

**MUSIC-RELATED NOSTALGIC EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG PEOPLE
LIVING IN MIGRATION**

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<p>Tiivistelmä – Abstract</p> <p>Music is a powerful means for constructing identity – both formulating and remembering who one is (e.g., DeNora, 2000). A particular situation creating challenges for the sense of self is migration and living in a foreign environment. Therefore, this qualitative study focused on investigating music-related nostalgic experiences in young people living in migration. The aim of the study was to identify features characteristic to music-related nostalgia particularly in relation the experience of migration. Ten university students (aged between 24 – 40 years, 5 males, 5 females) took part in the study. The participants were all Iranian, currently living in migration (in Germany or Finland). Data was collected through spoken interviews (20-60min each) with an additional short questionnaire and a task to listen to self-selected music that participants found inductive of nostalgic experiences in them. The interviews focused on the participants' current situation in the foreign country, their nostalgic experiences in general, and particularly in the role of music in their nostalgic experiences. The data was analysed qualitatively through the grounded theory approach. The results showed that the nostalgic memories of the participants focused on their home country; it's specific places, characteristics (such as the humidity of north of Iran), and related experiences. The inclusion of music to nostalgic episodes appeared to intensify and stimulate the experience making it more vivid and detailed. The participants employed different strategic methods in how they used music-related nostalgia in their life: for counteracting loneliness, for evoking bittersweet emotions, for bringing continuity or new perspectives into one's sense of self, finding meaning in life, and finding acceptance and sympathy for one's feelings. Accordingly music seemed to play a triple role in nostalgic reverie; as a trigger for nostalgia, as a mean to recall and simulate the memory-related emotional state, and finally as a mood regulator tool. Furthermore, individual participants showed differences in their encounter style towards nostalgic experiences, preferring either avoidance or acceptance of the nostalgic mood. Preference for these styles was influenced by the personal experiences and mood (including depression) of the participants.</p>	
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1 INTRODUCTION

Nowadays music is present everywhere and in individuals' everyday life. People are exposed to the music they do not choose to listen to in many places; in restaurants, cafes, shops, waiting rooms, and elevators. Besides, they also engage with music in more active ways; they listen to their self-selected music while driving, going to work, or doing daily routines at home. Some people may be more selective and choose different music for different occasions; a specific music when they are on their own and alone, another piece of music when they have friends around, and a proper music for dining when they have invited some guests.

In this active engagement with music, individuals choose different music in order to achieve different psychological states and moods, or they might wish to control their level of psychological arousal (e.g. different levels of arousal for exercising rather than mental concentration) (DeNora, 1999; North, 2004).

One of the goals for active engagement with music is mood regulation (Saarikallio, 2010). Mood regulation is fundamental in emotional abilities of human beings and refers to the processes of modification in valence and arousal. Self-regulation by music occurs for different purposes such as mood improvement, mood enhancement, mental concentration, distraction, and self-expression of feelings.

Thus regarding the presence of music everywhere, and in individuals' everyday life (either passive or active engagement with music), music plays an undeniable role in the construction of individuals' autobiographical memory, and is consequently effective on the perception of self and others, and finally on the construction of identity (Jäncke, 2008). Present in memory construction, music becomes a useful medium for recalling one's autobiographical memories. Music as an accompaniment for life fits in different occasions of life for individuals with different personality traits and life conditions. For instance, an adolescent might use music for different purposes compared to an adult. Or it might be a different means for an athlete rather than an (non-athlete) ordinary individual. Cultural background and generation are other factors that might have influences on the quality of music listening. Musical preferences might differ from one society to the other. Music's role and function for younger generations who have had access to music whenever they wanted to (by music social networks such as Spotify, Napster, etc.) can be different from older generations for whom the access to music

has been more limited. Although this limited accessibility doesn't imply that music was not important in the past rather than its experiences was more different and probably more special; before the advents of music recording and playing machines (e.g. phonographs) people could not easily listen to music everywhere and whenever they wanted to. But music was present in some special events such as rituals and ceremonies. Such music-specific events as concerts and music festivals were organized more recently.

The atmosphere and the place, in which music is being listened to, might also influence the quality and modality of musical experience. Listening to music in a familiar location and friendly atmosphere might be a different experience rather than listening in a new and unfamiliar place. In addition to the role of place and atmosphere, music can also influence the overall atmosphere of the place. This might be the reason for playing specific types of music in restaurants, cafes, and other public spaces such as private clinics and beauty salons. Another example is playing pleasant and gentle music for bringing feelings of safety and security such as in elevators and waiting rooms. By another definition, pleasant or familiar music might be able to fabricate the atmosphere and convert it to a more familiar and friendly one.

As previously mentioned, in addition to the uses of music in public places, individuals may utilize music in various ways in their everyday life such as for distraction; people listen to music through headphones or their car speakers when going to work or while travelling. This is a method of distraction from passage of time and distance in order to shorten their trip or/and distract themselves from the traveling time passage with their self-selected music.

Geographical move, or in general, immigration, is considered as an important life transition. Immigration might take place for different purposes and is accompanied with profound losses and thus psychological imbalance and challenges (Akhtar 1999). Immigration is not a new phenomenon; it has a long history and has existed throughout ages. Immigration takes place in different forms and for different reasons: changing living conditions, building a new life in a new country, finding better job opportunities, studying abroad, and also escaping one's home country for political and social reasons and seeking asylums in another country. The migrant often migrates from her homeland to a new country. In this process the individual

leaves the familiar culture and atmosphere behind and enters an unfamiliar culture and atmosphere.

For younger individuals immigration might start with a forepart of studying abroad. This period can be considered as a preliminary step for experimentation and preparation for future settlement. Studying abroad is considered as a short-term migration (Sedikides & Wildschut, 2008c) that takes place for various motivational factors (Chirkov, Vansteenkiste, Tao, & Lynch, 2007). One of the most important factors is self-development that is influential on individuals' future life and career. Individuals choose to study in another country in order to become professionals, and meanwhile, to explore the life and job conditions in the new place. Unfortunately the study of international students as potential migrants, their academic success, and psychological health and well-being is not well-developed. That is while their cultural and social encountering techniques in a foreign country, and their self-regulation methods can be very useful to both research communities and university administrations. International students encounter issues such as acculturation, adaptation, and integration. The main stressors of the new life can relate to unfavorable conditions in their homeland and also in the new country.

The migrant leaves the cultural familiarity behind which can become a profound sense of loss in her mind (Akhtar, 1999). The concept of ideal home becomes constructed and fantasized (Tummala-narra, 2009). In addition, the social, cultural and economical conditions of host country can become or seem harsh and relentless and as a result the migrant might encounter, or perceive prejudice and discrimination. In addition, sometimes the new situation, language, food, and in general, unfamiliarity with the new place may result in anxiety, feeling of exclusion, discontinuity in one's self and, psychological imbalance.

The migrant may experience various psychological and physiological states of mind due to her background, personal attributes and other conditions. Homesickness, depression and nostalgia can be some of those experienced states. In the homesickness case, psychosomatic symptoms (such as stomachache, loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, and headaches, disrupted concentration and absentmindedness) can be diagnosed (Watt & Badger, 2009). At times, the symptoms may include mental depression as well. In contrast, nostalgia seems to be the most positive response to feeling of loneliness, exclusion and self-discontinuity in times of social

hardships. Nostalgia is a psychological response to the sense of loss, and it is defined as a linking phenomenon that connects the mourner to the past through her symbols and objects of loss. In addition, nostalgia is a phenomenon that is linked to one's past and autobiographical memories such as life momentous events, close people, childhood and life experiences. Thus memory both in the time of its construction and recall is fundamental in a nostalgic experience, with which a nostalgic experience seems not to be formed and occurred.

Additionally, musical sounds are time-dependent perceptions. These time-dependent stimuli are processed and integrated in the working memory (Jäncke 2008). Musical sounds can be involved in various memory processes (semantic, episodic and associative) relevant to the situation; a piece of music can be associated with person's life events, (Baumgartner, 1992) and thus will be processed as an episodic memory and be recalled as autobiographical memory, or it can be perceived as a stimulus that conveys meaning and contains semantic information, (Koelsch et. Al., 2004) and is encoded semantically. Music in the context of nostalgic experiences is more likely to associate with autobiographical memory and the episodic memory processes. Nostalgic triggers are mostly rooted in memory of one's life events and close people. Music-related nostalgic experiences are those pieces of music that relates the individual to her past and autobiography. Considering the role of music in memory construction (both semantic and episodic), autobiographical music pieces can be expected to be highly remarkable to the person's mind. It has to mention that nostalgia is one of the most reported emotions in music (Zentner, Grandjean, Scherer, 2008). Thus, it can be expected that nostalgic music can play an important role in individuals with higher nostalgic proneness personality.

This master thesis is aimed at explaining the role of music-related nostalgic experiences in the lives of young people who are studying in a country different their own one.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Nostalgia, A Historical Definition

About three thousand years ago, Homer, the Greek poet, in his famous epic 'The Odyssey' used the word 'Nostalgia', to explain the psychological state of epic's hero, Odyssey. The word is a compound word consisted of two Greek words; 'Nostos' and 'Algos' that in order

mean 'return' and 'suffering' (Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt & Routledge, 2006). In the epic, Odysseus is the main character, who feels a strong yearning to return to his homeland after he emerges victoriously from the Trojan War, and it takes him ten years to go back to his homeland. He spends seven years in arms of a seductive sea-nymph called Calypso, and when Calypso asks for turning him to an immortal creature, Odysseus refuses and states: "Full well I acknowledge Prudent Penelope cannot compare with your stature of beauty, for she is only a mortal, and you are immortal and ageless. Nevertheless it is she whom I daily desire and pine for. Therefore I long for my home and to see the day of returning." (Homer, *The Odyssey*, trans. 1921, Book V, pp. 78-79).

Later in 17th century, Swiss physician Johannes Hofer used the term Nostalgia to explain a medical condition. Hofer equated it with homesickness and regarded it as a medical disease, based on observations of Swiss mercenaries. The disease was associated with a group of symptoms (as Hofer demonstrated) such as thinking of home, anxiety, irregular heartbeat, anorexia and insomnia (Wildschut et al., 2006; Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt & Routledge, 2008a).

By early 19th century nostalgia was estimated as a more psychological disorder like depression and melancholia. By 20th century it was labelled variously; 'immigrant psychosis', 'mentally repressive compulsive disorder' (Wildschut et al., 2006; Sedikides et al., 2008a). In late 20th century the nostalgia became differentiated from homesickness. Indeed both literary definitions of nostalgia and homesickness have changed; the new Oxford Dictionary of English (1998) describes Homesickness as "experiencing a longing for one's home during period of absence", while Nostalgia is described as "a sentimental longing for the past" (Wildschut et al., 2006).

