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From home to campus: The homesickness and adaptation experience of migrant students

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ABSTRACT

Educational mobility encourages many students to leave their home areas to continue their studies in higher education. The move not only presents academic opportunities but also poses various social and emotional challenges, including homesickness. This study aims to analyze the experiences of homesickness and social adaptation among migrant students at Sriwijaya University, Indralaya Campus. The research uses a qualitative approach with phenomenological methods. The data were obtained through in-depth interviews with five migrant students who were selected purposively based on their experience of living far from their families and having experienced homesickness. Data were analyzed using an interactive model consisting of data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing. The results of the study showed that homesickness is experienced in the form of longing for family, feelings of loneliness due to the loss of a familiar social environment, culture shock when entering a new environment, and difficulty living life independently. This experience is part of the social adaptation process that takes place when students enter a social environment that is different from their home region. Adaptation is carried out through changes in daily behavior, the development of new social relationships, involvement in student organizations, and the process of forming an identity as a more independent individual. The findings of the study show that homesickness is not only an emotional response to separation from home but also an important part of the process of social adjustment and maturation of migrant students.

Keywords: homesickness; social adaptation; migrant students; social identity; phenomenology

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RESEARCH & PUBLISHING



1. INTRODUCTION

Educational mobility has become one of the social phenomena that is growing in Indonesia. Every year, thousands of students leave their home areas to pursue higher education in other cities or regions that are considered to have better access to education. In fact, based on data from the Ministry of Education, Culture, Research, and Technology, there are more than 1.5 million students who are classified as migrants.

The increase in educational mobility reflects broader access to higher education but also reflects the occurrence of educational migration that requires students to adapt to the new social, cultural, and academic environment. In this context, migrant students not only face academic demands, but also various psychological and social challenges that arise due to separation from family, close friends, and the environment that has been their source of comfort (Jadidah et al., 2023; Supriyati, 2023; Waworuntu & Murti, 2025).

One of the most common challenges experienced by migrant students is homesickness. Homesickness is an emotional condition that arises due to separation from home and familiar environment, which is characterized by feelings of longing, sadness, longing for family, and the desire to return to the place of origin (Hamid, 2022; Nauta et al., 2019; Thurber & Walton, 2012). This condition often arises when individuals enter a new environment that is not yet known and must live a life independently. For migrant students, homesickness is not only related to the longing for home physically, but also related to the loss of routines, social relationships, and emotional support that they previously received from their families and home environment (Amelia & Kholidin, 2025; Kelly et al., 2021; Sezer et al., 2021).

The phenomenon of homesickness is becoming increasingly relevant in the context of the lives of first-year students. The transition period from secondary education to college is a period of significant change in an individual's life. In this phase, students have to deal with more complex academic demands, build new social relationships, manage daily life independently, and adjust to different cultures and norms from their home region. These changes often cause emotional pressure that affects the process of student adjustment in the campus environment.

Various studies show that homesickness is a common experience experienced by migrant students. (Amelia & Kholidin, 2025; Kelly et al., 2021; Sezer et al., 2021). Feelings of longing for family, loneliness, difficulty establishing social relationships, and discomfort with a new environment are factors that encourage the emergence of homesickness (Permatasari & Sari, 2026; Rathakrishnan et al., 2021; Zaidi et al., 2025). This condition can even affect the psychological well-being of students, reduce learning motivation, interfere with academic concentration, and hinder the process of social integration in the campus environment (Murillo & Chaves, 2024; Thurber & Walton, 2012; Zaidi et al., 2025). Thus, homesickness cannot be seen only as a form of ordinary longing, but as part of a social transition experience that has the potential to affect students' success in living college life. (Kelly et al., 2021; Permatasari & Sari, 2026).

From a sociological perspective, the experience of homesickness cannot be separated from the process of social adaptation that individuals carry out when entering a new environment. Social adaptation is the process of individual adjustment to norms, values, interaction patterns, and social structures that apply in an environment. For migrant students, this process includes efforts to build relationships with peers, adjust to campus culture, understand the patterns of life in the rented house, and develop the ability to live independently. Through this adaptation process, students gradually build a sense of belonging to the new environment so that they are able to reduce the feelings of isolation and discomfort they experience.

