what is the point of speaking when no one can understand you… you have the right to speak but nobody understands you, it thereby makes you miss people that understand you. When you are in your country, you don't have to talk all the time, from your face or just one word they can understand what you mean." (R 29)*

Language barrier makes some of these participants miss home because they are unable to communicate or have a conversation with a lot of people here.

> *"Anyplace you are, as a human being and you cannot communicate, the next thing that will come to your mind is "if it is in my country"". (R 12)*

> *"I feel like I cannot communicate with the people around, so it is sometimes frustrating and you just get fed up." (R 16)*

> *"There is nothing like being in a place; where you all understand each other." (R 25)*

Respondents due to language barrier were also unable to make friends which also added to homesickness.

In summary, when participants were asked if language barrier added to the reasons why they miss home; 16 out of 28 participants said yes, and the remaining 12 participants said no. Those who said yes said so because it made them miss home because in their home countries they speak the same language but here they are unable to communicate or make friends. Participants that said no said so because of these reasons: two participants see it as a means of entertainment, two participants see it as a chance to explore and learn new things, one participant (because she is intensely homesick) said she misses home because she miss home and it has nothing to do with language barrier, some are able to cope because they believe it is not too serious and it is something they can cope with, the rest in this NO category have co-national friends and they understand Turkish. AGAIN, this small sample size result contradicts the 'popular belief' that language barrier adds to the reason why people miss home.

4.4 Impacts of Homesickness

4.4.1 Impacts on Physical and Mental Health

Being homesick had many impacts on the participants' moods, emotions and state of mind.

As a result of being homesick, some participants experience loneliness. Respondent 3 claimed that she became a lot lonelier because of the language barrier.

> *"Sometimes I do feel lonely, I do...I really do because I like being around people and friends but you cannot because these people do not understand English". (R 3)*

> *"I get lonely because when I get home there is no one there to welcome and pamper me."* (R 8)

Others talked about how emotional and sad they feel. One of the respondents, whose mum died when he got here, said he is unable to be there for his family physically and this made him emotional sometimes. He said:

> *"My mother passed away a year after I came here. So whenever I am talking to my older ones back at home. Sometimes you wish that you were right there with them…concerning some very serious issues but since you are here you cannot do anything about it. So sometimes, I cry alone and get emotional."* (R 23)

Respondent 10 expressed how sad she was

> *"I am happier at home than I am here."* (R 10)

A few more respondents get emotional as a result of missing home.

> *"I get emotional…you know when you know you are alone."* (R 8)

> *"Now it is better, first year I used to get very emotional like I would cry. I cried more than I used to before I came on the island but now not really. I just miss home and I'll call them, it feels better."* (R 10)

> *"Like 3 days ago, I cried because I miss some certain kind of food and some friends."* (R 19)

> *"It's being 6 years and it is not easy being without your family for that number of years. Sometimes it makes me wanna cry… like it makes me want to cry, I miss them so much and sometimes I am just sad"* (R 2)

Others talked about feelings of deep rooted sadness. Respondent 29 emphasized:

> *"Sometimes I feel sad…deep rooted sadness that comes from within."* (R 29)

However, others talked about how missing home had a positive impact on their characters. For example, two participants said they became more matured. As one of the respondents said:

> *"I am more matured in the way I handle life" (R 22)*

Others claimed that they have become more responsible since they came to study abroad.

> *"For character, I am a whole different person; I was so loud, troublesome, I do things carelessly and I fight a lot; I am not that person anymore, the change of environment as made me more responsible"(R 8)*

Respondent 24 said he is stronger and more dependable now. He added that initially he was pampered and giving everything he wanted because he was the only son in his family but when he started having network problems while trying to contact them. He decided to man up and fend for himself.

> *"Before, I depend on my parents when I was home. If I need anything I will call them…I was so lucky to be the only boy…so anything I need, they will give me. When I got here, I called them one time to ask for something but there was network failure…their numbers were not reachable. So I had to brace up myself, to work and source for fund; so I was stronger" (R 24)*

Respondent 2 and 8 also agreed being homesick as made them stronger.

> *"It has made me become stronger" (R 2)*

> *"I am a better and stronger person now" (R 8)*

However, not everyone said that these impacts were positive. Others claimed that homesickness had negative impacts on their character. One participant said she is more confused now.

> *"Like you don't know what you are and what you want" (R 8)*

Two participants (R8 and R18) agreed they experienced depression as a result of being homesick.

Others complained about having specific physical health concerns as a result of missing home. For example, respondent 3 said she experienced both bloating and constipation as a result of missing home.

Some participants complained of not eating healthy food and settling for burger, chips and so on.

> *"I eat unhealthier here than I eat back at home, which* affects *my health."*
> *(R 29)*

Surprisingly, contrary to those who eat less healthy food, respondent 13 said she eats "strictly" healthy food here.

> *"I eat more than I used to eat in Nigeria…because I noticed they eat healthy*
> *and fresh food, I started eating that now I eat healthy…Strictly*
> *healthy…and a lot of food.. Because there are some things here I don't think*
> *I can find in Nigeria even if it is in Nigeria it is not easy to find it". (R 13)*

Two participants claimed to have had fever as a result of missing home.

> *"The first month I got here, I was sick may be fever because I felt so lonely I*
> *don't know why but I experienced it in my first month here. Sometimes I will*
> *just lie on my bed texting or watching movie or I will just try and call my*
> *Mum and if she's not online I will get angry, so i will call my little sister to*
> *tell mum to go online. My mum will be like what is your problem? Is it every*
> *time we must talk. You know when you are in that position you will not have*
> *appetite to eat or feel like hanging out with your friends; you just want to be*
> *by yourself". (R 11)*

Respondent 29 had problems sleeping, she later found out it was a result of missing home.

