

## Homesickness as Seen in Harry Potter's Character in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*

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### ABSTRACT

This research attempts to examine the effects of homesickness on Harry Potter in J. K. Rowling's *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. Homesickness as a mental illness is prevalent in people; therefore, the investigation used Harry Potter as its subject. The research adopts the theory of homesickness proposed by Fisher (1989). The research shows the harshness of being homesick in a society that we have little control of and in situations where we have no choice on how to proceed. It highlights the need of attachments in a social sense for individuals who are suffering from homesickness because it is one of the definite cure for a serious and dangerous mental illness. It can affect anyone regardless of age, living conditions, and state of mind.

**Keywords:** *character study, Harry Potter, homesickness, mental illness, state of mind.*

### INTRODUCTION

*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* is a novel written by J. K. Rowling. She wrote the novel in 1998 and published it in 1999. The story takes place during the third book of a series of seven books featuring Harry Potter as he attends a school of wizardry, Hogwarts. Along with his friends, Ronald Weasley and Hermione Granger, Harry must find the truth about Sirius Black, an escapee from Azkaban whom Harry and his friends believe to side with the evil Lord Voldemort. The book garners many popularities among children and young adults, and receives success in its theatrical releases.

Harry Potter is the primary focus of the book series. The character's actions or reactions present their story to develop their characters. The development of their characters is considered "flat"

or "round" from whether they change as a person or not from beginning to end (Wallace, 1986, p. 118). A character is considered as a "flat" character when they are static or unchanging in their characters and a "round" character when they are dynamic or changing in their characters. To know whether a character is either of the two terms, the reader must wait until the end of the story to give a complete judgement to a character in the story.

The present research investigates whether Harry Potter's character changes through the influence of homesickness. It utilizes the theoretical model proposed by Fisher (1989) on the topic of homesickness, which is primarily of loss that uses grief and attachment as a supporting argument. This theory is adopted to examine whether Harry Potter is suffering from homesickness.

Homesickness is a mental illness that affects the mental health of a person from their feelings of wanting to go home. The effects of homesickness influence the people to find a sense of familiarity in their new environment that reminded them of their old home. A few of them are their family, pets, or loved ones (Fisher, 1989). The effect forms an insistence to return to a person's real home or a location that is similar to their home. Eurelings-Bontekoe, Vingerhoets, and Fontijn (1994), in line with Fisher's theory, describe homesickness 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 the previous environment." However, homesickness is different from depression as homesickness's main cause is the drive for people to return home.

*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* is selected for analysis in the present research due to the various examples of homesickness found in the book. Furthermore, the book is about the psyche of Harry Potter. In the book, Harry is a child turning into to a teenager. Thurber (1999, p. 125) states, "When children separate from home and primary caregivers, they typically experience homesickness" which supports Fisher's theory of the mental health of homesick people (Fisher, 1990). The dynamic changes in a children's psyche are used to formulate the changes in Harry's character when influenced by homesickness.

*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* centers its story from Harry's point of view. It ranges from his emotions to the thought process in coping with homesickness. *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* shifts the focus to Harry Potter's personal struggle. It tells about how Harry reminds his deceased parents, finds someone who murders them, and forgives the murderer. The feelings to yearn for loved ones, to find knowledge for personal reasons, and to express compassion on others as they do toward themselves are the key-points to cope with homesickness (Hack-Polay, 2012, p. 71). It is in line with the homesickness model of Fisher.

*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* is set during the time when Harry is the most vulnerable, compared to the other seven books in

the series. Throughout the book, Harry experiences many types of vulnerability such as fits of anger, moments of anxiety, and states of depression. The depression that manifests in person who suffers from homesickness links to all three vulnerabilities mentioned previously (Veschuur, Eurelings-Bontekoe, Spinhoven & Duijsens, 2003).

In line with these arguments, the present research attempts to address the following the research questions:

1. How does homesickness influence Harry Potter as a fictional character?
2. What are the significant effects of homesickness on the character of Harry Potter?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

There have been several studies on the topic of Harry Potter, but there has not been any study focusing on homesickness in Harry Potter. Nur (2017) discusses the influence of Harry Potter's character to the conflict in *Harry Potter and the Chamber of Secrets* using characteristics of defiance, curiosity, cleverness, protective side, bravery, and persistence.

Theory of homesickness is very scarce and some of them still need further research. However, there are several studies focusing on homesickness. Shirley Fisher published a research in homesickness titled *Homesickness, Cognition and Health* in 1989. The research used a theoretical model to identify homesickness. The subject of research is mostly children that leave home during their early age or young adults who are studying abroad or far from their home. It shows the various stressors of homesickness and the involvements of cognitive thoughts and memory to find the cause of homesickness in a person as well as its consequences.