As previously mentioned, Homer termed nostalgia to explain the psychological state of Odysseus. The disagreements about the definitions of nostalgia and homesickness start from nostalgia's historical definition. Watt & Badger (2009) interpret the psychological state of Odysseus differently; they suggest that Odysseus was struggling with the state of being homesick. The authors neglect to clarify any differences or similarities between nostalgia and homesickness in order to demonstrate why they refer to Odysseus as being homesick and not

nostalgic. They also disregard why Homer used (or invented) the word ‘nostalgia’ for Odysseus’s ‘homesickness’, which is a contradictory discussion in its nature.

Watt & Badger (2009) further utilize the ‘belongingness hypothesis’ to explain homesickness. By this definition homesickness can take place in the framework of grief, loss and attachment. In this framework “grief arises in the loss of important connections, and attachment concerns security in one’s bonds with other people.” (Watt & Badger, 2009) Reviewing various literatures, some similarities and differences between characteristics of nostalgia and homesickness can be noticed. Although the differences are the highly emphasized attributes, and similarities are the least noticed. Considering the literary and historical definitions of nostalgia and homesickness, it should be regarded that both terms refer to a ‘yearning or longing for the past’; Homesickness mostly implies a ‘home’ in the past, that is not achievable in the present, and on the other hand, nostalgia is considered as a ‘longing for the past’, that includes people and places and events from the past. Thus, it is evident that both nostalgia and homesickness overlap in the ‘home (one’s place of origin) in the past’ part.

In addition from psychological and philosophical perspective, nostalgia and homesickness both refer to a lost object. However nostalgia refers to a variety of objects (e.g., persons, events, places, even to itself), and homesickness mainly refers to one’s place of origin (homeland) (Sedikides et al., 2008a). Although an important distinction between those two is psychosomatic symptoms of homesickness such as stomachache, loss of appetite, sleep disturbance, and headaches (Watt & Badger, 2009).

The aim of describing all the above mentioned, is to demonstrate the disagreements in defining nostalgia, and to emphasize the mutual attributes of nostalgia and homesickness. By this view the author of this thesis suggests that nostalgia and homesickness, might be different responses to similar conditions, in case of ‘home’ as the lost object.

2.2 Nostalgia and its Various Definitions

Nostalgia is a self-relevant emotion that is originally a positive one with bittersweet (pain and joy) elements (Sedikides, Wildschut, Gaertner, Routledge & Arndt, 2008b). It possesses a dual nature, and this dual nature is rooted in tension between the remembered past and present

(Dickinson & Erben, 2006). By another perspective nostalgia is considered as an affective process that sometimes may be evoked in association with autobiographical memory (Barrett, Grimm, Robins, Wildschut, Sedikides & Janata, 2010). It is also recognized as a highly social emotion that brings continuity between individual and collective selves (Sedikides et al., 2008b).

Nostalgia is also defined as a culturally acquired feeling (Dickinson & Erben, 2006). The authors suggest that nostalgia is a consequence of specific social and historical circumstances such as industrialization of societies.

However by reviewing the relevant literature, a lack of consensus in defining nostalgia can be noticed. Hence it seems necessary to recount some of those definitions, in order to obtain a comprehensive understanding of different perspectives of previous psychological research on nostalgia.

2.2.1 Nostalgia as an Emotion

In the social psychology framework nostalgia is recognized as a self-relevant and social emotion that has an ambivalent nature (Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006) and is predominantly a positive one (Sedikides, Wildschut, Baden, 2004). The self is the protagonist of nostalgic reverie and is surrounded by close others (family members, friends, loved ones).

Nostalgia is mostly recognized as an ambivalent emotion. This attribute is described as the simultaneous expression of happiness and sadness (Sedikides, Wildschut, Arndt, & Routledge, 2008a). Consequently, the concurrency of contradictory feelings (sadness and happiness) results in ambiguity and equivocality of nostalgic experience. It is also demonstrated that the nostalgia generates more positive affects rather than negative ones, and this attribute implies on nostalgia as being mainly a positive emotion (Sedikides et al., 2008a).

By another perspective, nostalgia is considered as a secondary emotion that has a dual nature with the experience of both pleasure and regret (Dickinson & Erben, 2006). This dual characteristic demonstrates the vague and allusive quality of nostalgic episodes. Additionally nostalgia is regarded as a cultural feeling that is acquired during lifetime and is linked to some basic emotions such as grief and depression (Dickinson & Erben, 2006).

Dickinson & Erben (2006) portrayed nostalgia as to be similar to grief and depression. They explain that ‘grief and depression’ and ‘nostalgia’ are all responses to loss. Although the authors suggest that ‘the loss’ in nostalgia is a different kind of ‘loss’ in that the ‘lost object’ is being regretted rather than yearned (such as loss of childhood). While in depression the experience of ‘lost object’ is overwhelming (such as loss of a loved one). Further the authors describe that nostalgia can be viewed as a part of the healing process of grief (Dickinson & Erben, 2006).

In contrast with the view that portrays nostalgia similar to depression, Volkan (1999) suggests a distinction between nostalgia and depression. In this view nostalgia cannot be functional in a depressed state and thus it cannot be regarded as a healing process of depression. This issue will be explained particularly further in the ‘nostalgia and functions’ section.

2.2.2 Nostalgia as an Affective Process

From another perspective Barrett et al. (2010) consider nostalgia as an affective process that takes place in association with autobiographical memories and it can be accompanied by music. To explain the bittersweet nature of nostalgia, the authors define nostalgia as an emotion blend, consisted of various emotions, and being grouped in various clusters. Previously Davis (1979) theorized nostalgia as an emotional reaction. Although despite considering nostalgia as a ‘secondary emotion’ or ‘a group of blended emotions, its affective characteristics remains intact in definitions.

2.2.3 Nostalgia as a Mechanism

Davis (1979) suggests that nostalgia is a mechanism, which allows people to maintain their identity in the time of major life-transitions. It is also a self-relevant means that enables continuity of the self in response to facing discontinuity in one’s life (Sedikides et al., 2008b). In this viewpoint, nostalgia brings continuity between one’s past and present individual self, and consequently by this process nostalgia imbues one’s life with meaning.

2.2.4 Nostalgia as a Psychological Resource

Zhou, Sedikides, Wildschut, & Gao (2008) define nostalgia as a psychological resource that counteracts loneliness when lack of social support is perceived. The authors propose an

implicit causal model for explaining the role of nostalgia. In this model nostalgia is considered as an intervening variable that indirectly increases perceived social support and consequently counteracts with loneliness. Therefore nostalgia is considered as a psychological resource that provides and shields mental health.

2.2.5 Nostalgia as a Coping Strategy

Zhou et al. (2008) suggest that nostalgia can also be considered as a coping strategy. The authors propose that individual differences such as shyness or social unskillfulness or situational changes such as relocation and immigration can result in perceived lack of social support in individuals. By this definition when lack of social support is perceived nostalgia can be evoked and act as strategy to cope loneliness (that is resulted from perception of lack of social support). The authors consider nostalgia proneness as an individual's positive attribute that is related to some personal characteristics such as high hardiness, positive emotionality, and self-compassion.

2.3 Triggers of Nostalgia

The states, conditions, and elements that trigger nostalgia can be categorized in three main groups: 1) Negative affects, 2) Social interactions, 3) Sensory input (Barrett, Grimm, Robins, Wildschut, Sedikides, & Janata, 2010).

2.3.1 Negative Affects

Negative affects such as loneliness (Wildschut et al., 2006), perceived lacks of social support (Zhou et al., 2008), and loss of loved object (Dickinson & Erben, 2006) are triggers of nostalgia. Wildschut et al. (2006) in a study provide strong evidence for demonstrating the causal link between negative mood and evoked nostalgia. Participants with negative mood state scored significantly higher in becoming nostalgic. In addition, loneliness - as a negative state - is a complex emotion that is characterized by perceived lack of social support. Loneliness can be perceived in association of various feelings and cognitions such as unhappiness, pessimism, self-blame, and depression (Wildschut, Sedikides, & Cordaro, 2010). Loneliness has been recognized as the mostly reported and the most common trigger of nostalgia among negative mood states. Wildschut et al. (2006) reported that participants with high-loneliness were more nostalgic than those in the low-loneliness condition.

2.3.2 Social Interaction

The self in nostalgic experience is surrounded by close others such as relatives, loved ones, family members, etc. (Holak & Havlena, 1992). Therefore, challenging the social interactions of one's self might lead in feeling lonely and result in becoming nostalgic. It should be mentioned that many other factors are effective in evoking nostalgia. Of those challenges, life transitions (relocation, migration) that deteriorate or even dissolve valued social bonds (Wildschut et al., 2010) can be mentioned. Personality dispositions such as shyness and social anxiety are the important factors in maintenance and formation of social networks or on interpersonal rejections. In general, perceived social exclusion can trigger feelings of loneliness, and as a result, nostalgia can be evoked as a coping strategy in order to compensate the lack of social support.

On the other side, it should be noted that nostalgic experience is centered on key people (Holak & Havlena, 1992) such as family members (both living and deceased), friends, romantic partners, etc. Therefore, when reconciliation with close others is not possible (distance, relationship break up, death), nostalgia can increase the feeling of social support by evoking nostalgic thoughts and recalling memories of those people (Sedikides et al., 2008b). In addition to social interaction and close others, another trigger for nostalgia can be remembering momentous and important events of one's life such as anniversaries, holidays, and social gatherings (Sedikides et al., 2008b), in which also close others are present.

2.3.3 Sensory Input

Other triggers of nostalgia are the sensory entities that are being heard, seen, smelled or felt. Music, photos, smells (Barrett et al., 2010), and even feelings or affects (Volkan, 1999) can recall memories in individuals and evoke nostalgia. In this thesis, the main focus is on music, as a sensory input, that recalls autobiographical memories and evokes nostalgia.

2.4 Functions of Nostalgia

Nostalgia is considered as to be a self-relevant and social affect, and usually brings various functionalities to one's life. Some of those functions that have been investigated in literature are as follows:

2.4.1 Nostalgia and Self-continuity

In another study Sedikides et al. (2008b) define the self as the protagonist in a nostalgic episode that is surrounded by close others in a social context. Furthermore the discontinuity in one's self (both individual and collective selves) can result in psychological maladjustment. Identity continuity seems to be a crucial issue in one's psychological health, and in contrast discontinuity in one's self can bring anxiety, alienation, negative affects, weakening in group identification and even suicide (Sedikides et al., 2008b).