Sriwijaya University, especially the Indralaya Campus, is one of the universities that is the destination of students from various regions in Indonesia. The diversity of cultural, linguistic, and social backgrounds that students have creates an interesting adaptation dynamic to study. For some students, moving to the campus environment is the first experience of living away from family. This situation often

gives rise to various forms of homesickness, which are expressed through feelings of loneliness, longing for family, difficulty living an independent life, and the emergence of a desire to return home.

Although previous studies have examined homesickness among university students, many of them focus on psychological causes, emotional consequences, coping mechanisms, and academic effects. These studies often treat homesickness as an individual problem of adjustment. Less attention has been paid to how homesickness becomes part of a broader social process involving adaptation, relationship building, belonging, and identity transformation.

This study addresses that gap by examining homesickness through a sociological and phenomenological lens. Rather than treating homesickness solely as psychological distress, this study explores how migrant students at Sriwijaya University experience homesickness as part of social adaptation and identity transformation. The novelty of this study lies in its integration of homesickness, social adaptation, and identity formation within the lived experiences of migrant students at the Indralaya Campus.

Based on this focus, this study aims to understand the experiences of homesickness among migrant students and the adaptation processes they undertake while studying at Sriwijaya University, Indralaya Campus. The study contributes to a deeper understanding of educational migration, student social adaptation, and the formation of migrant student identity in higher education settings. Unlike previous studies that primarily examine homesickness as a psychological condition, this study conceptualizes homesickness as a social process through which migrant students negotiate belonging, adaptation, and identity transformation.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Migrant Students

A migrant student is someone who leaves their hometown for a long period of time to pursue higher education (Medani et al., 2024; Rincón-Báez, 2024). Educational migration is one of the main reasons individuals leave their hometowns (Murillo & Chaves, 2024). In this era of globalization, many students pursue higher education by studying away from their hometowns, including students. A student who migrates must live outside his hometown area for a certain time to complete his education, or, in other words, a migrant student. Of course, these migrant students will leave their hometown to live their own lives without a family beside them. Away from home, when faced with any situation and conditions, a student is required to be able to handle it on their own. This is because the situation is different in a new place. The opportunity to depend on others is very minimal, and the fulfillment of their needs must be overcome by themselves (Fauzia et al., 2021).

This condition makes migrant students have to face various changes in their daily lives, both in terms of the social and cultural environment. This difference requires students to be able to adjust in order to be able to carry out lecture activities well. This situation can make migrant students experience homesickness, especially in the early days of being on campus (Hamid, 2022; Nauta et al., 2019). Feelings of homesickness, family, and habits in the home area can affect their adjustment process. Therefore, migrant students need to use various ways to adjust, such as interacting with friends and starting to get involved in the campus environment, in order to reduce these feelings and be more comfortable living life abroad.

2.2. Homesickness

Homesickness is a negative emotion that arises due to separation from the closest figures in the house, which is characterized by feelings of longing and thoughts that are constantly focused on the home. Homesickness is a common thing experienced by individuals when they are in a new and unfamiliar environment. This condition can occur in various age groups and is influenced by separation from family, friends, and the environment that is usually occupied.

Homesickness can hurt an individual, especially children and adolescents, so adequate social support is needed from parents and peers. This can result in several inhibiting or obstructive problems,

such as unwillingness to learn and laziness to learn, negative thoughts and feelings, loss of zest for life, stress, frustration, negative or unstable emotions, and others. Homesickness can also make an individual who experiences it miss the atmosphere of his hometown or surrounding area, which causes him to have difficulty socializing and interacting in his new environment. There are five main aspects to knowing if an individual has homesickness and determining the level of homesickness a person has, namely longing for family, longing for friends, feeling lonely, difficulty or difficulty adjusting, and reflection about home (Amalia et al., 2024).

2.3. Social Adaptation Theory

Social adaptation is one of the important concepts in sociology that is used to understand the process of individual adjustment to the new social environment. Adaptation occurs when individuals face changes in social conditions that require adjustments in behavior, values, interaction patterns, and life habits in order to be accepted and function effectively in the environment. In the context of the life of migrant students, social adaptation is an inevitable process because they have to leave their home environment and enter a new environment that has different social, cultural, and life characteristics.