Hack-Polay publishes a journal in 2008 titled *Migrant Integration: Case for Necessary Shift of Paradigm*. The journal elaborates on the necessity of a pattern to find homesickness in a person. Later in 2012, Dieu Hack-Polay publishes another journal titled *When Home Isn't Home – A Study of*

### *Homesickness and Coping Strategies among Migrant Workers and Expatriates.*

In 2003, Margot J. Verschuur, Elisabeth H. M. Eurelings-Bontekoe, Philip Spinhove, and Inge J. Duijsens releases *Homesickness: Temperament and Character*. It defines a few more clarifications of homesickness as well as the findings and definitions of the consequences of homesickness. It also introduces the definition of trigger effects of homesickness in the layperson. We use the triggers of homesickness and its treatment and prevention to define homesickness.

Thus, this research is different from the literature reviews because this research focuses on homesickness' influence in the fictional character Harry Potter throughout the third book *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. There is no literature review previously mentioned that discusses homesickness' influence in the character of Harry Potter in *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*. This research is therefore original and does not adopt from the literature reviews previously listed. The aforementioned works of literature are mainly as an association for the research's topic of homesickness' influence in Harry Potter's character.

## THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The objectives of the present research are to examine the effects of homesickness on Harry Potter's character. To understand the influence of homesickness in Harry Potter's character, the research provides explanations of methods of collecting and analyzing the data, which uses the theoretical definition of homesickness by proposed by Fisher (1989).

The study focuses on using the first model of loss. When the individual separates from their family, friends, and acquaintances, the same individual also experiences a loss that results in serious distress of grief and need for attachment. The grief that appears from this model of homesickness becomes a need for attachment equal to the grief that a person accumulates.

## METHODS

This research uses a library research method to collect the data in order to fulfill the objective of this research paper. There are two kinds of data that we collect, which are primary data and secondary data.

The primary data of this research are the dialogues and the narrations from the novel itself. The research uses the narration and dialogues from *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* that has the connection with homesickness' influence and its effects to Harry Potter's character in the book. The secondary data were from other sources including books, journals, articles, and reviews from the libraries or the internet that supports the objective of this research paper. Various parts of the novel and the external data that contain or describe the influence of homesickness and its effects on Harry Potter's character in the book were then collected to support the primary data.

This study uses qualitative descriptive method to gain the conclusion bases on a theory. In order to analyze the homesickness influence and its effects on Harry Potter's characters, the method of analyzing data mainly uses the theoretical examples of homesickness using the model theory made by Fisher (1989). Afterward, using the newest descriptions of homesickness and its various influence factor and effects variable found in the secondary data, the findings were presented and discussed in detail with the intention to correlate that into the objective of the research. The primary and secondary data sources were used to clarify the influence of homesickness on Harry Potter throughout the book.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Homesickness in Harry Potter's character in the book comes from his needs of attachment to something that he can refer to as a family. It might be a reminiscence of his parents, his old home in the Dursley house, his memory of previous two years in Hogwarts, or his friends who is his true family.

We discuss the function and usage of Fisher's model of homesickness (Fisher, 1989), which can be

implemented into the contextual evidence that pertains to the character's actions and feelings of Harry Potter as written and interpreted in the book *Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban*.

*Harry Potter and the Prisoner of Azkaban* is the title of Harry Potter's third year in Hogwarts, which makes it the third book in the series. The content of the book mainly tells the readers about the continuation of Harry Potter's life straight from the second book. His third year in Hogwarts is about to start, his friends are sending him letters of places they vacate, and being harassed again by his adoptive family. Then, he is borne by more responsibilities from school, his friends and families, as well as his unchecked feelings that have plagued him. It is born out of his unnoticed need for a family, or at least a parental figure. The book tells a detail of sorrow and circumstances where Harry needs the figure of families or parent, not only friends he could socialize with. This idea aligns with the academic research which shows that young age needs needs parental figure to avoid being homesick (Fisher, 1989). The book presents the introduction of parental figure for Harry Potter. They are the new teacher, Lupin, and the convict Sirius Black, who turns out to be his godfather all along.

Grief for Harry Potter refers to his loss of parents. The loss of his parents during his childhood continues to remind him of home that is now nonexistent. It makes him searching for an attachment throughout the story. This is presented in the third book through the constant reminder of his parent death by the Dementors and the visitation ticket to Hogsmeade which needs parent/guardian signature.

The need for parental figures is the main reason of attachment found in the character of Harry Potter. To equate the grief of losing his parents, Harry needs a similar amount of attachment to compensate for the loss. Attachment for Harry Potter means to find a parental figure that is on par with his parents. In the book, the visitation form to Hogsmeade is a reference to the need for a parental figure in Harry's life.