In this regard nostalgia is an identified mechanism that enables continuity in one's self. In the nostalgic experience the nostalgic person goes back and forth between individual and collective selves, and this journey will bring the meaning to one's life through realizing the role of others. Consequently the individual and collective selves become reunited and harmonized and therefore the continuity in selves is increased. This process implies on why the nostalgia is considered as a highly social emotion.

2.4.2 Mood Regulatory

As mentioned previously loneliness as a negative affect is one of the main triggers for nostalgia. In addition, positive emotions play a crucial role in regulating psychological distress. Wildschut et al. (2010) demonstrate the role of some certain positive emotions in regulation psychological stress and maintaining psychological and physiological stability and equilibrium.

To describe the role of positive emotions the authors bring the 'undoing hypothesis (that is previously proposed by Levenson 1988), in which positive emotions play the role of 'undoers' of ANS (autonomic nervous system) states. In this perspective nostalgia is a positive emotions that plays an 'undoer' and regulatory role. Further Wildschut et al. (2010) describe the relations between nostalgia, loneliness, and mood regulation. Wildschut et al. (2010) demonstrate that loneliness reduces the perception of social connectedness, and consider nostalgia as an alternative strategy for coping with loneliness. In this regard drawing nostalgic memories bolsters the subjective perception of social connectedness. The authors propose a 'statistical suppression' model. This model consists of an initial predictor (loneliness), an intervening variable (nostalgia), and an outcome (perceived social connectedness). Based on this model nostalgia becomes the indirect effect of loneliness that

helps psychological regulation (in contrast with the direct effect outcome) by decreasing feeling of loneliness and increasing perceived social connectedness. According to statistical suppression model, loneliness and nostalgia respectively as negative and positive emotions interplay with each other, and this process is a self-regulatory process.

2.4.3 Meaning in Life

The perception of meaningful life seems to be fundamental in the time of life crisis. Meaningfulness seems to be crucial toward psychological well-being and promotes the quality of life (Routledge, Arndt, Hart & Juhl, 2011; Zhou et al., 2008). Zhou et al. (2008) previously demonstrated four psychological functions of nostalgia: 1) Positive affect, 2) Maintenance and increase of self-positivity, 3) stronger social bonds, and 4) existential meaning. Routledge et al. (2011) investigated the existential functions of music-evoked nostalgia. In this study the authors consider traveling through time and engaging in nostalgic reflection as the sources for meaning in life. The results of six various methods in the mentioned study (experiments, surveys) demonstrated that nostalgia fosters the sense of meaning into one's life through different mechanisms; Nostalgia increases social connectedness, and intensifies meaningfulness of life against life threats. In addition music-evoked nostalgia is in association with feeling of being loved and worthiness. Furthermore nostalgia can be considered as a well-being enhancer tool that helps individuals (low in meaning in life) to increase the sense of vitality and resolve subjective stress.

Acknowledging existential functions of nostalgic experiences, it can be utilized in different fields of psychology such as clinical, developmental and health psychology (Zhou et al., 2008).

2.4.4 Adaptation to The New Country

Volkan (1999) explores nostalgic experiences in life in migration. He defines nostalgia as an affect that is linked to objects and phenomena. In his view this specific affect can be considered as a linking phenomenon itself. In this perspective the migrated or displaced person uses linking object or phenomenon in order to connect to the past, and to the lost ones, things, or locations. Volkan (1999) emphasizes that applying nostalgia depends on many factors such as circumstances and individual differences. Thus nostalgia and linking procedure should be utilized in a creative way, in order to ease the adaptation process. In

addition there are some situations that nostalgia cannot evolve or function, such as entering a depressed state indirectly and unconsciously, or in a specific condition when such displaced person as an exiled person is being prohibited to enter a gradual process of losses and changes. Volkan (1999) terms this latter condition as poisoned nostalgia, in which nostalgia cannot be functional anymore.

2.5 Music in Nostalgic Experience

2.5.1 Music and Memory

Nowadays music is present everywhere and as described earlier, music can play an important role in memory construction (Jäncke 2008), both for semantic and episodic memory processes. Those memories can be about pieces of music themselves, or can be formed in association with specific events. The point of this study is to investigate the importance of autobiographical music, thus episodic memory is more highlighted within this framework. Although as it will be described later for some people semantic aspect of music is an important factor in construction of autobiographical memory.

Furthermore music evokes strong emotions; “Listening to music activates the entire limbic system, which is involved in processing of emotions and in controlling memory” (Jäncke 2008). This activation of limbic system can describe the dual role of music in both memories construction and emotion stimulation. Memories can be formed in association with pieces of music, or music can be present in events of life that are being memorized. A kind of memory that is formed with the specific attention to the ‘self’ is called autobiographical memory.

On the other hand nowadays music is present in everyday life. Therefore it seems that music is strongly involved in formation of autobiographical memories, and by that definition it is likely that every individual possesses a collection of autobiographical music. Hearing relevant music from the past evokes strong feeling of knowing in the individual. That feeling is consisted of autobiographical information in association with musical melodies and information. Jäncke (2008) describes the power of music in arousal and triggering specific emotions in human being, and consequently all those processes are involved in many cognitive functions.

2.5.2 Music as a Technology of Self

Music has been studied in the everyday life situation (Sarrikallio, 2010; North, 2004; DeNora, 1999). The recent concern within this framework is to investigate what music ‘does’ as a dynamic material in daily life rather than older and on-going viewpoint of investigating its ‘meaning’ (DeNora, 1999). This viewpoint considers music as a ‘means’ for various aspects of social existence such as mood enhancement, reflective creativity, and most importantly the construction of self and identity in social context. Musical power in self and identity constitution is achieved through various methods that are differently used by individuals. Those strategies are self-programming, aesthetic reflexivity, self-regulation and modulation, mental concentration, self-identity, identity and relation through music, musical memory, and musically composed identities, as DeNora (1999) suggests.

Music is a powerful means to recall one’s memories, and to help in the recapturing and constructing process of life experiences, and thus it can serve as a reminder for individuals’ accomplished identities. In this framework past and music in conjunction are producing agencies in real-time. Music is a powerful aid for memory in general (memory construction, recall, and recapture), because it is a temporal medium and can help in unfolding the temporal structures of time.

2.5.3 Music in Mood Regulation

In general, mood regulation strategies are being analysed and categorized regarding three different aspects; ‘Element of stability’ which points typicality in regulatory strategies, ‘element of change’ which refers to age-induced life changes, development and life situations, and finally ‘individual differences’, which explains differences in regulatory strategies, goals and personal preferences.

Recently music has become the centre of attention as a mechanism toward mood regulation (Saarikallio, 2010). Mood regulatory strategies with music aim for two different goals as Saarikallio (2010) demonstrates; ‘Mood improvement’ and ‘mood control’ in which the first conveys the desire to feel good or better and the latter points to a need for having self-control over one’s own feelings. Music-related mood regulation is characterized as such: 1) Mood regulation by music includes both behavioural and cognitive elements, 2) Mood regulation by

music modulates various component of moods, 3) Music listening can be utilized as means for situation modification, promotion of attention deployment, 4) Mood regulation by music includes a great variety of goals and means.

2.6 Migration/ studying abroad

The issue of international students (who are studying abroad in a place other than their home country) or other groups of migrants (immigrants, refugees, sojourners, etc.), their health and psychological well-being are not a well-developed field, yet the importance of psychological studies of mentioned groups cannot be ignored (Chirkov, Vansteenkiste, Tao, & Lynch, 2007). In this viewpoint, studying abroad is considered as a form of migration, probably because ‘studying abroad’ and ‘migration’ both share common motivational factors such as ‘self-development’. On the other hand self-development is positively associated with the emigrants’ well-being. Another motivational factor is ‘preservation factor’ that demonstrates avoiding disadvantageous circumstances of home country. Besides, both migration and studying abroad consist of adaptation period in the departure country.

2.6.1 Migration and Nostalgia

Acculturation is one of the mostly studied aspects of immigrants’ lives (Schwartz, Zamboanga, & Szapocznik, 2010). Acculturation refers to the changes and social influences, which take place in immigrants’ lives in encountering a dissimilar culture. As Gibson (2001) phrases “Acculturation is the process of culture change and adaptation that occurs when individuals with different cultures come into contact”. The consequent stress of the acculturation process can be a result of the host country cultural, economic, and social conditions and attributes as well as the stressors of the immigrant’s inherent culture (Sedikides, Wildschut, Routledge, Arndt, & Zhou, 2008c).

Nostalgia is an important coping strategy in the migration condition that buffers acculturative stress and facilitates the adaptation process (Sedikides et al., 2008c). Considering similarity of studying abroad and migration, most of the conditions such as adaptation and regulation mechanisms in migration also can be applied to international students’ psychological condition. Hence it seems necessary to mention the procedures, in which nostalgia is proposed as a helping mechanism or a coping strategy.

2.6.2 Lack of Social Support / Loneliness

One of the issues that an immigrant might face in the new country is the feeling of loneliness. When lack of social support is perceived, and immigrant is not fulfilled by her or his relationships, as she or he desires, feeling of loneliness is evoked (Zhou, Sedikides, Wildschut, & Ding-Guo, 2008). Psychic pain of feeling lonely can be healed by social communication and the perceived support from it. Sometimes individuals might face difficulties in coping with loneliness directly due to some factors such as shyness and social unskillfulness. Direct coping strategy refers to strengthening social support through the formation of social networks or expansion of existing ones. This type of coping strategy might be unreachable in the case of the displaced immigrant. Nostalgia is introduced as an indirect coping strategy against loneliness, in that nostalgia augments subjective perception of social support (Zhou et al., 2008).

2.6.3 Immigration and Linking Object or Phenomenon

In the process of mourning, different methods are being applied by the displaced mourner (immigrant) in order to adapt to the change or loss (Volkan, 1999). One healthy method is selective identification and mental representation of lost objects. When mental representation is externalized in a healthy way, it leads to selection and utilization of linking objects (things) or linking phenomenon (a song, a smell, an affect). It means that the mourner chooses an external item to mourn the loss. The immigrant, refugee or displaced person creates linking objects or phenomenon. If those linking objects or phenomenon are used in a creative way, the person will connect to the lost persons, things, locations, or culture through the linking object, and in consequence she will be able to give them up, bury them and move on with her life.