According to Purwadarminta (2007) in Herlina (2019) social adaptation is the process of individual adjustment to the social environment so that individuals are able to live and function effectively in the social group in which they belong. Adaptation is not only related to the individual's ability to survive in a new environment, but also the ability to build social relationships, understand applicable norms, and develop behavior patterns that suit the demands of the environment.

In a sociological perspective, social adaptation is seen as part of the process of interaction between individuals and their social environment. Parsons (1951) Through the AGIL scheme, it is explained that adaptation is one of the basic functions that must be fulfilled in order for a social system to survive. Individuals, as part of the social system, are required to adapt to the environmental conditions faced and utilize available resources to achieve social balance. Thus, adaptation is not simply an individual's response to change, but also a mechanism that allows individuals to become part of a new social system.

Migrant students are a group that is prone to having difficulty adapting because they have to face various changes at the same time. These changes include the physical environment, culture, patterns of social interaction, academic demands, and changes in roles from individuals who were previously dependent on the family to more independent individuals. This situation often gives rise to various forms of discomfort, including feelings of loneliness, longing for family, and homesickness.

In this study, social adaptation theory is used to understand how migrant students adjust to campus life after experiencing separation from their families and home environment. The adaptation process is analyzed through various experiences of students in building social relationships, adjusting to the campus and rented house environment, living life independently, and overcoming various challenges that arise during the overseas period. Using a social adaptation perspective, this study not only sees homesickness as a purely emotional condition, but also as part of the social adjustment process experienced by students when entering a new living environment.

3. RESEARCH METHOD

3.1. Research Design

This research uses a qualitative method with a phenomenological approach. This method was chosen because the research aims to deeply understand the experience of migrant students in dealing with homesickness in the campus environment. This study does not use numbers, but rather emphasizes how students interpret the experiences they experience in their daily lives.

According to Nasir et al. (2023) phenomenology is concerned with how individuals understand an event or experience based on their consciousness. A person's knowledge is formed from direct experience, so that the meaning of a phenomenon emerges through the process of interaction between individuals and the surrounding environment.

3.2. Research Locations

This research was conducted on the campus of Sriwijaya Indralaya University, Ogan Ilir Regency. The selection of this location is based on the characteristics of the campus, which has a large number of migrant students, namely students from various regions outside the South Sumatra region. This condition causes most students to live far from their families and home environment, so they have the potential to experience homesickness.

In more detail, the campus environment of Sriwijaya Indralaya University has a fairly large area with centralized lecture facilities, and is supported by various academic and non-academic activities, such as student and community organizations. This environment requires students to be able to adapt, both socially and culturally, because they have to build new relationships with peers, lecturers, and the surrounding environment.

3.3. Types of Data Collected

3.3.1. Primary Data

Primary data collection is carried out through in-depth interviews that are open and flexible. Through these interviews, the researcher obtained detailed information about the informant's experience, such as the form of longing experienced, the factors that cause homesickness, and how they adjusted to the campus environment. In addition, the researcher also explored aspects of social interaction, such as relationships with peers, involvement in campus activities, and social support received by informants. To support the interview results, the researcher also used field notes to record situations, expressions, and important things that arose during the data collection process.

3.3.2. Secondary Data

Secondary data in this study is supporting data obtained from various written sources relevant to the research topic, such as national scientific journals, reference books, and previous research results that discuss homesickness, social support, and social adaptation of migrant students. These sources are selected selectively based on the suitability of the theme, relevance, and year of publication to remain in line with the latest research developments.

3.4. Determination of Informant

Informants were selected using purposive sampling. This technique was appropriate because the study required participants who had direct experience of living away from family and experiencing homesickness. The criteria for inclusion were students from outside the local area, currently studying at Sriwijaya University, living away from family or place of origin, and having experienced homesickness during their university life.

The study involved five informants from different study programs and academic years. The variation in gender, faculty, semester level, and migration experience provided a broader understanding of how students' backgrounds shaped their homesickness and adaptation experiences (See [Table 1](#)).