There are two people that Harry attaches himself within the book, namely Professor Lupin and Sirius Black. Both people play a role in lessening the grief of his parents in their way. They

are suitable in exchanging Harry's grief for attachments as both of them sufficiently know Harry's parents and Sirius is the sworn brother and the real guardian figure of Harry Potter.

Harry Potter quickly attaches himself to Lupin and later on in the story starts to bond with Sirius Black through misunderstandings. Lupin is the new teacher for the Defense of the Dark Arts. In the story, Lupin teaches Harry various things which are beneficial for Harry's education and personal life. He is often strict with teaching Harry and understands that he needs Harry to improve if he wants to continue attending Hogwarts. In return, Sirius Black helps Harry from the sidelines but overall supports Harry's actions and needs in Hogwarts.

The presence of Lupin is akin to a father figure in Harry's mind. Harry recognizes such a figure akin to a father who is strict but protective. He teaches Harry how to defend himself against his fears and is constantly helping Harry in his time of needs. It is not an exaggeration when Harry thinks of Lupin as a sort of father figure. It supports the idea that Lupin promotes a father figure in Harry.

In contrast, the presence of Sirius Black is akin to a mother's figure in Harry's mind. The figure is as protective as Lupin, but in contrast with hoe open Lupin, Sirius prefers to be in the sideline and watch Harry from afar. Sirius is also a kind and loving person despite his rough appearance. It represents the image of Harry's mother who helps Harry in his time of need though only in his vague recollection of memory.

The symbol of fear and home creates kindling effects of homesickness in Harry Potter's character. The symbol of fear in the book takes the form of Dementors, and the symbol of home in the book takes the form of Harry's deceased parents. We argue that both symbols are the greatest source of homesickness that affects Harry Potter's psyche.

Fear is a condition in which many people suffering homesickness may receive can turn into anxiety or depression-like state (Fisher 1989, 132). Throughout his year in Harry Potter's life in Hogwarts, he feels as if it is not his second home anymore. He experiences a different third year in Hogwarts since he could not meet his close friend regularly, fight with Dursley family, and being

haunted by the image of Black Dog which resembles Sirius Black.

Fear for Harry is a feeling that he cannot escape in the form of his grief for both his parents. The parents of Harry Potter are constantly in use by the Dementors to torment Harry Potter into giving up his life. The fear due to the image his parents dying feeds the Dementors and at the same time acts as the main stressor of his homesickness episodes.

Home to Harry Potter means a person whose existence makes him feel safe. In this case, it is Sirius Black, Harry Potter's godfather. Harry feels happy with and when he thinks of Sirius. Although the two of them cannot live together, the thought that Harry is able to see Sirius visiting him is enough to make Harry feel comfortable in the Dursley household.

We argue that because Harry Potter knows that Sirius is alive, Harry can feel at home when returning to the Dursley household. Knowing a person is waiting for him or is watching over him makes him think that his old home that rejects him can eventually feel homely. The sensation of homeliness stems from Sirius, which is a symbol of home for Harry Potter above the Dursley household.

The Dursley household is not an ideal home for Harry. It is a place where his parental figures restrict his action and the environment is not friendly. However, it changes with the thought of Sirius watching over him. It creates a happier feeling over the Dursley house when Harry returns to at the end of his third year.

## CONCLUSION

We believe that homesickness does influence and affect Harry Potter as a fictional character in various ways. Homesickness can be an efficient way to create a relatable character if handled well. Writers can use the same method of writing for characters that are more believable or has its background set in a more real setting. Scientific research prove that homesickness can occur to anyone. Harry's personal feelings and the changing environment around him

play a part in influencing his homesickness. It is triggered by the grief of his parents and his needs of attachment to family or parental figure.

Harry as a fictional character creates a way for people to understand what it means to lose something and what it means to gain something. He experiences the homesickness of loss and in turn leaves grieving for his dead parents and in need of attachment equal to the worth of the dead parents. This need is fulfilled by being close to Lupin, the new professor in Hogwarts, and understanding Sirius Black, who is a criminal that turns out to be one of the few people that Harry's parents' trust.

The moral of the story is to face the grievance and the need for attachment head-on in a person's daily life. Like Harry's example, the feelings and struggle of a homesick person can reward him or her in their life. For a loss and grievance, there surely is someone to take over the grief and turn it to a positive form of attachment.

It is a lesson to learn for many people who plan to or has previously read Harry Potter. To conquer their fear or to find a new home, one must work hard for it. To befriend other people, one must work hard for it. To better the life in his environment, one must work hard for it. It is only then that one can find happiness.

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