Volkan (1999) describes nostalgia as “an affect attached to linking objects or phenomena [that] may itself function as a linking phenomenon”. Therefore if nostalgia is being utilized in a healthy way, it will ease the process of adaptation and when the adaptation takes place, nostalgia is likely to fade away, but not entirely.

Akhtar (1999) describes the characteristics of migration and exile, and their encounter with nostalgia. “Migration involves intense changes and losses. When an individual migrates from one country to another -regardless of differences in cultural attributes of home and departure

country- she leaves behind familiar things, such as food, music, social relations, language, etc.”, as the author demonstrates. Therefore, the individual might become a mourner for the lost objects of ‘back home’ and experience nostalgia. Nostalgia is a bittersweet pleasure; it evokes psychic pain and joy. Through pain the individual becomes aware of separation and fantasizes reunion with familiar objects and becomes joyful. In the current frustration of migration, nostalgia for migrant acts as a defensive mechanism against aggression.

Furthermore Akhtar (1999) describes the effects and functions of nostalgia for immigrants and for people in exile, and emphasizes that nostalgic experience can be functional in an immigrant’s life because of voluntary act of migration and is probably dysfunctional and poisoned for exile. (Akhtar (1999) describes that people in exile are unable to utilize nostalgia as a coping strategy or regulatory means. He calls this condition as ‘poisoned nostalgia’.

2.6.4 Music, Nostalgia and Individual Differences

Individual differences are considered to influence the quality of nostalgic experience as well as the methods of mood regulation and music listening (Barrett, Grimm, Robins, Wildschut, Sedikides, & Janata, 2010; Saarikallio & Erkillä, 2007). It is important to notice differences between people’s encounter and utilization styles of music listening and nostalgia in order to obtain a more accurate and realistic result.

Barrett et al. (2010) refer to the person-level constructs in nostalgic experiences. These constructs are of individual differences that associate with individuals’ proneness to nostalgia. Person-level constructs are relevant to personality traits (Extraversion, Agreeableness, Conscientiousness, Neuroticism). As an example, the relationship between neuroticism, sadness and nostalgia proneness is being investigated. Barrett et al. (2010) demonstrate that person-level negative affective states can predict higher proneness to nostalgia, and it works as a coping mechanism for the individual.

Wildschut et al., (2010) demonstrate individual differences in relation to other psychological attributes such as attachment style and avoidance. The authors suggest that low avoidance persons are more likely to become nostalgic. The individuals with low-avoidance augment positive affect through deriving social connectedness from nostalgia and boost their self-

esteem by this process. Therefore it is likely that low-avoidance individuals regulate their psychological deficiencies through nostalgic process.

Another issue is the incapability of nostalgic experience in some specific circumstances. This can be interpreted as a context-level variable. One example for context-level variable is the condition of 'poisoned nostalgia', as Akhtar (1999) suggests it. People in exile are unable to utilize nostalgia as a coping strategy or regulatory means (Akhtar 1999). This condition can be considered as an indirect individual difference, in which the individual is incapable of benefitting from nostalgic experiences. Volkan (1999) also explains this phenomenon ('poisoned nostalgia') in the framework of depression and grief. The author describes that if the mourner starts to identify the mental representation non-selectively, then the nostalgia becomes poisoned. This process can take place for individuals in exile or refugees who have not moved to another country by choice.

Utilizing music as a mood regulatory means, some other individual differences such as musical preferences should be taken into account. Musical preferences apply to amount of daily listening, active background of instrument playing or singing, or music being important in one's family life or as an individual. For instance versatility of individual's musical preferences is positively correlated with greater use of music in mood regulation (Saarikallio, & Erkkilä, 2007).

3 METHODS

3.1 Aims of the Study

As it was explained earlier the aim of this research is to study the role of music in nostalgic experiences of young people that are studying abroad. Previously all of the mentioned fields - nostalgia, music's role in daily life and migration (international students) - have been studied separately; nostalgia has been studied in the psychological framework in various studies (Akhtar, 1999; Tummala-Narra, 2009; Volkan, 1999). Additionally Sedikides and Wildschut from Southampton university have conducted various collaborative projects about nostalgia and its characteristics and functions, in collaboration with different researchers; nostalgia's content, triggers, and functions (Wildschut, Sedikides, Arndt, & Routledge, 2006), its role as a mood regulator means (Wildschut, Sedikides, & Cordaro, 2010), how nostalgia is evoked in

association with autobiographical music (Barrett, Grimm, Robins, Wildschut, Sedikides, & Janata, 2010), how does it ease the acculturative stress (Sedikides, Wildschut, Routledge, Arndt, & Zhou, 2008) and how does it bring the meaning to one's life (Routledge, Hart, & Juhl, 2011). Nostalgia is also studied in the immigrant and exile condition (Akhtar 1999; Volkan, 1999). On the other hand the role of music in emotional self-regulation and psychological life and its functions have been investigated (DeNora, 1999; North 2004; Saarikallio, 2007; Saarikallio, 2010).

Nevertheless all of those three fields – nostalgia, music's role in daily life, and migration (international students) – in association have not been studied to the extent of author's knowledge (Leastwise in English scientific literature that was the main source in this research). Thus, the aim to of this research is to explore all of the topics (nostalgia, music in everyday life, and immigration) in association with each other, and in regard to cultural background. On the other hand, the nostalgic experiences in migration were of author's self 'lived experience' during the master studentship period, and finally the concept of nostalgia is a vividly present concept in Persian literature and consequently familiar to the author's cultural background (Iranian). All of the aforementioned reasons have provided enough motivation to conduct a research in order to explore and become deeply acquainted with this 'lived experience' phenomenon that is experienced by the author herself, and some Iranians of the same generation. This experience might be common for other nations, cultures and generation relevant to their history, background, and sociopolitical and cultural attributes. But the author only focuses on Iranian young population, with whom she shares the same history and background. The author can be considered as an insider within the culture and society and thus she explores this 'lived experience' only within the Iranian community. This research further can be replicated for other cultures and communities.

3.2 Data Collection

The data collection of this research is performed through semi-structured interviews. The interview questions (included in the Appendix 2) focus on the personal music-related nostalgic experiences of the interviewees, particularly in terms of how these experiences are defined and what kinds of meanings are given to them. Auerbach, and Silverstein (2003) define grounded theory as such: "A basic idea of the grounded theory is to choose research participants who have lived through the phenomenon that [the researcher] wants to learn

about”. In this sense grounded theory is the general approach of this research. It has to be mentioned that the interviews were being conducted based on a predetermined questionnaire that was designed by the author. Although only the author had access to those questions, in order to hold on to the research aims. Different steps of inviting and collecting the data were as follows:

An early invitation was posted on Facebook social network and also sent through Email to some known people and friends, in which it was asked if someone was interested in participating in a study in the field of music and emotion. Facebook as a social network was chosen for inviting individuals for several reasons; first, it is one of the most popular social networks among (Iranian) young people. Furthermore, most young people who live abroad use Facebook to keep in touch with friends and family back home, thus, it was a good choice for finding and inviting the target population. On the other hand, friends and their networks could spread the call for participation around the web and some other people (other than the author’s circle of friends) would be informed about the study, and this method seems to be successful in snowball sampling of population. More than half of selected interviewees did not know the author in person and were not of her virtual friends. In addition, semi-structured interviewing method was chosen in order to provide a vis-à-vis situation in interviews, in which the ‘nostalgic experiences’ of the interviewees can be discussed and their nostalgic music can be listened together.

Afterward an invitation Email was sent to the people who responded that they are interested to participate. In this Email, to begin, the volunteers were asked if they are familiar with the concept of nostalgia or not, and if they are willing to participate in an interview. Then two definitions of nostalgia from two different dictionaries (The American Heritage Dictionary of English & The New Oxford Dictionary of English) were given. Following that, the interview’s design was described and the Email recipients were asked to select 3-5 pieces of their own nostalgic pieces of music and mention the titles of those pieces to the interviewer in a reply Email, if they wished to participate in the interview.

The individuals who were willing to participate replied to the invitation Email and sent their music pieces. Then a date and time was set to conduct the interview. Many volunteers from

different countries including Spain, France, Netherlands, Sweden, Belgium, the United States, Finland, and Germany replied that they would like to participate in the study.

From all of the Emails that the author received only ten of them were selected, based on their country of residence (Finland and Germany). The decision was made because of the financial difficulties for travel and accommodation for the author. The possibility of conducting the interviews through Skype was still a choice, but the study was originally based on presence of close human interaction (face to face interview) for recall and self-expression. (The author doesn't underestimate the role and importance and practicality of social networks, but emphasizes on the vis-à-vis human experience to simulate a more vivid and real recollection of feelings and expression).

All ten participants were university students (two of them PhD students and the rest master students) and they were all Iranians living in Finland or Germany. The age range was 24 to 38 years old; eight of them in their late twenties, one of them were thirty years old and one was in his late thirties. They were five males and five females (the equal number of male and female was coincidental and not of author's intention).

As they will be introduced later in the study by their fictitious names: *Arash, Siavash, Pendar, Kousha, Farhad, Babak, Shabnam, Ramak, Golnaz, Farnaz*. The interviews were conducted in three cities (Cologne and Dortmund in Germany, and Tampere in Finland). Three volunteers offered their residence as the place for conducting the interviews.

Interviews were recorded by a video camera. Recording was done by consent of every interviewee in the beginning of interview. The duration of interviews varied between 20 minutes to 1 hour. If the questions were not quiet clear, interviewer would give some hints and more explanation to help the interviewee. Interviewees could take their time to think and contemplate about their opinions and explanations.

In the beginning interviewees introduced themselves. They gave information about their age, country of residency, period of stay in the new country, and level of satisfaction (in general about the living in the new country) and the amount of nostalgia occurrence. Level of satisfaction and nostalgic experiences was rated through a five-point scale,

respectively rated from ‘very satisfied’ to ‘very unsatisfied’, and ‘always’ to ‘rarely’. The rating was verbal. Afterwards interviewees were being asked if they could recall the nostalgia definitions – which were given in the invitation Email – and to explain their own definition of nostalgia. The reasons for asking to recall the given definitions were the assurance about sharing a mutual understanding about the phenomenon and avoiding misunderstandings. In the next step, questions were being asked and discussed in detail. After general questions about nostalgia, next step was the listening section. The interviewer was choosing from interviewee’s collection of music, and playing the pieces randomly. Every piece of music was being played from 30 seconds to a full piece depending on the tolerance and patience of interviewee (or her or his wish).