Table 1. Informant Table

Informant	Gender	Study program	Faculty	Semester/year level	Origin region	Length of stay away from home
IM	Male	Sociology	Faculty of Social and Political Sciences	Semester 2 / 2025 cohort	Lubuk Linggau	Less than 1 year
MP	Female	Sociology	Faculty of Social and Political Sciences	Semester 4 / 2024 cohort	Medan	About 2 years

AS	Male	Agribusiness	Faculty of Agriculture	Semester 2 / 2025 cohort	Jambi	Less than 1 year
FS	Female	Mathematics Education	Faculty of Teacher Training and Education	Semester 2 / 2025 cohort	Musi Rawas	Less than 1 year
SA	Female	Public Administration	Faculty of Social and Political Sciences	Semester 4/ 2024 cohort	Ogan Komering Ulu	About 2 years

Source: Processed from primary data (2026)

3.5. Data Validity Checking Techniques

In qualitative research, the validity of data is essential to ensure that the data obtained is truly valid, accurate, and trustworthy. The researcher uses several data validity check techniques as follows: The validity of the data in this study was ensured through several techniques, namely data triangulation, member checking, observation persistence, and peer discussion. Data triangulation was used to test the validity of the research data by comparing information obtained from various sources, methods, researchers, or theories, so that the findings became more valid and reliable than those obtained from a single approach (Nurfajriani et al., 2024).

In this study, triangulation was carried out by comparing interview results from several informants, namely migrant students who experienced homesickness, to identify the consistency of the data and ensure that the information did not come from only one perspective. Member checking was conducted by reconfirming the interview results with the informants, in which the researcher presented the data that had been obtained to ensure that it was in accordance with the informants' experiences and intentions. This technique was used to improve data accuracy and avoid misinterpretation. In addition, observation persistence was applied through in-depth and repeated observations of the phenomenon being studied, namely homesickness among migrant students, so that the researcher could obtain more detailed, accurate, and reliable data. The researcher also conducted discussions with peers or other parties who understood the research topic in order to gain input, criticism, and alternative perspectives on the data and research findings, thereby strengthening the validity and objectivity of the study.

3.6. Data Analysis Techniques

The data analysis technique used in this study is qualitative data analysis with an interactive model. This model is carried out continuously from the data collection process to the final stage of the research, so that the analysis is not only carried out after the data is collected, but takes place simultaneously with the process in the field.

3.6.1. Data Reduction

Data reduction is a selection process, focusing attention on simplification, abstraction, and transformation of rough data that arises from written records in the field. This process takes place continuously throughout the study, even before the data is actually collected, as seen from the conceptual framework of the research, the study problems, and the data collection approach chosen by the researcher. Data reduction includes: (1) summarizing data, (2) coding, (3) searching for themes, and (4) creating clusters. A rigorous selection of data, a summary or a brief description, and classifying it into a broader pattern (Rijali, 2018).

In line with this understanding, data reduction in this study is a process of selecting, simplifying, and focusing data obtained from in-depth interviews. At this stage, the researcher selects information that is relevant to the focus of the research, namely the experience of homesickness in migrant students. Unrelated data will be set aside, while important data will be summarized and grouped by theme, such as feelings experienced, causative factors, coping strategies, and the impact of homesickness. This process aims to make the data more targeted and easier to analyze further.

3.6.2. Data Presentation

Data presentation is an activity in which a set of information is compiled, thus providing the possibility of drawing conclusions and taking action. The form of presentation of qualitative data can be in the form of narrative text in the form of field notes, matrices, graphs, networks, and charts. These forms combine information arranged in a cohesive and easily accessible form, making it easy to see what is happening, whether the conclusions are correct or otherwise, and re-analyze (Rijali, 2018).

The presentation of data is carried out by compiling data that has been reduced into the form of a descriptive narrative. The data is presented systematically in accordance with the themes that have been determined, making it easier for researchers to understand the overall information. In addition, the presentation of data can also be complemented by direct excerpts from the interview results to reinforce the research findings and provide a more realistic picture of the informant's experience. Conclusions are drawn by identifying patterns, relationships, and meanings from the data that has been presented. The researcher interpreted the findings based on the themes that emerged, then related them to the focus of the research, namely the homesickness experience of migrant students. The conclusions produced are temporary at first, then will be strengthened as the data increases until consistent and reliable results are obtained (Rijali, 2018). By using this interactive analysis model, researchers can gain a deeper and more structured understanding of the homesickness experience, as well as produce findings that are appropriate to the conditions that occur in the field.