"Insomnia…I didn't know it was a result of missing home until I spoke to psychologist. I felt alone and overwhelmed here which made me miss home". (R 29)

Respondent 19 said his blood pressure gets really high and he feels heart burns as a result of missing home.

"Most times high blood pressure…I know when my blood pressure is high, I feel heart burns and I fall sick because I am homesick." (R 19)

4.4.2 Impact on Academic Performance

Homesickness also had positive and negative impacts on international students' academic performance. 23 participants said being homesick as not impacted their academic performance.

"I don't skip classes, I have 100 percent attendance." (R 5)

"I hardly miss classes; it hasn't affected my academic performance. I try not to make it affect my academic performance so like every time I feel like I miss home I Try by all means to maybe get over it for the moment and focus on my academics then attend to it after." (R 10)

"I try as much as possible to do what brought me here...I am here for masters and to attend classes." (R 19)

In fact, respondent 14 and 18 use attending classes as a means to distract themselves from the thoughts of missing home.

"Classes are the only places you will go and not be alone and it takes away your mind from other things. It distracts you and it is the main reason why you came here…there is no other thing to distract you, there is no places to travel to, no much fun here and no places to explore to make you forget about your classes." (R 14)

"I have nothing to do, coming to class is the highlight of my day…like if I don't have class, what am I doing? I enjoy the classes, it is fun." (R 18)

Respondent 2 sees it as a good source of motivation, to do well and have good grades. Respondent 29 sees attending classes as a very good inspiration and a quicker means to leave North Cyprus.

> *"I just don't want to fail any course…so that I can leave here as soon as possible…so it makes me do my best, so that I could leave here because if you fail, you will have longer time to stay here and if you attend summer school, you can't go home for summer. The goal is to leave not to stay. It makes me do my best as quickly as possible to leave as soon as possible."* (R 29)

On the other hand, there were 5 participants whose academics was affected negatively because of how homesick they were. Three participants skipped classes.

> *"I did a lot when I just came newly. I didn't miss classes because I was ill or sick I did because I was homesick. You know that feeling when you just wake up and feel tired of everything...you just want to go back home to relax, I just relax on my bed here instead of going to classes."* (R 7)

> *"When I first came I used to skip classes and just sleep because I was homesick and it affected my result..... I actually didn't give my parents any explanation for my result, I couldn't explain because it wouldn't make sense to them, only I understood why."* (R 13)

> *"A very few times I got fed up with the environment and decided not to go for classes. Being homesick has made me miss classes but very very few times".* (R 16)

Another respondent talked about how intensely homesick she is and her strong connection with her mum. She talked about how a "negative" call from her mum can negatively affect her concentration in class and academic performance.

> *"I don't miss or skip classes but I might attend a class and I will not understand what they are teaching …I will be in the class but I will be absent except the lecturer ask me a question…like I will just be lost because of my mum. Also if she calls me during my exam period and she dare tells me this is what she Is facing….Trust me, that exam will not be good again…it will not be okay…I will not write that exam well and throughout the whole day, I will not be laughing with anyone I will just be there".* (R 20)

23 participants said being homesick has not impacted their academic performance. Moreover, 5 participants academic performances were affected negatively one way or the other; 3 skipped classes, 1 participant attended morning classes very late because his mum was not here to wake him up to get ready for school and the 5th participant said she doesn't write her exams well and doesn't pay attention in class when her mum tells her about her issues at home.

4.4.3 Impacts on Other Things

Others talked about their mood swing experiences as a result of missing home.

> *"I experience very short mood swings...not for long, the mood will just come and it will just go". (R 16)*

> *"I do experience mood swings, sometimes I am not in the mood to talk... I just miss home and I will be thinking about those at home but I have no other choice than to stay here." (R 11)*

2 participants experience anxiety because they miss home but 1 participant in particular experiences severe anxiety, this severe anxiety started when she got here.

> *"Severe anxiety especially when it comes to the end of the month...when I know I have a lot of things to handle like: bills, school and so on. And you have no one to share it with, I never experienced anxiety in Nigeria, I started having anxiety when I came here. I Became more anxious because a burden shared, is a burden easier to handle ...so when I am here I am alone, I have to think about everything by myself ...what I am going to eat? What I am going to wear? Or my bills or the school fees as changed? Resident permit fee as changed? ...gives anxiety." (R 29)*

Others complained about the changes in their reading pattern(s) because of the change of environment.

> *"I lack motivation; I don't even feel like reading sometimes...but I just have to read because I have exams...I read 2 or 3 days before the exam or test, the pressure puts me into that mood of reading but before I was proactive when it comes to reading; I read naturally even at my leisure but now I don't read again. I think it as a lot to do with me being homesick; it affects my reading pattern and everything in my life." (R 21)*

Respondent 15 started smoking as a result of missing home.

> *"I started smoking because I was homesick…it reduces my thoughts of missing home. The purpose of smoking is to help relax your brain and start thinking about the positive things." (R 15)*

Respondent 16 started smoking more "shisha" because he was missing home.

> *"The only thing I smoke is shisha to warm myself up when it is cold but when I miss home I smoke more shisha than normal." (R 16)*

Others claimed that missing home made them calmer.

> *"It has helped me to be calmer, when trying to talk to people because I know they don't understand me. Aggression doesn't solve it when you are trying to communicate with people here, most times you just have to be calm and you cannot blame them; it is their country it is their language. So yes, it has helped me to be a bit calmer" (R 16)*

Respondent 14 and 21 said their anger issues are gradually reducing.

> *"Before I got to Cyprus I get angry easily but now I don't get angry easily, because there is no point. If you get angry with people around you, they don't understand you or what you are saying; so it is like a loss to you because you are not supposed to be angry. In my country they understood my reasons for getting angry but when I came to Cyprus, the anger issue died." (R 14)*

> *"I am CALMER now…I used to get angry a lot before." (R 21)*

Being homesick as made respondent 17 create room for working on his anger issues.