Individuals were free to start to talk whenever they wanted to, in the middle of the listening or after it. For every individual at least three pieces of her or his collection was played and the pieces were discussed. A few questions about overall experience of music listening and individual’s music collections in migration were talked over. The individuals were free to add and explain anything more, if they felt so. It has to be mentioned that all the processes (Invitation Emails, Interviews, etc.) were conducted in English.

A time span about one month (or more) was passed from initial correspondence with volunteered individuals to actual interview. This period of time was a good opportunity for individuals to recall and collect their nostalgic pieces of music and also for introspection, contemplation and recalling their nostalgic memories and life events.

3.3 Data Analysis

The data analysis processes started by transcribing the interviews after all ten interviews were done. Interviews were transcribed accurately and word-by-word, and were double-checked. After this step, the transcribed texts were being re-read and reviewed in order to obtain an in-depth memorization.

Previously it was explained that the data collection part was conducted by semi-structured interviews and based on a questionnaire, hence, the transcribed data was more or less clustered relevant to the questions. However, individuals’ explanation, definition and recalling were being unfolded during the interview and not just by every question. More

information was given during the process and sometimes without regard to the question. Thus the collected data was codified and categorized based on what the research aim was: nostalgic experiences abroad, their qualities, characteristics, content, possible functions, etc. In the first step of codification, the transcription was highlighted and coded based on four initial themes: Nostalgia; 1) Definition, 2) Nature, 3) Elements, 4) Functions, and also based on the timeline of the interview: Music-listening (during the interview); 1) Before, 2) During, and 3) After

Missing important data is one important issue in qualitative data analysis and during the coding process. One safeguard against this issue is to codify the transcript by more than one person (In addition to several times codification in order to forming categories and themes) (Auerbach, and Silverstein, 2003). For this aim, the author decided to ask for help and a musician friend who was fluent in English but unfamiliar with the project and interviewees and from a different background (Music playing and graphic design) was invited. The aim of the research plan and important theoretical frameworks (qualitative analysis and codifying methods), ethical issues and a short review of literature were explained to the second codifier. A printed version of the transcript (without names and just with different sections) and the initial keywords (Definition, Nature, Elements, and Functions) were given to the codifier too. The author showed the first codified version (printed version with colourful highlights that exhibit different codes) to the second codifier. He (the second codifier/assistant) asked for a few days to review the transcripts and start the process of codifying. Afterwards, several sessions were held with the second codifier and the transcripts were codified and double - checked in several steps.

During the codifying session both codifiers were looking at the transcripts and discussing over the text if any specific section, phrase or sentence can be included in different codes or not. There were some parts that the author had neglected them as specific codes and the second codifier mentioned them, as well as interpreting the transcript from a different viewpoint. It has to be reminded that the second codifier has not watched or listened the interviews videotapes and he only had a printed copy that was relatively neutral (The author means the difference between reading a book or watching a movie based on that book, in this sense the book can be considered as more neutral), and finally it has to be emphasized that the author kept the individuals' information confidential during the codifying sessions and after that.

After this step, the transcripts were reviewed again, and after that, the second phase of codifying was started regarding emergent themes and categories. The emergence of themes and categories were based on the initial codes and also the repetitive patterns that were obtained from several times and steps of codifying. For instance, when an interviewee was more accepting toward the nostalgic experience, it could be slightly different from the case when an interviewee wasn't accepting (Avoidance). Another example was the case of clinical depressed interviewees rather than interviewees with no clinical depression background. Thus, for all en transcripts the repetitive patterns were extracted considering the initial themes. First issue in categories emergence was to look at the data regarding different layers of nostalgic experiences. For instance, the nostalgia in general and solely (regardless of its triggers and the main point of this study that was music-related nostalgia) was considered as a theme, and afterwards came the music-related nostalgic experiences as a second category and in the next step the immigration was added to the second category and formed the third one.

The process of codifying and categorizing the transcription was repeated many times in order to achieve consistent themes and categories. Next issue in categories' emergence was based on overall individual commonality and differences such as their encounter and regulatory methods, their agreement and disagreements, etc. Finally the categories were formed based on the generality to specificity of their topics. One point that should be mentioned in the both phases of codifying and category construction was repeated and refined many times. In the next chapter emerged themes and categories will be explained, accompanied with quotations from transcript.

4 RESULTS: THEMES AND CATEGORIES

Six main themes (categories) emerged from the transcripts:

- 1- Nostalgia
- 2- Music-related Nostalgic Experiences
- 3- Music-related Nostalgic Experiences in Migration
- 4- Strategic Methods
- 5- Individual Differences
- 6- Timeline-based Observation

An important issue in the process of themes construction was the phase or timeline of interview that mostly can be binned into two sets: “before” and “after” listening. Nostalgia in general (nature, triggers, functions) was discussed before the listening. Whereas music-related nostalgic experiences, strategic methods, and individual differences are mostly being talked over during and after music listening. (Music-related) nostalgic experiences are discussed in both of time phases.

Time-based distinction is initially considered as to highlight possible roles of music in evoking nostalgia. As it was expected, this distinction was evident in participants’ opinions and definitions about nostalgia and all other themes and later in the coding and analysis process a triple role for music was elicited. This issue will be discussed later in the sixth category description.

Another issue that has to be mentioned is the categorization method. Categorizing was relevant to 1) Interview questions, and 2) Emerged themes from the transcription.

4.1 Nostalgia in General

This category refers to nostalgic experiences of participants in general, it consists of the content of a nostalgic reveries, how is it evoked (triggers), and what are the nostalgic elements that trigger nostalgia.

4.1.1 Content

It seems that participants did not share a homogeneous opinion about the nature of nostalgia, as it is investigated from transcriptions; nostalgia is regarded mostly as a complicated feeling with both positive and negative characteristic, and it can also be bittersweet. As Pendar describes it in the most positive way among the others:

“It is beautiful in a way, it is not painful, it is sweet but not very sweet, a faint pleasure ... “ (Pendar)

In addition, positivity or negativity of nostalgia is dependent on the specific experience from which it is aroused. Nostalgia has a diverse range from positive to negative, and also it depends on the actual mood of the involved individual.

Explaining the nature of nostalgia seemed to be difficult for most of participants. From one perspective it was defined as bittersweet. For some, it was defined as something completely negative. However nostalgia was defined as to possess an experience-relevant nature which is complicated to explain. Thus, it can be negative when it is related to negative memories, and positive when related to positive ones.

“It depends on the memories which arises, that how I feel ... it is dependent on the memory; sometimes it is positive, sometimes it is negative” (Ramak)

“Complicated, something between bittersweet and complicated, it has variations to say” (Golnaz)

“It is bittersweet. In my opinion, the whole fine of living is kind of bitter but there are lots of little stories and tales in your life which make it sweet, so it is a combination of sweetness and bitterness.” (Farhad)

Interestingly, the inconsistency in explaining the nature of nostalgia can demonstrate its complex nature.

“Complicated, something between bittersweet and complicated, It has variations to say” (Golnaz)

Mostly in the end of interviews (or after listening parts) participants mentioned the bittersweet-ness of the nostalgic experience, explaining it as a ‘pain in the teeth’ or ‘a kind of enjoyable suffering’.

On the other hand positivity or negativity of nostalgic experience is dependent on individual’s mood, as expressed by some participants:

“It depends on my mood, sometime it is really sad ... Sometimes I am in a better mood, I have some moments with friends, sharing the events and memories with them, it is not desirable, but it is bittersweet and usually the sadness is bigger”(Shabnam)

Next issue considering the content of a nostalgic reverie is association of sadness and nostalgia. ‘Not being happy and grateful’, ‘missing’ and ‘sadness’ are the feelings that accompany nostalgia and were expressed as nostalgic content.

“Nostalgia is not the moment that I feel how happy and grateful I am” (Babak)

“It is a combination of good memories you remember and you feel. I don’t have them anymore therefore I feel nostalgic, I am sad when I miss it” (Golnaz)

4.1.2 Nostalgic Triggers and Elements

On the other hand nostalgic reveries were consisted of various elements; music, sound in general, smells, photos, and, even some movies could be nostalgic objects.

“Smells, smell of orange blossoms, and the sounds in general, sounds of my friends, and music too, Smell is more intensive” (Pendar)

“Photos from my friends and places from Iran, photos from Tehran” (Ramak)

“It can be music, and smells of course” (Golnaz)

“Music, one food can have the same effect, one taste, but mostly music” (Kousha)

As it was expressed, sometimes music is the most nostalgic object, and sometimes it could be smells. The smell of pollution in the air, and humidity were of smells that were common among participants. Seemingly all participants have lived in Tehran, and Tehran, as a metropolis is also a polluted city, thus the pollution in the air is one of the conditions of living in Tehran.

“When I smell pollution in the air it reminds me of Tehran” (Golnaz)

“like snowy photos of Tehran, or short movies of driving in Tehran streets” (Ramak)

On the other hand, central parts of Iran (and Tehran as well) are more or less located in the dry climate. In contrary, north of Iran has humid weather and green climate and it is relatively close to Tehran, it is desirable for inhabitants of Tehran to travel to north in their free time or on holidays. Humidity is one of the desirable climate’s attributes for inhabitants of Tehran. (Compared to Tehran’s relatively dry climate). Europe is also more humid compared to Tehran, thus the humidity of air in the new place became a nostalgic object for those who used to travel to the north of Iran regularly.

This issue indicates that a common attribute of climate in old and new place can become a nostalgic object for a migrant.

“I remember myself, in a car, driving to the north of Iran. I was with my sister and my cousin and his friend and we were having a very good time together ... you know Chaloos road, it is a very special road. We were driving at 6:00 a.m, very fresh air; I could feel the wind over my skin when I opened the window.” (Kousha)

“I used to have a group of friends, with whom we used to travel to north of Iran, specially every two weeks or so ... The humidity here, reminds me of the north of Iran, wood, jungle, etc.” (Golnaz)

Music is a strong trigger for nostalgia as it is expressed, and for some people the strongest tool for evoking nostalgic feelings.