3.7. Research Limitations

This research has several limitations. First, the relatively limited number of informants means that the results of the research are not intended to be generalized to all migrant students in Indonesia. However, phenomenological studies prioritize depth of lived experience rather than statistical representativeness. Second, the research was only conducted on Sriwijaya University students, so the experiences found were greatly influenced by the social and cultural context of the campus. In addition, this study focuses on students' subjective experiences, so it has not studied in depth the influence of broader structural factors. Further research can involve more diverse and cross-university informants.

3.8. Homesickness Experience of Migrant Students

3.8.1. Longing for Family as the Primary Expression of Homesickness

Longing for family emerged as the most dominant expression of homesickness among participants. This feeling was especially strong during the early months of migration, when students had to adjust to living away from parents and familiar routines for the first time. The informant explained:

"Jujur ini baru pertama kali, aku kan baru pertama kali jauh dari orang tua... perihalnya rindu.. jujur rindu nian dengan orang tua." ("Honestly, this is the first time I've been away from my parents... about missing them, honestly, I really miss my parents.") (IM).

MP also described the first semester as emotionally difficult because she had never previously lived far from her parents:

"Nah aku itu dari dulu anaknya gak pernah jauh dari orang tuaku... jadi awal-awal itu aku nangis sampai aku sakit. Karena kalau aku sakit, aku gak bisa jauh dari mamaku." ("Well, I've always been a child who has never been far from my parents... so in the beginning, I cried until I was sick. Because when I was sick, I couldn't be far from my mother.") (MP).

These narratives show that homesickness was not only related to physical separation from home. Participants also missed everyday care, emotional security, and the presence of parents in ordinary routines. Home was therefore understood as a social space that provided comfort, attachment, and a sense of being protected.

3.8.2. Loneliness and Loss of Familiar Social Networks

In addition to longing for family, participants described loneliness as a central part of their homesickness. The absence of close friends and familiar social surroundings created feelings of isolation, particularly in the rented house environment.

"Di kostan ini awal-awal sendirian sering nangis karena kangen rumah biar dak ngeraso sendirian aku sering ngomong samo dinding." ("In this rented house, when I was alone at the beginning, I often cried because I missed home. So that I wouldn't feel alone, I often talked to the wall.") (FS).

Loneliness was also experienced when students were physically present on campus but had not yet developed close social networks. IM explained that he needed friends to reduce the feeling of being alone: *"Aku ngerjoi sharing-sharing karo koncoku... biar aku gak kesepiann juga kan, biar gak kerasa nya."* ("I'm doing anything and sharing with my friends... so I won't be lonely either, so I won't feel it.") (IM).

These findings suggest that homesickness is closely connected to the disruption of social networks. Students missed not only home but also the social relationships that had previously helped them feel recognized, accompanied, and emotionally secure.

3.8.3. Culture Shock in a New Environment

Participants also experienced culture shock during the early period of migration. They had to adjust to new communication styles, different peer groups, rented house norms, and unfamiliar campus routines.

"Awal-awal adaptasi di kelas itu percaya diri aku berteman dengan siapa aja... Jujur, baru pertama kali agak risih, tapi lama-kelamaan tidak karena lingkungan sosial dari teman." ("During my early adaptations to campus life, I was confident and made friends with anyone... Honestly, at first time I was a bit uncomfortable, but over time I didn't because of the social environment of my friends.") (IM).

MP similarly recalled uncertainty in her early interactions: *"Jujur awal-awal itu aku bingung nak berinteraksi cak mano... awal-awal kenal namo cak itu ntab ngapo jadi nyambung bae."* ("Honestly, at the first time I was confused about how to interact... finally, when I got to know my friend's name, I just connected when we did conversations.") (MP).

These experiences indicate that homesickness was intertwined with social and cultural adjustment. Students had to learn how to communicate, build trust, and participate in new social environments before they could feel comfortable on campus.

3.8.4. Difficulties of Living Independently

Another important dimension of homesickness was the difficulty of living independently. Before migrating, participants relied on their families for meals, household chores, emotional care, and everyday support. After moving to Indralaya, they had to manage these responsibilities on their own. *"Hal seng nggawe rindu biasanya kan makan tinggal makan, sekarang kalamau makan harus beli sendiri... soal pakaian kan biasanya dicuciin sekarang nyuci sendiri, apa-apa itu harus sendiri."* ("The thing that makes me miss my parents is that usually I just eat, now if I want to eat, I have to buy it by myself... about clothes, my parents always do my laundry, now I did my laundry by myself, everything I do has to be done by myself.") (IM).