> *"Right from onset I get angry easily…it is in my nature but now I am working on it… I ignore or just leave that place; it is better than it was in Nigeria." (R 17)*

Respondent 18 claimed to become a lot nicer since she came to study in North Cyprus.

> *"I am nicer; in Gambia I am unapproachable with a straight face, so people don't approach me. When I came here it is like a switch changed I don't*

know why?...i don't know why?. I am so friendly to everyone, I am smiling to everyone, I am chatting up with everyone, I am hugging people and kissing cheeks...I am surprised! I told my friend yesterday that I don't know why I am nice, he was like you are nice...I told him I was not nice in Gambia. At my workplace, back at home; I used to work in the bank even my boss is afraid to talk to me because I was hot tempered and quick to respond. But when I came here, I became nice and sweet with a soft voice....i don't know???. I think it is because I am homesick, I have the mentality that I have to be nice to people here if not I will struggle in this country...I really don't know why the change but I think the homesickness is part of it because when you are homesick you have to make friends and if you want to make friends you have to be nice.....but I like it. My husband and family were surprised about how nice I am now. I also got a job by being nice". (R 18)

Some of the participants explained some positive and negative changes in their behaviours including what they do here but they were not doing in their various home countries. **Bad changes**: mood swing-Seven participants experienced it, 1 participant said peer pressure, 2 participants experienced anxiety; one of them as "severe" anxiety, 1 participant over thinking, 1 participant said he is picking up bad habits, lack of motivation, new feed pattern: late night eating and eating in less frequency, 4 smoking: 2 started smoking here, 1 smokes more "shisha" and the 4th smokes because of the people around him, 5 are less social, boredom; 1 gains weight as a result, 6 disappointed with the country, students and locals, 1 is more defensive, 1 angry, 1 not nice anymore 8 bad eating habits: 1 participant biscuit, remaining 7 complained of chicken and chips. **Good changes** value more family time, different mindset, 6 are calmer: less anger issues and working on anger issues and nicer. 15 negative and 4 positive changes. Homesickness can make you do things u don't normally do, it can make u better or much worse than you were before.

4.5 Regret Being Here

When participants were asked whether they were regret studying abroad, the most of the respondents said they were not. They gave a variety of answers for not being regretful.

> *"No not at all; the university is good, I have learnt a lot and the place too is peaceful…that is why I love the place it is peaceful." (R 11)*

> *"No….it is the best thing that happened to me, being far away from home and not being under parents." (R 27)*

They have become better and stronger.

> *"No because it has taught me a lot; like: it has made me a better person and it as taught me not to rely on my parents." (R 13)*

> "Nah…I am pretty sure if I was somewhere else, I would not have gone through life like this. Basically Cyprus puts you through life that you should be experiencing after school but here while schooling…you experience all that." (R 25)

It has helped respondent 22 discover himself more and his potentials.

> *"No because I feel like if I am not here, there are a lot of things I will not know. Like I have never worked in my life in Nigeria….never, it is here I started working. If I didn't work, I would have not learnt new skills; if I had not learnt new skills, I would have not been a better person and if I didn't go through some experiences here; I would have been unable to have a broader perspective on life." (R 22)*

However, there were three students who were regretful. One of these students said that it is very far away from home and they do not consider Christmas as a holiday.

> *"Sometimes I do because it is so far away from home, sometimes I feel like why didn't I go to South Africa because it is much closer to home. Another thing, they don't consider Christmas for us here and we still attend classes. I feel like that is what makes me regret being here, Christmas is just one day they should consider it for us and we will be okay" (R 10)*

Respondent 19 and 17 complained about the salaries being low.

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> *"Sometimes I do…because of the economy and how much they pay us as salary with all the time and stress. Sometimes I feel like I came to the wrong country." (R 17)*

There were also some students who overall were not one hundred percent regretful they came here but they had small concerns due to personal circumstances; one student whose father died while she was in North Cyprus has not been able to visit home due to guilt, regret and so on. Another main regret is related to lack of opportunities, other mixed feelings responses are:

> *"Mostly yes because I would have been able to able to see my father's last moments. No in the sense that I am a better and stronger person now, I am more responsible and I have learnt from my mistakes." (R 8)*

> *"I don't regret being here but I have a little atom of regret just a little and that is because of some basic things like: this place is enclosed and no better job opportunities. I really don't regret being here because it is my first time being away from home for this long (6 years) and it as affected me in a very positive way." (R 2)*

> *"Yes, before I travelled out of my country, I thought that out here is better and I will have more opportunities than my country but here I am disappointed. There are no opportunities here for students…very limited opportunities. No, like they say learning never stops…there are a lot of things I have learnt." (R 28)*

> *"I don't regret the fact that I am earning a degree…I do like Cyprus it is a very calm and safe environment, it has good beaches. Yes I do feel that we don't have opportunities when it comes to work and things like that." (R 29)*

4.6 Coping Strategies

Students developed a number of strategies to help combat their thoughts of missing home. They are as follows:

4.6.1 Calling Mum

Some of the participants in this category have a strong relationship with their mothers and as a result they called their mothers regularly to combat homesickness. They said:

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"I call my mum 24-7." (R 1)

"I look at her picture or I do a video call with her." (R 20)

4.6.2 Calling Family

Others call their family members regularly to deal with their homesickness.