“I feel nostalgic mainly by music rather than these kinds of things, for example events or smells or anything else ... so it is all together I would say mostly by music or maybe by some movies” (Farhad)

Photos of family, friends, and places are also expressed as triggers for nostalgia. Nostalgic memories are consisted of memories of important life figures; closed ones, friends and family, loved and beloved ones. Life stages such as going to university, death of a close family member (Grand parents), and the most highlighted; childhood, are the memories that can trigger nostalgia. Special events and first-time experiences also possess nostalgic content, and recalling them may result in becoming nostalgic. Some of the phrases consisted of closed others comes below:

“Past loves, more with friends and beloved ones, past experiences”

“Sounds of my friends”

“Every meal I have, everyday I was eating with my parents, lunch together, sitting for lunch I think of my mom”

“I remember I was in a car with my mom, with my family”

“Something that reminds me of childhood”

“People that I don’t have around me, like my uncle, my mom. Having the opportunity to meet the guys who I liked, some of my teachers, even the people who worked in the groceries in the street close to my home, my friends in my homeland, mostly people”

“Maybe differently, but I have a strong feeling about my grandpa and my grandma whom we lost them 3 and 7 years ago”

“The past times with my friends and family, we had some good time, even bad time”

“I miss people, like my grandmother, I missed a period of my time that I was very happy, like my childhood”

Another nostalgic element which is mostly indirectly emphasized is ‘homeland’ or ‘home country’. This emphasize can be the result of migration that is one of the aims of this research. Referring to specific places in one’s home country demonstrates this issue; social places such as coffee shops, some famous streets (Such as Vali-e-asr St. in Tehran, the longest street in Tehran), and again highly emphasized the ‘Chaloos road’ (A spiral shape road around Alborz mountain ranges) that connects Tehran to the north of Iran and thus Caspian Sea, are common nostalgic places among participants.

4.2 Music-Related Nostalgic Experiences

4.2.1 Process

As it was previously explained, the second phase of interviews were consisted of music listening and the interviewees discussed their feelings and memories associated with every specific piece of music (that was chosen beforehand by themselves).

Interestingly, the discussions over nostalgic memories, feelings, and functions took place in details while participants started to open up and express themselves much easier. It seems that listening to one's nostalgic music allows the individual to recall the related memory in-depth. On the other hand, listening to nostalgic music simulated the nostalgic experiences and consequently, participants felt free to express their personal and spontaneous feelings and thoughts in the interview in general.

As can be elicited from transcriptions, all music-related nostalgic memories are detailed; the first time of listening to that music, participant's age, the place it was heard, the atmosphere of the place, people present and involved in the related event, and also negativity or positivity of the experience are fully demonstrated in interviews.

Going further than music as a simulator, in some cases the feeling became real, and the participant were brought to tears, remembering the missed person through recalling and explaining the memory and listening to the music. By this explanation music becomes a strong simulator that both recalls and evokes nostalgic feelings.

4.2.2 Typicality: Intentional / Unintentional

Nostalgic experiences seem to be haphazard and random emotional experiences to some people (They don't expect to become nostalgic and become surprised when experiencing it). Becoming nostalgic for some participants is not desirable and accepted, thus it is not being produced intentionally through recalling memories or listening to music. Some of the transcribed phrases from participants come bellow:

“I never collect nostalgic music in my computer, most of the time I don't listen intentionally.”
 “It doesn't work if I want to produce it. I play it first and the nostalgia comes to me, it depends on how my memory works”

On the other hand more than half of participants stated that they recall nostalgic memories consciously and intentionally in order to confront the past and reality and regulate this feeling. However mood regulation mechanism was not directly pointed out.

“I do it intentionally sometimes, to put the memories behind and move on. It is simulating”

“when I wake up in the morning, I play these kinds of music that I love for myself, and I feel myself as at home and life goes on”
 “Sometimes I play them for myself intentionally”

The typicality of nostalgic experience and its relevancy to individuals' encounter style will be discussed later.

4.2.3 Functionality

Most of the interviewees discussed the functionality of nostalgic experiences in-depth and detailed. It adds more account to the fact that music is a strong simulator for nostalgia which helps the individual to realize the role and functions of nostalgic experiences.

“Something beyond feeling better or worse, something very deep inside life, makes me understand something, helps me to understand many thing, I can limit it to feeling better or worse, continue to live with this music, the nostalgic elements of this music remained with me” (Pendar)

“It helps me to cope better in new life; it doesn't have anything with my confidence. It just helps me to have a more stable emotional state.” (Ramak)

“You try to give a new definition, when this music makes you feel so sad, in order to survive sometimes ... normally when I am stressed, I can say often when I am listening to it, I feel more relaxed. And it has positive influence.” (Golnaz)

“I have the feeling of not having this music is very bad, because when you are listening to the music you feel more calm ... This music is very important for me. I have a connection to those tracks” (Farnaz)

“Different songs brought different feeling for me ... I enjoy because I can review what has happened to me until now. It is a very fast review of my life” (Kousha)

The functionality of nostalgia in general will be described in the ‘Strategic Methods’ section in detail.

4.2.4 Musical Features Relevancy

Musical features and content of a piece are also effective on the piece becoming a nostalgic one. Although this effect is very personal and it is based on individual's musical preferences. Musical meanings, values, and depth are important to a nostalgic listener. A nostalgic individual listens to her or his nostalgic piece with accuracy and attention, and the music should sound valuable to her or him. The lyrics are also powerful factors. If lyrics are about love and hope or one's country, or are being sung in one's ethnic dialect, or they convey philosophical meanings, they are potent of intensifying the nostalgic content for the listener.

“My first girlfriend, it was a very strong music, I put albums from Anathema, [we were making love] ... Now I remember those moments, that music is very deep. Our love was very deep and so the music fitted to that situation” (Arash)

“The story of Inferno, by Dante (music by Tchaikovsky); I was 9 or 10, it was so painful, hard music, made me very sad at that time, I started to read the Dante, the pictures in the book and in music, it was a mayhem, it was so painful for a kid. Brings me back to that age, exactly the feeling I had, living and hell and the situation when you are dead, and combining the music and its story”(Pendar)

“It makes me remember someone, and it was being sung to me when I was very happy and the lyrics is kind of looking to the future” (Ramak)

“This song is an Iranian traditional, basically the music is sad but the lyrics are so hopeful, it talks about that ‘we are all hopeful, we hope for a better days, there is some kind of problems, we will come over those problems, we will wake up some brighter days” (Golnaz)

“It is sad music, with northern dialect in Iran. It is talking about the moon and asks the moon to please come out”, “In the lyrics, the singer sings about ‘your eyes, your eyes’ and it reminds me of my brother’s eyes. “(Farnaz)

“It makes me feel this kind of love, I don’t know why, maybe because of the voice of the female singer. Maybe the event of love or passion or something like that”(Farhad)

“It is a song from Elend, my favorite band. I like this song, really a sad and melancholic one ... Song is about the coldness of society and how lonely we are in this planet ... The lyrics bring me this feeling, that there is no need to put so much effort on everything” (Babak)

For those with musical background (instrument players or professional listener) musical value, quality and interpretation of a piece can affect its nostalgic attribute.

“The theme of this music is different ... I tried to find the singer and the composer and I was unsuccessful [a music piece that was heard by chance without having any information about it] ... and at that time I had a little jazz band and we tried to perform this, to play this track” (Farhad)

“Listening to it without knowing Beethoven, very fast and very hard, too sad I realized that he was deaf, the feeling is not that sadness, its very static, nostalgic for me only because of Toscanini, his interpretation of this music”(Pendar)

4.3 Nostalgic Experiences in Migration

The intensity and frequency of nostalgic experiences are relevant to many factors. In addition to cultural background, personality, and individuals’ psychological states, the length of stay seems to be influential. In this research the cultural backgrounds of Iranian students is more or less similar. All of the participants (except one) belong to the same generation and age group. However, individuals’ personality cannot be explored and examined extensively except for their self-descriptions.

Psychological state and length of stay are of the effective factors in nostalgia that can be

explored in this research. In this project two participants stated (by their own wish) that they were clinically depressed and they were under therapy and medication for a period (one for 7 years, and another individual for one year recently). As previous literature suggests (Akhtar, 1999; Volkan, 1999), nostalgia for exiled and depressed individuals can be more negative or poisoned than being functional and positive. As it is expressed by the depressed cases in the interviews, they avoid their nostalgic memories, and in general they avoid their past, and thus nostalgia is not functional for them.

In the case of this project, the poisoned and avoided nostalgic feelings were observed in individuals with depression history.

“I was preparing for my entrance exam for university; it was before my depression problem ... I cannot, not to think about that period before depression... it is necessary to avoid my memories, I don't want to make myself sick again, so I don't listen to some old music ... being nostalgic is harmful for me, I don't have to miss anything, I just look at the future, looking at past is not wise.” (Siavash)

“This nostalgic feeling, I try to avoid it when I am here, maybe because I went to a very hard depression when I came here, I visited a therapist and used medication” (Shabnam)

Another effective factor is length of stay; all participants except one were newcomers and lengths of their stay were between 6 months and 2.5 years. Regarding newcomers' length of stay, they were more prone to experiencing nostalgia. In contrast, the participant who was living in the new country for over 8 years reported rare experiencing of nostalgia.

On the other hand, nostalgia proneness in migration also depends on factors relevant to living in a country rather than one's homeland. As it was described many nostalgic elements were related to one's home country, and nostalgic memories of migrants consisted of their past live circumstances and its comparison to the new place.

Many participants reported that listening to their nostalgic music in the new place is a different (and probably more intense) experience from listening to them back in Iran, and their music brings them back to their home country.

“There is a difference between listening to this music here and back there, that I know now that I will never experience this again, I experience it once and it's gone” (Pendar)

“But here that I am too far from my country, all of these songs are stronger for me, because I think I am really far. Maybe I never live like before anymore, because I have left something behind, and therefore, those songs are stronger for me.” (Farnaz)

“When I am here, and here the whole society is completely different compared to my former country, most of the particular sections are in contrary with my previous country... it feels like a gap ... So those tracks I sent you, and those music tracks that I was always listening to back in Iran, when I listen to them here I kind of feel myself at home” (Farhad)

4.4 Strategic Methods

The theme presents the individual strategies in utilizing nostalgia in their new life, and in other way the functionality of nostalgia in different psychological aspects of life. As can be expected nostalgia is capable of different functions for individuals regarding their personal and socio-cultural differences.

4.4.1 Self and Identity

Nostalgia is a mechanism that counteracts loneliness (Zhou, Sedikides, Wildschut, & Ding-Guo, 2008) when a discontinuity in one's self is perceived. It helps some individual to cope better in their new life through reviewing and comparing life experiences in former and new society and consequently analysing the new environment and its conditions, differences, and similarities. As a result of better understanding of the self and the new environment the integration and adaptation process will be eased.