AS also emphasized that the change in daily routines made him miss home: *"Aku ngeraso ado perubahan kebiasaan sejak merantau. Dulu ado keluarga yang ngebangunin samo nyiapke makan. Sekarang harus ngelakuin galo dewek: bangun pake alarm, masak dewek, atau kadang beli."* ("I feel like my habits have changed since I moved away from home. Usually, the family wakes me up and prepares meals. Now I have to do everything by myself. I wake up with an alarm, cook for myself, or sometimes buy food.") (AS).

These findings show that homesickness was connected to a shift in social roles. Participants were no longer positioned as family members who received direct care, but as individuals who had to organize their own lives. This shift became an important part of their adaptation process.

3.9. Behavioural Adaptation of Migrant Students

3.9.1. Adjusting Daily Life Habits

After experiencing homesickness, students gradually developed new habits that helped them adjust to university life. They learned to manage time, complete academic tasks, organize daily routines, and reduce dependence on family assistance. *"Terus aku mencoba untuk lebih menyibukkan diri di kos, lebih sering-sering vc sama mama papa... semester 2 itu aku sudah mulai terbiasalah dengan kehidupanku yang jauh dengan orang tua."* ("Then I tried to keep myself busier in the rented house, more often I had video calls with my parents... in the second semester I started to get used to living far away from my parents.") (MP).

This adaptation occurred gradually. Participants did not immediately feel comfortable, but they developed new routines that helped them manage emotional discomfort and everyday responsibilities.

3.9.2. Taking Care of Personal Needs

Behavioural adaptation was also shown through participants' ability to fulfil personal needs independently. Activities such as buying food, preparing meals, washing clothes, waking up without parental help, and managing academic tasks became part of their daily learning process.

"Aku pasti selalu kangen masakan ibu dan dibangunin sama ibu karena disini dibangunin sama alarm." ("I always miss my mom's cooking and being woken up by my mom because here I'm woken up by an alarm.") (AS).

"Aku rindu dengan kucingku, rindu dengan mesin cuciku juga, karena kalo di kosan, aku nyiapin segalanya tu dewan aku bingung sekali." ("I miss my cat, I miss my washing machine too, because when I was in the rented house, I prepared everything by myself. I was so confused.") (FS).

These narratives show that independent living was not only a practical issue. It also had emotional meaning because daily care at home was closely connected to family affection and a sense of belonging.

3.9.3. Adapting to Rented House and Campus Regulations

Students also adapted by learning the rules and social expectations of the rented house and campus life. They had to adjust to shared living arrangements, campus schedules, new friendships, and organizational activities.

"Kalo di kampus awal tu pasti susah beradaptasi... Tapi kalau di kosan ini termasuk solid." ("When I first start on campus, it's definitely hard to adapt... but in the rented house, the community is quite compact.") (AS).

The rented house became an important site of adaptation because it was where students encountered new peers, built everyday relationships, and learned to negotiate social boundaries outside the family environment.

3.10. Social Adaptation of Migrant Students

3.10.1. Building Friendships

Friendship played a central role in helping participants cope with homesickness. Friends provided emotional support, companionship, and a sense of belonging that helped replace some of the social support previously provided by family.

"Kakak cerita samo teman, apalagi di asrama hubungan kami sudah cak keluarga, jadi enak untuk berbagi dan mereka jugo sering ngasih dukungan." (I talked with my friends, especially in the rented house, our connections were like a family, so I feel comfortable sharing, and my friends always give me emotional support). (SA).

"Dukungan sosial yang saya dapatkan berasal dari teman, kampus, dan keluarga... Yang paling berperan penting menurut saya adalah teman kampus." (I got social support from my friends, my friend's college, and my family. And the one that played the most important role was from my college friends) (FS).

These findings show that friendship was not merely a casual social relationship. It became an important mechanism through which migrant students reconstructed emotional security and developed a sense of belonging in the campus environment.

3.10.2. Joining Student Organizations

Participation in student organizations emerged as one of the most effective strategies for reducing homesickness. Organizational involvement provided activities, social networks, and opportunities to connect with other students.