"I talk to my parents; they make me laugh and I will be good for the day. It is easier as that with me." (R 3)

"In the aspect of missing my family; I talk to them I make sure we do video calls a lot and then when I finish talking to them I just feel awwnn "I wish I was there" but it is cool." (R 4)

"I can even go out alone and be on a video call with my sister; so it feels like she is there and we are together, I show her what I am eating and she will be like "hmmm…enjoy…bring my own o" after that I drop the call and then I go home but that happens once in a while." (R 4)

"When I miss my family I call them; I do a video call with them that helps, when I talk to them face to face I am fine; it makes me feel happy. Then they sending me pictures, me sending them pictures makes me feel really good. I really like that." (R 6)

"I call whoever I want to talk too: my mum, my aunt, my uncle or my siblings; sometimes I can do multiple whatsapp call and I talk to three or four people at once." (R 17)

4.6.3 Talking to Friends Back Home

Others preferred to call and talk to their friends back at home.

"I call my friends at home…we gist and insult each other; normal stuffs that we do." (R 27)

"I talk to my friends back at home; they make me laugh and I will be good for the day. It is easier as that with me." (R 3)

4.6.4 Exercise

Some participants use exercise as a means to deal or cope with homesickness. One of the respondents takes a walk regularly to distract him from the thoughts of missing home. He said:

"I will see so many things that will distract my attention from missing home." (R 17)

Another respondent goes to the gym every day.

> **"I try to do the things I do back home like: going to the gym almost every day."** (R 13)

Football and basketball, helps some participants reduce their thoughts of missing home.

> *"I started doing more sports and more activities; activities like: basketball and football with my friends."* (R 15)

> *"I play football…I spend most of my time on the pitch, if I am not in school I am on the pitch. I train in the morning from 6-8am and in the evening from 4-6pm."* (R 14)

4.6.5 Read Books

One of the students (R15) claims that he reads a lot of books in order not to think about home or feel homesick.

4.6.6 Talk/ Hangout with Friend(s) Here

For many students, hanging out and socializing with their friends here was one of the main coping strategies used to combat feelings of homesickness.

> *"I have close people here that feel up that space; for example have one of my friends here I go to her room, stay there and we cook together. I just have these people that I know in my heart of hearts "nothing fit do me wey dey no go dey" (no matter what happens they will be there for me)"* (R 2)

> *"I have one good friend that as always been there for me, she has been my friend for a long time. I am not a kind of person that shows my weakness but I show her my weakness, I talk to her about my problems and she listens."* (R 8)

> *"I have someone I call "my mum"here even though she is like a little sister to me, she has the same character with my mum, she Is like a mother figure. She used to ask where I am. Ask If I am wearing a jacket when it is cold? She used to wake me up early for my classes. She is like a mum to me, I don't joke with her; I talk to her, I visit her and she helps me cope with being homesick …. some people even thought we were dating."* (R 17)

> *"I go to lefkosia and hangout with my Gambian friends; we play songs, eat, drink, dance and have fun."* (R 18)

"A little hang out once or twice a month." (R 14)

"Sometimes I just go out with friends and just chill." (R 4)

"Sometimes we go to the sea to swim, sometimes we camp on Karpaz. With more activities, you gonna relax your brain and reduce your thoughts of missing home." (R 15)

"I go to my friends or I sleep if I feel homesick." (R 10)

"I go to my friend's house for a sleep over." (R 14)

4.6.7 Drinking and Smoking

One of the participants uses alcohol to help reduce his level of homesickness.

Smoking helps three of the participants relieve the thoughts of missing home.

**"It reduces my thoughts of missing home. The purpose of smoking is to help relax your brain and start thinking about the positive things." (R 15)*

"It helps me forget a lot of things." (R 19)

4.6.8 Playing Games

Some use playing of games as a coping strategy for homesickness.

**"I play game…I am addicted to playing games." (R 21)*

**"When I was alone then before my wife came here, I had a best friend…when I am alone or I am missing home, there is a song I used to play; and when I am playing the song… I will be playing chess. I used the internet to play chess with people from different states ONLINE…chess engages my mind and I made a lot of friends from playing chess online and it built me up….when I am playing chess, I am in another world, so it helps a lot." (R 24)*

4.6.9 Religion

6 participants use religion as their coping strategy for homesickness; 2 out of the 6

pray more here than they did in their home countries.

**"Religion helps me and it has made me feel less homesick, I pray to God to keep making me strong to withstand any kind of pressure or homesickness. Actually, I think I pray more here than back at home. You know in Islam we pray 5 times a day; yes I pray my 5 times back home, we also have additional prayers that you do…So here I sometimes I pray more of those additional prayers than I do back home; back home I feel more at peace and my heart is more calm and serene but here you know when you have a heavy*

heart, I am pushed to pray so that God can ease my heart and I feel more at peace but at home it is peaceful." (R 7)

The church activities he engages himself in distracts him from missing home.

Response 14 says:

"I spend most time in church.. I am a worker in my church so I do a lot of activities there" and he adds that the weekly meetings (cell meeting) helps him too." (R 14)

"Religion helps me too.. the thoughts of not having suicidal thoughts, feeling depressed it is religion; and your relationship with God that helps. I pray more here… I wanted to be close to God when I was in Nigeria but I didn't have enough time, coming here as given me enough time to be closer to God." (R 21)

"My church; Believers love world, helped me cope with missing family; in the sense that they became a family away from home and the people there are so amazing. They brought the sense of joy wherever I went; they brought me together and made me feel like there is no need to be thinking about those things in the first place".

In addition, when he lost his mum in 2012, the church was there for him and he didn't feel alone.

"My believers love world family (church) also helps me because they are always there. Everything that connotes with what a family is, is what my church provides; I never feel alone, disappointed or down because I have a family to run to. Also, we have a lot of meetings; so there is no time to think about certain things like home." (R 22)

Respondent 23 is a pastor and as a pastor it is mandatory to have members in your church, being a pastor as helped him reduce the thoughts of home.