“But my personality is that I like to change it a bit with the people in the situation, so when I listened to this music I reviewed that was it a good idea to be like that person in that situation... The music helps me live here, because I told you I have been analysing myself, my character. I can combine these experiences with this society and the society I was living in before, I can obtain very useful hints with listening to music.” (Kousha)

Besides, nostalgic experiences are the result of the recall of one's autobiographical memories and life experiences. By remembering and reviewing the history, one can obtain and rebuild her or his individual self. Additionally another function of nostalgia is bringing continuity to one's self. In social context, sharing memories with others, feeling of being included in a history of community, feelings of belonging, and in general possessing a collective identity are of the factors that counteract loneliness, bring feelings of existence and nurture one's identity. Nostalgic experiences by recalling one's history nurtures and empowers an individual's identity.

“Something belonging to my past, doesn’t help me, not at all, it is restricted to me too, nostalgia is the only thing that connects me to some parts of my life, the past ... I have friends, and we have some common nostalgic experiences together, then when we talk about it” (Pendar)

“When I feel nostalgic and I remember something good from the past, I feel good that I had such a good times there, I experienced a lot in my life, somehow I feel happy that I experienced that area as well” (Golnaz)

Furthermore, in the case of poisoned and negative nostalgia, the individual avoids nostalgia in order to forget his or her past life and perceived failures, and consequently to put behind his or her former identity and history and becomes a new person.

“In this new environment I have a new collection, cause I am a new person, it is necessary to avoid my memories, I don’t want to make myself sick again ... I feel I am old when I miss something, I didn’t do anything important, I wasted my life, that’s why I avoid my memories ... I don’t have to miss anything, I just look at the future, looking at past is not wise.” (Arash)

4.4.2 Mood Regulation

Positive emotions have a crucial role in maintaining psychological stability and equilibrium, as it is previously demonstrated (Wildschut, Sedikides, & Cordaro, 2010) and meanwhile nostalgia as a positive emotion possesses an undoer and regulatory role.

Considering bittersweet nature of nostalgia, it might convey the bitterness of the lost and gone past, and thus some individuals may be resistance against experiencing it or avoid it, but at the same time it is consisted of sweetness of remembering and recalling one’s life experiences. As participants phrase it, nostalgia is a ‘kind of joyful suffering’, ‘a masochistic feeling’, ‘a sad feeling that one should push it to come out in order to put memories behind and move on’. The latter expression is the exact function of nostalgia as a tool in regulating negative moods in order to obtaining a more stable emotional state. The process can be repetitive for some individuals as to achieve the desired stability.

“I try to regenerate the feeling of past and feel the same” (Arash)

“Sometimes when we are a little bit sad, we want to get satisfied with the sadness or we want to have a full period and then put it behind, like the girls cry just because they need to cry once a week, so I need it once in a while ... I keep pushing it to come out, so I listen to music to cry, so cry and let it out ... to put the memories behind and move on ... it is kind of happy and relaxing, nothing complicated” (Ramak)

“In my mind I enjoy listening to some tracks, it is like something chemical in my mind that I like to repeat it, repeat it, and repeat it. It is something joyful. Or better to say it is kind of suffering that I enjoy.” (Farnaz)

The strategies for emotional self-regulation also function as a means for coping in the new situation. This process is achieved through regulating one's emotional instability, bringing comfort (relaxation) and sometimes consequently more confident for the individual in the social hardships:

“Normally when I am stressed, I can say often when I am listening to it, I feel more relaxed. And it has positive influences” (Golnaz)

“I feel more confident, that I have something for myself everywhere. Even though I don't have anything, I have something for myself.” (Farnaz)

4.4.3 Meaning in Life

Meaningfulness is fundamental in the time of crisis in individuals' life span (Routledge, Arndt, Hart, & Juhl, 2011). This meaning is obtained by nostalgic experiences through recalling memories and important experiences in life; experiences of 'being together', 'understand something about life', 'feeling love in mind', and recognizing 'valuable moments of life', and 'review of what one has done in life' are of the experiences that foster meaning into life.

“I like to feel nostalgic, it makes me very deep, there is a meaning for me in that time, valuable moments in life ... somehow made me feel love in my mind, I felt the whole concept of love without it being real” (Arash)

“If I listen to a music that I have memories with it in the past ... what I have done in my life and what has happened to me, they bring something to me” (Kousha)

Sometimes the meaningfulness in life is experienced and understood in a metaphorical and philosophical frame:

“Exactly the feeling I had, living and hell, and the situation when you are dead, and combining the music and its story” (Pendar)

“It has a message for me that sadness is sadness. The condition of the house, the faces of people, sad and crying, everything was like that [after the grandpa passed away]” (Kousha)

“It reminds me of the coldness, just one word; coldness... The atmosphere reminds me of winter... the feeling ... belongs more and more to the past, the time I was grabbed from the old nature, they got me from the sources, tore me apart from my origin and put me to this world, to this environment, to this society... Exactly, like the mother, the old mother, you can say God ...this departure, this feeling, from origin, includes coldness, not bad, but coldness.” (Babak)

4.4.4 Sympathy/ Empathy

Sometimes the process of becoming nostalgic evokes feelings of sympathy. Ramak illustrates this in a comment:

“Sometimes I feel like a rush of emotions, it is sympathetic, suddenly someone’s mom coming to town, and I feel that I am lost; my mom is 6000 kilometres away, then you look at the photos and you feel more calm, or you get an Email from someone and you feel like what the hell and you feel a rush of blood in your heart or in your head and I play old songs and it helps me remember what was my thoughts or my state at that time, so it is totally positive for me to handle my rush of emotions”

Sympathizing with someone’s life condition, can result in the self becoming nostalgic and of course the condition have to be familiar and experienced for the individuals or the individual has to have emotional bond to the sympathized person.

“The feeling is like my father is sad, because the song is sad, so it reminds me of the sadness of my father. Although I couldn’t see in his face that he is sad. Or there wasn’t something specific, maybe about the society, society was going wrong. It was a lovely music for him, but I suppose that it was a nostalgic song for him.” (Farnaz)

Another condition in which individuals can become nostalgic is empathizing with someone’s condition or a specific situation:

“Listening to it without knowing Beethoven, too sad I realized that he was deaf, the feeling is not that sadness, its very static ... nostalgic for me only because of Toscanini, his interpretation of this music” (Pendar)

“This song is just for my aunt’s husband. I really liked him. He was a poet and an artist, a good one. He was wise and thankful. I really adore him, in that time I wanted to communicate with a person who respects children... I didn’t like the family reaction to kick him out of family. Then he took his stuff and went out of the country...” (Babak)

“I am listening to this music, I feel myself- same as movies- as the performer of the music, for example the pianist” (Farhad)

4.5 Individual Differences

This research is conducted in a qualitative manner in order to explore nostalgic experiences of different individuals and distinguish various methods of confrontation and utilization of nostalgia in migration.

4.5.1 Encounter Style

Individuals differ in confronting and utilizing nostalgia (Zhou, Sedikides, Wildschut, & Ding-Guo, 2008), based on their attachment style, resistance and avoidance. The noticeable psychological attribute –emerged from interviews- was encounter style that refers to individuals’ avoidance or in contrary acceptance of nostalgic mood. Encounter style seems to be a very important factor that determines some of strategic methods such as mood regulation, and coping strategy, or even the nature of the nostalgic experience.

4.5.1.1 Avoidance

One of the encounter styles in facing nostalgia is to avoid the experience. Individual tries to avoid the memories and every linking object to it. Within this perspective looking to the past is not wise, nostalgia is a barrier that interrupts one's daily and routine life and future, and nostalgic experience is when individual loses his or her powers and is influenced by the past. Although this perspective seemed to be paradoxical, because some of avoidant participants changed their opinion during the interview and admitted that the existence of a history and past could be recalled as important for their life.

“Mostly I don't like this feeling and I feel negative about it. I am a kind of person who doesn't like to go to this [nostalgic] mood” (Farnaz)

“Nostalgia always has this definition for me; to be influenced in past times, and depends on how effective this influence is on me ... I feel myself to be objective not subjective ... No, I cannot console myself, but just to be influenced, to be a slave of environment... The moment is like a threshold for me, I lose the power to control myself” (Babak)

Avoidant perspective is more explicitly discussed when the individual is depressed.

4.5.1.2 Acceptance

Another style is accepting the nostalgia in general or just at the time of realizing it. In this method, individuals accept nostalgia as an emotional response, reasoning that the reality and past should not be escaped and reviewing the past helps to analyse the present in order to survive. While accepting nostalgia as an emotional experience, some individuals believe that nostalgia can be regenerated intentionally for several reasons; it can bring meaning to life, it feels like past in the present time, or it is a mechanism to put the past memories and sadness behind and move on. Whereas some others believe that nostalgia should come by itself, and it cannot be regenerated. By this acceptance the individual recognizes the nostalgia whenever it happens and utilizes it for obtaining a more stable emotional state (as coping strategy or mood regulator mechanism).

“I am entering that time, as a kid, for a short interval I stay there and I come back to present and that's me feeling nostalgia ... It feels good, it should come for itself helps me to understand many things” (Pendar)

“There is a meaning for me in that time, valuable moments in life ... I try to regenerate the feeling of past and feel the same” (Arash)

“I do it intentionally sometimes, to put the memories behind and move on” (Ramak)

“No I don’t avoid the memories, I don’t really like to escape from reality [in the time of recalling memories and becoming nostalgic].” (Kousha)

4.5.2 Depressed Individuals

It has been suggested (Akhtar 1999) that nostalgia for exiled individuals and refugees is a negative process and cannot be functional in their lives. Volkan (1999) also suggests that going unconsciously through a depressed state might cause the nostalgic experience become poisoned and dysfunctional.

In the interviews two participants reported that they experienced being clinically depressed and were under psychotherapy and used medication for a period of time (one for 7 years and one for more than 1 year). In one of them the depression was old, related to the period of living in the home-country. The other individual’s depression belonged to the current period of living abroad (and therefore it is possible that the depression was part of the homesickness process). For both participants, nostalgic experience was something that they would highly avoid in order to avoid going back to the depressed mood; for this reason they even changed their musical collection in order to avoid any familiar music and memory that could bring them back to past times.

“It is not good for me. It doesn’t help me. I had a long depression for 7 years; I miss the time before that depression ... I don’t feel good now, when I am listening to this music, I cannot stop thinking about that period before depression ... Always try to listen to happy songs; because I don’t want to return to previous state ... I avoid my memories, and I am a very nostalgic person, being nostalgic is harmful for me ... I don’t want to make myself sick again, so I don’t listen to some old music” (Siavash)

“This nostalgic feeling, I try to avoid it when I am here, maybe because I went to a very hard depression when I came here, I visited a therapist and used medication ... Now I am listening to some music, I do not really enjoy listening to them, but I switch to something that I have no memory of... They are funny and give me the feeling of relaxation and not being that serious ... [the new music is] a device for distraction... to distract myself from starting to think” (Shabnam)

A behavioural resemblance between refugees and depressed individuals can be observed here; both groups highly avoid nostalgia and resist against becoming nostalgic. Depression and the grief of exile, both refer to a ‘lost object’ (Home country, passed relatives) returning to which seems to be impossible in reality. Thus, both groups might share the same attitudes in encounter with nostalgia, and it can be the case that nostalgic experiences for both groups are unpleasant, poisoned and negative.