"Aku melu organisasi jujur ngilangi nian roso iku. Karena kesibukan iku kan jadi hilang rasa pengen balek terus." (Honestly, I was joining student organizations, and it makes me feel better, it can eliminate the feeling of missing my family) (IM).

"Kalau yang kalian sering lihat aku ikut kepanitiaan itu merupakan salah satu pelampiasan aku supaya aku gak benggong di kos, supaya aku gak kepikiran." ("If you often see me joining student organizing committees, it's one of my outlets so I don't just sit around in my rented house, so I don't think about my family"). (MP).

Through organizations and committees, participants could remain occupied, meet new friends, and feel more integrated into campus life. These activities helped reduce repetitive thoughts about going home and provided a stronger sense of social participation.

3.10.3. Interacting with the New Environment

Beyond friendships and organizations, students adapted through everyday interaction with the broader environment. They engaged with rented house friends, classmates, seniors, and campus communities. These interactions helped students understand local norms and gradually feel more comfortable.

"Kalo aku milih main samo yang lain di kos... takutnya ada yang merasa kesepian gek kami di kos di sano." (I prefer to play with others in my rented house, I'm afraid someone will feel lonely, if someone feels lonely we'll go to their rented house"). (FS).

"Kawan ni la kek keluarga dewek kak, suka duka selalu samo kawan tula kak." ("My friends are like my family because we go through joy and sorrow together."). (AS).

The more actively students interacted with their surroundings, the more they were able to reduce isolation and construct new social attachments. Social adaptation therefore depended not only on individual resilience but also on the availability of supportive social environments.

3.11. Adaptation of Migrant Student Identity

3.11.1. Transformation from Dependence to Independence

The adaptation process contributed to a transformation in participants' self-perception. Students gradually moved from dependence on family support toward greater independence and responsibility.

"Cak aku biso dak yo survive di tempat baru, beradaptasi di lingkungan baru yang banyak wong tu dak di kenal." (I was wondering, can I survive in a new place? Can I adapt in my new environment where I don't even know anyone?). (SA).

The repeated experience of managing problems independently helped participants develop confidence. Homesickness was therefore not only a sign of emotional difficulty but also a turning point that encouraged personal growth and social maturity.

3.11.2. Identity Formation as Migrant Students

As adaptation progressed, participants began to form a new identity as migrant students. They no longer viewed themselves only as individuals who were far from home, but as students capable of surviving, adapting, and building new social lives in an unfamiliar environment.

"Walaupun ado raso rindu, aku tetap usaba buat fokus, ngelakuin kewajiban sebagai mahasiswa, dan nyelaain tugas-tugas." (Although I feel that I miss my family so much, I still struggle to focus on my studies, do all the things that I have to do as a college student, and do all my tasks"). (AS).

"Setelah mulai terbiasa, ketemu teman, dan lingkungan sudah terasa nyaman... rasa itu mulai berkurang." ("As I became more accustomed to living independently, made new friends, and felt comfortable in my new environment, the feeling of homesickness gradually decreased"). (SA).

This identity transformation shows that educational migration is not merely physical relocation. It is also a process through which students learn autonomy, build social relationships, and reinterpret themselves as independent social actors.

4. DISCUSSION

The findings demonstrate that homesickness should not be understood merely as an emotional reaction to physical separation from home. Rather, homesickness represents a transitional social experience that emerges when individuals leave established social networks and enter unfamiliar social environments. The participants' narratives indicate that homesickness is closely connected to broader processes of social adaptation and identity transformation.

Previous studies have generally examined homesickness as a psychological condition associated with sadness, loneliness, emotional distress, and adjustment difficulties (Kelly et al., 2021; Murillo & Chaves, 2024; Rathakrishnan et al., 2021). While these studies provide important insights, the present findings suggest that homesickness also functions as a social phenomenon. Participants did not simply miss their homes; they missed the social relationships, emotional support systems, daily routines, and feelings of belonging embedded within their home environments.

From the perspective of social adaptation theory, feelings of longing, loneliness, and culture shock reflect temporary disruptions in social integration. Students entered a social environment in which established relationships and familiar social structures were no longer available. Consequently, they experienced a period of uncertainty while attempting to reconstruct social connections and develop new forms of belonging.