"It has really helped…you are with believers, people of love and people of like mind." (R 23)

"I speak in tongues; I pray, when you pray fervently in the spirit of God; you are more at rest, relaxed and connected with God because when you speak in tongues your spirit is aligned with God and it comforts you …it is a sense of comfort. It is a sense of relief …it is a sense of joy within your

spirit. If I am looking for comfort and that peace within the storm, I just go to the place of prayer and pray about it." (R 22)

4.6.10 Watching Movies

Others watched a lot of movies to deal with homesickness.

"I watch African YouTube series." (R 18)

"I prefer watching movies." (R 19)

"I watch movies…before I came here, I used to say I will never watch seasonal movies because "it is a waste of my life", now I am watching the vampire diaries season 1-8," (R 21)

"As soon as I watch a nice movie or comedy or listen to music I'll feel better and happy too". (R 11)

"I watch Nigerian movies." (R 12)

"Sometimes I watch Nigerian movies just to have that home feeling that home vibe. (R 1)

4.6.11 Listening to Music

Listening to music also helps students to deal with homesickness.

"Whenever I am lonely or sad I just listen to music, put on my earpiece and just be by myself. As soon as I watch a nice movie or comedy or listen to music I'll feel better and happy too." (R 11)

"The other day I just wanted to dance. So I downloaded a Senegalese song, I have been listening to it for the past three days… it is so nice and it reminds me of my country." (R 18)

"Music…it distracts me from missing home." (R 21)

"As a musician and a dancer; my music and dance definitely helps me cope with missing home…I put everything I am going through in that moment…physically, mentally, emotionally…I put all the emotions into both of them because that is where I find the MOST PEACE." (R 27)

4.6.12 Phone/social media/internet

They help the participants reduce their thoughts of missing home.

"I go on social media; I search for things happening in Nigeria, I go on Instagram and twitter and look at what is trending." (R 16)

"Generally, Facebook helps me a lot...if I miss anybody I will go to Facebook search for their name, check their pictures and see what is going on in their lives." (R 20)

"I explore the internet because; it is more affordable and available than back home.. I make good use of the internet." (R 28)

4.6.13 Exchanging Gifts

One of the students talked about exchanging gifts with those at home, it helped her

cope with being homesick.

"I buy things online and send to them in Nigeria and they buy things online to send to me...so I feel like I am getting a gift from home, which makes it very exciting." (R 29)

4.6.14 Business Here

The participants, who are business owners here, agreed that their various businesses

serves as a distraction for their thoughts of home and it helps them meet new people.

"*My business here helps me too because it makes me meet new people." (R 9)*

"*My business, it takes part of my time." (R 8)*

4.6.15 Family/Spouses Present Here

Five of the participants have their spouses or a member of their family here; 4 have

their spouses here and the last participant has her brother here. These people help

them reduce their thoughts of missing home but two married women out of the four

married participants agreed that their husbands help to reduce their thoughts of home

but they still insist they miss home. She said:

"*But I still miss those moments when my family comes together, sharing same things together, going out together, enjoying yourselves together and all that. I still miss those periods." (R 6)*

4.6.16 Job

3 of the participants, who are working here, agreed that having a job also distracts

them from the thoughts of missing home**.**

"First of all I have a lot of things occupying my time, so there is literally no time to sit down and be worrying about your sorrow. in terms of missing home there are certain things that I know if I was at home I would not lack but working and being able to get things for myself as reduce the stress of missing home, in a way." (R 23)

"Getting a job has helped me a lot; at least I go out, I talk to people and I engage myself. So with that I am coping, it has reduced my thoughts of missing home…When I am at work I don't think about anything, all I think about is "work work work." (R 9)

"Working everyday gives you less time to think about home because when you are doing nothing, you start missing home." (R 28)

In summary, the coping strategies used by these homesick participants in this research; are as follows: call mum, call family, take a walk, go to the gym, read books, talk to friends back home, hang out or talk with friends here, drinking, games, religion, speaking in tongues, sports, smoking, watching movies, music, watching mother's burial, recreate taste of food back at home, buy food I crave, phone/social media/internet, exchanging gifts with those at home, business here, family present here and job.

Chapter 5

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

"Leaving family, friends, and the home culture in the pursuit of studies abroad, students frequently find themselves grieving for the missed persons and living in an unfamiliar surroundings. Students frequently reported to feel sad because of living in unfamiliar surroundings in the host country" (Akhtar & Kröner-Herwig, 2015,p.810).

This is inline with this research, homesick students experience sadness as a result of missing home; sadness is one of those "many" feelings that comes with being homesick. Of course you will feel sad, when you move from an environment you are normally used too to a new one, no matter how happy and "well adjusted" you are in the new environment the feeling of sadness will always show up.

"Building new social networks and adjusting to new cultural demands does not easily compensate for the actual loss of a close relationship either to people or cultural aspects of life." (Akhtar & Kröner-Herwig, 2015,p.810).

Having friends or social support in the new environment DOES NOT fill up the void of those left back at home, they can only help you feel better in "some cases" but not in "all cases" according to this research. When the 28 participants who have friends in North Cyprus were asked if these friends they have here, helped to reduce their thoughts of missing home; 19 said yes, 7 said not really and 2 participants specifically said No. So, this means that having friends in the new environment does not ALWAYS help to reduce thoughts of missing home.

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Past researches (e.g., Mori 2000; Poyrazli and Lopez 2007; Yi, Giseala Lin, & Kishimoto, 2003) have proved that homesickness is "a major concern for international students" (Akhtar & Kröner-Herwig, 2015,p.810). Homesickness is a very important aspect that needs to be examined when new students get into a new environment; there should be a periodic check up on the level of homesickness of the international students, so as to help them reduce and prevent it from being intense. Homesickness is one of the MAJOR CONSTANT problems international students face in a new environment. Because of how homesick I am and how personal this research is to me, I made sure all 29 participants involved in the data collection process were homesick.

Poyrazli & Lopez, (2007) argued that younger students experience a high level of homesickness, this **contradicts** this research; most of the new international students are less homesick. From my observation, the new students are still enjoying the honey moon phase according to the U curve by Lysgaard or the culture shock theory; the honey moon stage is the first stage of an international students moving to a new environment, it is the stage where they are so happy for their change of environment; this is exactly what is happening in this situation. The funny thing about this part of my research is those who have been in the environment for several years miss home more than those who just came.

Research by Khawaja & Stallman, 2011, Barratt & Huba, 1994, Poyrazli & Kavanaugh, 2006, Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007, Titrek, Hashimi, Ali, & Nguluma, 2016 shows that international students are unable to make friends in the host community because of language barrier. In this research, language barrier is one of the major reasons why international students are unable to form friendships and relationships

here in North Cyprus. Language barrier is one of the highest concerns of the participants in this research; 25 out of 29 participants are faced with language barrier. When the participants were asked if "language barrier" deprived them from being friends with fellow students or locals in the community; out of a total of 28, 12 said yes (including problems with fellow students) and 16 said no. Mind you, the participants whose responses were no either understand/speak Turkish to an extent or they have co-national friends or they use goggle translator to talk to their friends or they see it as an avenue to learn a new language; while the participants who said yes have little or no idea of the Turkish language.

Students who reported higher levels of discrimination also reported higher levels of homesickness (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007) and "Moreover, levels of discrimination among international students predicted their level of homesickness." (De Araujo, 2011, p.5). This research **contradicts** this, not all participants who experienced racial discrimination in this research agreed it was one of the reasons why they are homesick. Details in numbers, 22 participants agreed they have experienced homesickness here in North Cyprus; but 9 out of the 22 said it doesn't add to the reasons why they miss home.

Poyrazli & Lopez (2007) "found that level of English proficiency predicted homesickness: International students with lower levels of English skills had higher levels of homesickness" (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007, p. 275). International students with a low level of English skills will have a higher level of homesickness. I am rephrasing this statement because English is not the host community's language here in North Cyprus; it basically means that lower level of the host country's language brings about a high level of homesickness. This **contradicts** this research, some of

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the participants in this research took the bold step of learning/understanding Turkish (host country's language) but they are still homesick. According to this research having a "high" level of understanding of the local language doesn't guarantee or lessen international student's level of homesickness.

Another **contradiction** to (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007) study, language barrier predicted homesickness. When participants who have problems speaking or communicating English with locals or fellow students in the community were asked if it added to the reasons why they are homesick; 12 out of the 28 participants said it doesn't add to the reasons why they miss home, these 12 participants said it is because they see language barrier: as a source of entertainment, a chance to explore a new language; Other reasons are: respondent 20 for example misses home because she misses home and it is as nothing to do with the language barrier, they are able to cope with it, they speak or understand Turkish and they have conational friends who they speak English or their local language with. So, language barrier does not in all cases predict a high level of homesickness for international students according to this research.

Past researchers have identified that depression is associated with homesickness (Park and Rubin, 2012; Pedersen, Neighbors, Larimer, Lee, 2011; Saravanan, Alias, & Mohamad, 2017). This research also supports this as well.

According to the results in (Watt & Badger, 2009) participants missing their family is the highest aspect they miss about home. Same as this research as well, out of a total of 29 participants; 22 out of 29 miss their families. They miss: spending time with family, sharing family moments, going on family trips, they miss the "genuine"

concern and care of their family, they miss creating moments with family and being with them.

Watt & Badger, (2009) found out that those who feel accepted in the new environment experience less homesickness. This **contradicts** this research; participants were asked if they felt a sense of belonging in North Cyprus; out of 29 participants: 14 said yes "wholeheartedly" because of: the friendly nature of the locals, how peaceful and safe the country is; amongst many other reasons, 12 said no, 1 said yes and no and the remaining two said it is "50-50" (undecided). A follow up question was not asked to determine if it added to the reasons why the "No and undecided participants" miss home but my point here is; those who said they felt accepted in North Cyprus are as homesick as the once who do not feel accepted in North Cyprus.

> "Van Tilburg et al. (1997a) found the majority (52%) of homesickness sufferers who were surveyed while experiencing homesickness (in contrast with retrospective studies) did not attribute their homesickness to insufficient friends in the new location. The majority attributed it to missing persons (82.7%), missing the environment (81.4%), and missing the atmosphere of the old environment (87.7%)" (Watt & Badger, 2009, p.526).

This agrees with this research, not having friends in North Cyprus is not the only reason why all the participants involved in this research miss home.

According to Abbas, Aqeel, Wenhong, Aman, & Zahra, (2018) homesickness is positively related with mood swings especially negative mood swings;

> "Previous studies explained that age differences exist on mood swings (Thurber and Sigman, 1998). Young students have shown more mood swings due to homesickness as compared to adult students. This may affect their academic performance too. Therefore, recurrent thoughts of the home are the major cause of inducing mood swings among university students (Brewin, Furnham, & Howes, 1989)". (Abbas et al., 2018,p.363).

This research supports this 7 participants said they experience mood swings as a result of missing home.

> "First, establishing social support networks is undeniably one of the most valuable strategies that international students can employ in order to integrate successfully into the host society. Supportive social relationships are integral to their psychological and academic integration. Whilst friendships with the host national network are difficult to obtain due to cultural distinctions and personal locus of control linked to individualism and collectivism (Leung, 2001), the international network often provides the most satisfactory group that assists in minimizing feelings of loss and loneliness" (Patron, 2014,p.37).