The findings also highlight the importance of behavioural adaptation. Students gradually learned how to manage daily activities, fulfil personal needs, and navigate the rented house and campus norms. These adaptations enabled them to function more effectively within the university environment and reduced their dependence on family support. In Parsons' terms, adaptation functions as a mechanism through which individuals adjust to environmental demands and maintain social equilibrium (Parsons, 1951).

Social relationships emerged as another crucial factor in the adaptation process. Friendships, organizational participation, and interactions with the broader campus environment provided students with opportunities to rebuild social networks and obtain emotional support. These findings support sociological perspectives that emphasize the importance of social integration in facilitating adaptation.

The most important finding concerns identity transformation. Participants gradually shifted from identities characterized by dependence on family support toward identities associated with autonomy, responsibility, and social participation. Homesickness, therefore, served not only as a challenge but also as a catalyst for personal growth and social maturation.

The primary contribution of this study lies in its conceptualization of homesickness as part of a broader process of social adaptation and identity transformation. By integrating emotional experiences with sociological processes, this study moves beyond dominant psychological interpretations of homesickness and provides a more comprehensive understanding of educational migration among university students.

The findings are consistent with Parsons' conception of adaptation as one of the fundamental functions required for social equilibrium. Migrant students were required to adjust their behaviours, social relationships, and daily routines in response to environmental changes. Their ability to establish new social networks, participate in campus organizations, and develop independent living skills demonstrates how adaptation operates as a mechanism through which individuals maintain stability within a changing social context.

5. CONCLUSION

This research shows that homesickness is a common experience experienced by migrant students in the early days of life in the Sriwijaya University campus environment. These feelings appear in various forms, such as longing for family, loneliness due to the loss of a familiar social environment, culture shock when facing a new environment, and difficulty living life independently. These findings show that homesickness is not only related to physical separation from home, but also to the loss of various sources of social support and life habits that have been part of student life.

The results of the study also show that homesickness is part of the social adaptation process experienced by students when entering a new environment. Adaptation takes place through behavioral changes, such as adjusting life habits, managing daily needs independently, and understanding the rules and norms that apply in the campus environment and residence. Over time, students began to be able to adjust to the demands of living a way from home so that the feeling of homesickness that was initially dominant gradually decreased.

In addition to behavioral adaptation, the social adaptation process is also seen through students' ability to build relationships with peers, expand social networks, and be involved in various campus activities. The interaction with the new environment helps students gain a sense of acceptance and be part of campus social life. These conditions suggest that the success of adaptation is not only determined by the individual's ability to adapt, but also by his or her ability to build supportive social relationships.

Furthermore, this study found that the experience of homesickness and the process of social adaptation contributed to the transformation of the identity of migrant students. Life away from family encourages students to develop independence, take responsibility for their own life needs, and build a new perspective on themselves as individuals who are able to survive and thrive in an environment different from their home region. Thus, homesickness can be understood not only as a temporary emotional experience, but also as an important part of the social maturation process that shapes the identity of migrant students.

Ethical Approval

Formal ethical approval was not required for this study because it involved voluntary interviews with adult university students and did not include medical procedures, clinical interventions, or sensitive personal data. Nevertheless, the study adhered to the ethical principles of social research. All participants were informed about the purpose of the study, provided informed consent before participation, and were assured of the confidentiality and anonymity of their responses. Participation was entirely voluntary, and participants were free to withdraw from the study at any time without penalty.

Informed Consent Statement

Informed consent was obtained from all participants involved in the study. Before the interviews, participants were informed about the purpose of the research, the procedures involved, the voluntary nature of their participation, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time without any negative consequences. All participants agreed to participate and provided their consent before data collection commenced.

Authors' Contributions

IP, VR, DOS, MR, LL, GR - conceptualization and formal analysis; IP, VR, DOS, MR, LL - methodology, data collection, and writing—original draft preparation; GR, VVS, EA - writing—review and editing, supervision, and validation; GR - manuscript formatting and manuscript translation. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

Disclosure Statement

The authors declare that there are no financial, professional, or personal conflicts of interest that could have influenced the work reported in this manuscript. The authors alone are responsible for the content and writing of this article.

Data Availability Statement

The datasets generated and analyzed during the current study are not publicly available due to participant confidentiality but are available from the corresponding author on reasonable request.

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