This research supports a part of this finding and there is a little contradiction here. A lot of these participants use their friends here as coping strategy for their homesickness; they hang out with their friends and do sleepovers these and many more helps them reduce their thoughts of missing home. The little **contradiction** here is, when participants in this research were asked if their friends here helped to reduce their thoughts of missing home; well 19 said yes, 2 said no and 7 said not really.

Results of (Msengi, 2007) study shows that married students are less lonely while unmarried students are lonelier and married students are less homesick because they have spouses to vent or talk to. Not all the parts of this sentence can be agreed with in this research because there is a **contradiction**; yes the unmarried participants are more lonely while the married participants are less lonely (except for one woman whose husband finished schooling here and went back to their home country, she is alone here) because they have their husbands/wives here with them but the **contradiction** here is some of these married participants involved in this research agreed that having their spouses here helps to reduce their thoughts of missing home but two married women out of the 5 married participants said they still feel homesick

even with their husbands here with them. So according to this research, being married doesn't completely reduce the thoughts of missing home; it only helps reduce the thoughts of missing home a little.

Some researchers (Poyrazli & Lopez (2007); Sun & Hagedorn, (2016); Sun, (2015)) found out that the female gender are more homesick than the male gender, this **contradicts** this research. First of all, both genders are homesick and no gender is more homesick than the other.

The result of some studies shows that homesickness is associated with lowered mood, health complaints and cognitive failures (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, Van Heck, & Kirschbaum, 1999). This agrees with this research, health complaints that emerged from this research are: lack of balanced diet, bloating, constipation, bad eating habits, high cholesterol, fever, headache, high blood pressure, heartburns, ulcer pain increase, overweight, insomnia and a little psychological problem.

Poyrazli & Lopez, (2007) stated that students with plenty social support are less likely to feel homesick. This **contradicts** this research; international students with "adequate" social support are still homesick.

> "Other studies have found a significant relationship between intensive homesickness and cognitive failures, poor concentration, decreased work quality, lower academic performance, and higher scores on anxiety and depression measures" (Sun & Hagedorn, 2016,p.945).

Participants in this study were asked if being homesick affected their academic performance negatively, only a small number (5 out of 28) agreed and said they

skipped classes, went late for classes and had poor concentration as a result of missing home.

Theoretical Perspective

Fisher's homesickness model explains the five theoretical dimensions of homesickness, the after effects of leaving home or a familiar environment (Sun, 2015). They are:

Firstly, loss; being separated from family, friends and a familiar environment brings about a sense of loss. It is a partial loss by the way because the students/ individual still have his/her family and friends back home, he/she is able to keep in touch with them and the individual can visit home whenever they want. (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck,1996, p.903). "Therefore homesickness can be conceived as a form of reversible bereavement. Besides family and friends, the losses may also include valued possessions, careers and places of emotional significance" (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck, 1996,p.903).

Secondly, interruption of lifestyle; moving to a new environment also means interruption or the end of certain lifestyles, habits, routines and behaviors, these will likely lead to negative feelings like: anxiety, fear, stress and homesickness. Old habits, behaviors and routines become irrelevant in a new environment; of course an UPGRADE is needed to help the individual or student cope in the new environment (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck, 1996,p.903). "If one continues the old behaviors in the new situation, he/she may experience difficulty to cope with the situation, resulting in a higher chance of becoming homesick". (Sun, 2015,p.29).

Thirdly, reduced control; moving to a new environment comes with new demands, when one cannot cope with these new demands it becomes a problem and then there is a reduced control. It is important to have control, in other to be able to cope with the new demands and problems you will encounter in the new environment (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck, 1996,p.903). "A move away from the familiar environment into a new situation always leads to a reduced control" (Sun, 2015,p.29), "the idea is that low control may lead to feelings of helplessness, which is in turn associated with depressed feelings" (Van Tilburg et al.,1996,p.904) and homesickness of course.

Lastly, conflict; when an individual or student changes environment,

> "there is a conflict between the wish to acquire new experiences, while at the same time wanting to return home. Home is attractive because it is secure and comfortable, whereas new environments are challenging because of the new experiences and opportunities. It is hypothesized that this conflict may create anxiety and" (Van Tilburg, Vingerhoets, & Van Heck, 1996,p.904) "the anxiety out of this conflict may create homesickness" (Sun, 2015,p.29).

Dural process model of coping with bereavement

> "Provides another theoretical framework to understand homesickness from two dimensions: cognitive stress and attachment. Homesickness is likened as the grief reaction in the case of loss through death. Although this theory approaches homesickness differently, the DPM reached a similar conclusion that homesickness can be predicted by two types of stressors: one is loss-oriented, such as missing the family, significant others, and so on, and another is restoration-oriented, such as adjustment difficulties in the new environment" (Sun, 2015,p.29).

The aspect of this model covered in this research is the loss- oriented type…it is either you miss the home, the place, the people, the food and so on.

Belonging Theory

We all know how important and compulsory a sense of belonging is especially in a new environment, in order to have a sense of belonging in a new environment it is very necessary to make friends in the new environment and "keep in touch" with family. Therefore, one way to reduce homesickness is to maintain some of the old relationships back at home by contacting them, with the help of modern technologies, contacting home as frequently as possible is now very possible.

Furthermore, they suggest that when more friendships are formed in the new location, the need to belong will be satisfied, resulting in a reduced level of homesickness. (Sun, 2015)

Practical Implications

"First, the findings highlight the importance of intervention programs designed to help international students, especially the younger ones, cope with and overcome their experiences related to homesickness. Through brochures, pamphlets, Web sites, and orientation programs, these students could be informed about what they may experience in the new culture and what psychological reactions they may have. Students could form or join social support groups during their initial semesters to help them gain new skills to cope with their environment. Within the support groups, students could discuss discrimination and the relationship between discrimination and homesickness. These support groups could help international students transition more easily into the new environment and offer them a place to discuss or ask questions about their experiences" (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007,p.276).

"Therefore, identifying students' problems at an early stage, for example, screening all international students for psychosocial problems in the first week after registration would be the best option. Many universities provide a mental health awareness lecture or seminar for international students to increase their awareness of homesickness and other psychological problems, but students may not attend or utilize the service. Consequently, students are unaware of mental health problems such as depression and homesickness. Therefore, the university should make attending mental health awareness lecture in the first week of their first semester compulsory for all

international students. This type of mandatory activity will force the students to attend a mental health awareness lecture. As a result, students will be aware of problems, such as depression and homesickness, and be more likely to seek assistance from the student counseling centre or a mental health professional for their psychological problems. " (Saravanan, Alias, & Mohamad, 2017,p.114).

While students are preparing to study in another country, one of the necessary training that will be very important for them is the social support training and how to establish social support or make friends (Hendrickson, Rosen, & Aune, 2011). No man is an island, it is mandatory to relate with people in the new environment, this training prepares you for what is ahead of you and the best way to identify and make GOOD AND NECESSARY friends that will be very helpful and beneficial for you during your study in a foreign land.

> "Campuses may wish to offer ways to help foster healthy peer relationships among new students. In particular, providing opportunities for student interaction could allow for the development of new friendships". (Goguen, Hiester, & Nordstrom, 2010,p.334).

> "The transition to college inevitably requires cultural adjustment. Domestic and international students must find ways to adopt the patterns of the new society" (Omachinski, 2014,p.40). "All students need social ties in college to provide comfort and support on the journey to graduation. Higher education professionals need to provide social networking opportunities that include both groups as well as ways to integrate students together in the classroom to facilitate conversation and form friendships amongst students". (Omachinski, 2014,p.40).

This present study shows that international students face a lot of problems in the new environment. All of these problems should not be swept under the rug, strategies and methods should be put in place; this will reduce the level of homesickness and the "many" problems these international students will face in their new environments.

The school or their members of staff should organize a workshop during the academic year, to educate international students on everything that pertains to "racism". These officials can go further to encourage these students who have experienced racism to share their experiences during this event; this way the student who is sharing his/her story will feel a lot better and other international students who are listening will have a clearer understanding of racism; this will also create awareness to racism. With this in mind racism experiences will be much lesser, racism situations will be avoided a little and level of homesickness will lessen (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007).

Encourage acceptance among the international students, "faculty could arrange social gatherings such as multicultural potluck dinners or movie nights for students. Such interactions could lead to a higher level of acceptance and reduce the likelihood of discrimination" (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007,p.276).

Most if not all international students, do not see the need to seek help or consult mental health experts or psychologists concerning how homesick they are or the problems they face in their daily lives; this is because of the stigma attached to it and the fear of being judged or called "crazy". The universities MUST therefore,

> "provide a mental health awareness lecture or seminar for new students to enhance knowledge about negative emotions, provide self-management techniques to manage their negative emotions and mention the availability of mental health services in their educational institution. Student counselors and mental health professionals need to be conscious of the relationship between depression and homesickness, as this study found the existence of a strong relationship between depression and homesickness" (Saravanan, Alias, & Mohamad, 2017,p.114).

> "Programs to educate faculty, staff, and the campus community could greatly benefit universities. Programs designed to help international students understand and cope with discrimination, homesickness, and the transition to college life would make it clear to the students that the university is

concerned with their well-being and wants to minimize their discomfort. Such programs may help international students to feel more comfortable, speak well of their host countries and universities, and encourage other friends from their countries to study at their host universities, which could promote friendlier international relations between all countries involved. Because of these potential benefits, universities should see the implementation of these programs not as an expense, but as an investment" (Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007,p.277&278).

Provide counseling service for students (Majid, 2014), this helps them vent and share all that is bothering them. Provide recreational and leisure activities like: movies, sporting activities, tours, musical concerts (Shaikh, Kahloon, Kazmi, Khalid, Nawaz, Khan, & Khan, 2004); I feel this will help distract them from the thoughts of missing home. Organize extracurricular activities and social events to help entertain these students (Titrek, Hashimi, Ali, & Nguluma, 2016), this will help them think less about home.

"Providing a warm, fun, relaxed orientation where incoming students have a chance to connect socially and familiarize themselves with the school before classes begin"(Thurber & Walton, 2012,p.3) "Provide orienting information about the school, its environment, and its culture. The more that incoming students know about what to expect and where to find supports and resources when they arrive, the less anxious they will feel." (Thurber & Walton, 2012,p.3).

Before leaving your home country, decide on the means you want to use to keep in contact with family and friends back at home, is it through: emails, social media, phone calls, one on one visit and so on (Thurber & Walton, 2012) . It is very important. Also, discourage pick up deals; which is when the child/ward tells his/her parents they are homesick, the parents then agrees to come pick them up and take them home. This is really bad and it should be avoided by all means. The schools should encourage parents that no matter how much they miss their child/ward, there

should never be no "pick- up deals" instead they should encourage and motivate them. (Thurber & Walton, 2012).

> "For international students, cultivate host-country friends as well as homeland friends. Both can be important social supports. Establishing a friendship group of predominantly homeland friends impedes acculturation and is usually associated with more intense feelings of missing home" (Thurber & Walton, 2012,p.3).

It is best to be friends with people from different nationalities not just your nationality; it helps reduce homesickness but being friends with only people from your nationality increases homesickness.

Limitation and Future Research

The limitations of the research are: time and one location specific i.e Famagusta. Future research should ensure that more than one location, city or town is covered this way results or opinions are not limited.

Also, due to the interesting and contradicting finding in this research; I suggest a quantitative approach should be explored on these contradictions to further prove these NEW findings in this research and also examine if not having a sense of belonging in a new environment is one of the reasons why people miss home.

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