4.5.3 Subjective Experience of Nostalgia

Probably the most interesting theme that was elicited from the interviews is experiencing nostalgia in a subjective manner. This type of nostalgic feeling is subjective because it doesn't refer to any specific object or memory. It is a self-made nostalgic experience for the individual that brings different feelings, philosophical meanings over life or images to the mind. It can be an event of love or passion in which the individual is the protagonist of the scene.

“It makes me feel this kind of love, I don't know why, maybe because of the voice of the female singer. Maybe the event of love or passion or something like that. I was in this kind of love, but not exactly related to a specific event in past ... like I am playing the guitar and the beloved girl is singing, it is actually like this... It makes me nostalgic because it hasn't happened” (Farhad)

It also can be a philosophical point of view about life and nostalgia. Within this perspective the human being is an eternal departed one. This departure consists of loneliness, anxiety and melancholia in accompany with coldness.

“But about this song, the feeling is not related to these 24 years, it belongs to more and more to the past, the time I was grabbed from the old nature, they got me from the sources, tore me apart from my origin and put me to this world, to this environment, to this society... This departure, this feeling, from origin, includes with coldness, not bad, but coldness. [It is associated with] Loneliness, anxiety, and feeling sad and melancholic, always with coldness. I just feel about myself, just feel [to be] departed...It is always combined with cold. It couldn't be warm.” (Babak)

4.5.4 Social Context Relevancy

Another area of individual differences was social context as individuals differed in describing the social context. These differences can be divided into two parts; ‘Shared Nostalgia’ and ‘the impact of social context on experiencing nostalgia’. Shared nostalgia refers to a nostalgic experience which is relevant to the society; the nostalgic experience that can be shared among a specific population or in a community:

“I liked this music, and I tried to find the singer and the composer and I was unsuccessful. Now, recently I found this track and I proposed it to my friends and they liked this track, and at that time I had a little jazz band and we tried to perform this, to play this track together. It was the story of this track. There were lots of things that made us do it slowly because we couldn't find this kind of guitar ...” (Farhad)

“I used to play this song maybe a thousand times after that political event, in my car, at home, like a loop, it makes me so sad” (Golnaz)

The Second part refers to the degree of each individual's eagerness to share or exhibit nostalgic state in social context. Two groups of people can be identified in this regard: people who are reluctant to exhibit and share, and the ones who are willing to share it.

"In social context, I don't allow myself to show my feeling, I try to control somehow the sadness, and I try to distract myself... Another factor is being in social context or just being by myself. When I am in social context, I don't want to share my sadness with them, and it is related to my personality. In social context with the sad one [nostalgic music] I will not let it to effect me, in a way I filter it, I will not let it go deep" (Shabnam)

"There is nobody here that has this feeling [nostalgia], if somebody has such a feeling that we can share it ... I have friends, and we have some common nostalgic experiences together, then when we talk about it" (Pendar)

4.6 Timeline-Based Observations

One of the interesting emerged responses during the interview was the reconsideration about the nature and function of nostalgia. In the beginning of the interview, interviewees were being asked about the nature of nostalgia and its functionality.

As Farnaz discussed in the beginning of the interview:

"I am a person who always misses someone, this feeling is strong in me ... Mostly I don't like this feeling and I feel negative about it. I am a kind of person who doesn't like to go to this mood ... It (becoming nostalgic) is negative, the worst one ... It doesn't help me feel better."

She scored 5 (always) in response to the question of 'how much do you experience nostalgia?' Later and after listening to her self-selected nostalgic music, and better to say experiencing simulated nostalgia, she took reconsideration about both the nature and functionality of nostalgic reverie. It has to be mentioned that experiencing nostalgia in interview for her seemed to be so intense that she burst into tears while listening to one of her music pieces, while talking about her brother:

"I have the feeling that not having this music is very bad, because when you are listening to the music you feel more calm, ... It is not a happy feeling, although it can be like enjoying this feeling... In my mind I enjoy listening to some tracks, it is like something chemical in my mind that I like to repeat it, repeat it, and repeat it. It is something joyful. Or better to say it is a kind of suffering that I enjoy... I also think I should give a level better score. I can say maybe complicated and negative. Complicated is a closer to correct, because it gives me an identity. When I want to think about where I come from, my feeling and myself, and my history. If I don't have anything then I feel I don't exist, so the history that I have gives me an identity, which is positive, which gives me an existence for myself. So it is not negative, it gives me myself ... I feel more confident, that I have something for myself everywhere. Even though I don't have anything, I have something for myself."

This reconsideration in one's opinion is consistent with one of the main aims of this research which is the role of music as a simulating device for such intense emotional experiences as nostalgia, and besides, its impact on emotional self-regulation (feeling better after engaging with music).

Similar changes in a softer extent was observed in other interviews; in the beginning of the interviews, it seemed uneasy to talk about their personal feelings and opinions, but when the music was played individuals started to discuss their feelings more openly and with more detail. Defining nostalgia, life memories, momentous events and other life experiences became easier. This implies the role of music in helping people to unfold their feelings and recall their autobiographical memories and life experiences.

Another change that took place gradually during the interviews was that the interviewees became more comfortable and relaxed after they listened to their music; some of them became forgetful about being filmed. They started to unfold their feelings and their life stories behind the music pieces.

This issue indicates the triple role of music in emotional regulation in general, and more specifically in nostalgic experiences; Music can be involved in construction of a specific memory (a special event for an individual), it can be the trigger of nostalgia by recalling that autobiographical memory, and finally it accompanies the individual through the process of 'mourning the lost object' (nostalgic recall of people and places), and regulates the feelings and brings emotional stability for the individual. Thus, music can be considered a very important means in the overall nostalgic experiences, from its initial stages of construction of an autobiographical memory, until the final stages of regulation and relief.

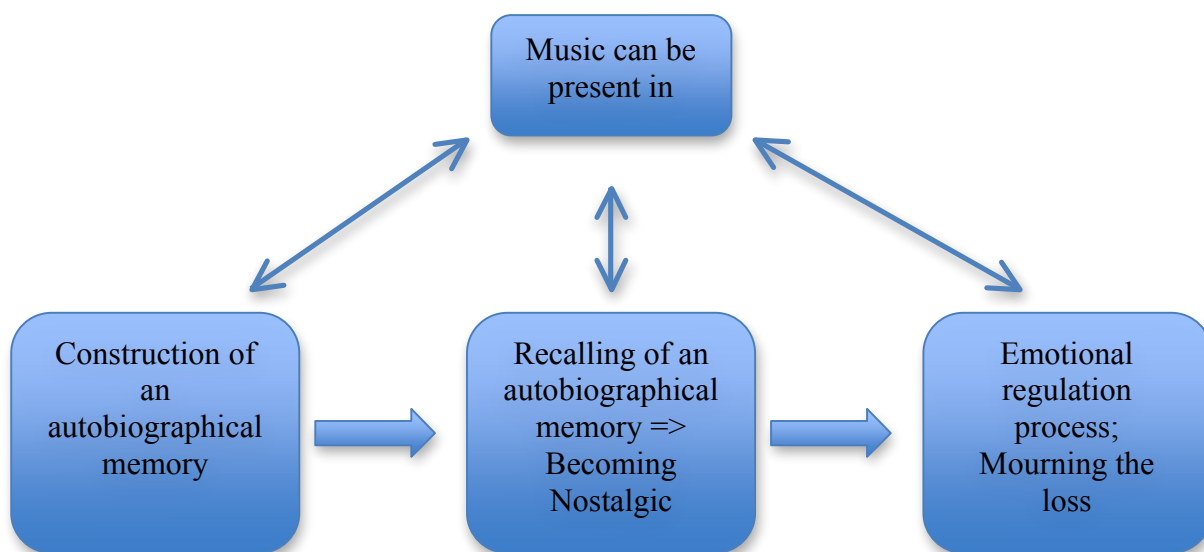


Table 1. Triple Role of music in a nostalgic process

It has to be mentioned that it is a pattern that is deduced by the author, after watching and re-watching the recorded interviews and reading and reviewing the transcriptions. Thus, it can be subjective and limited to the author's perception.

5 DISCUSSIONS

The aim of this research is to explore the utilization of music in international (Iranian) students' everyday life when nostalgia is evoked. When nostalgia is triggered, either intentional or unintentional, it can be utilized as a mood regulator medium and it can ease the psychological pain of 'leaving one's home behind' and foster the sense of self and identity. The results of the study provided new information about the role of music in nostalgic experiences. For instance, the participants employed different strategic methods in how they used music-related nostalgia in their life: counteracting loneliness, evoking bittersweet emotions, bringing continuity or new perspectives into one's sense of self, finding meaning in life, and finding acceptance and sympathy for one's feelings. Moreover, music seemed to play a triple role in nostalgic reverie; as a trigger for nostalgia, as a means to recall and simulate the memory-related emotional state, and finally as a mood regulator tool. Nowadays music is easily accessible by the invention of Internet.

Individuals can search for different genres and pieces of music in various music-streaming services, and also by music identification services (Such as Soundhound, Shazam). Although various ethnic and folk music might not be available by those services yet. Thus, music became an accessible and mobile means for the individual. The individual can listen to her or his preferred music in different places, and utilize it for various psychological purposes.

In the case of individuals in migration, self-selected music becomes an excellent concomitant that contains personal memories and accompanies the person in her or his different emotional states. Music can be present or become absent at any desired moment, even if the sound is not present in fact it can be recalled and remembered from memory and be sung or whispered for one's self.

In this study participants described that they listen to their self-selected music in a daily routine at home, or on the way to work and study, while in public transport to stabilize their emotional states or distract themselves from negative feelings and provide motivation to attend their daily routine and study.

Migrants utilize their autobiographical music to recall their memories of homeland and past life, and to review their life passages and reconstruct their identity and collective self based on their past and present conditions. Additionally music itself has an important position in identity and cultural construction. In this study part of the self-selected music pieces were relevant to homeland. Famous old songs, old national anthems, liberty and folklore songs were included in participants' self-selected music. This issue can describe the role of music in a regulation cycle, which is depicted in the next page:

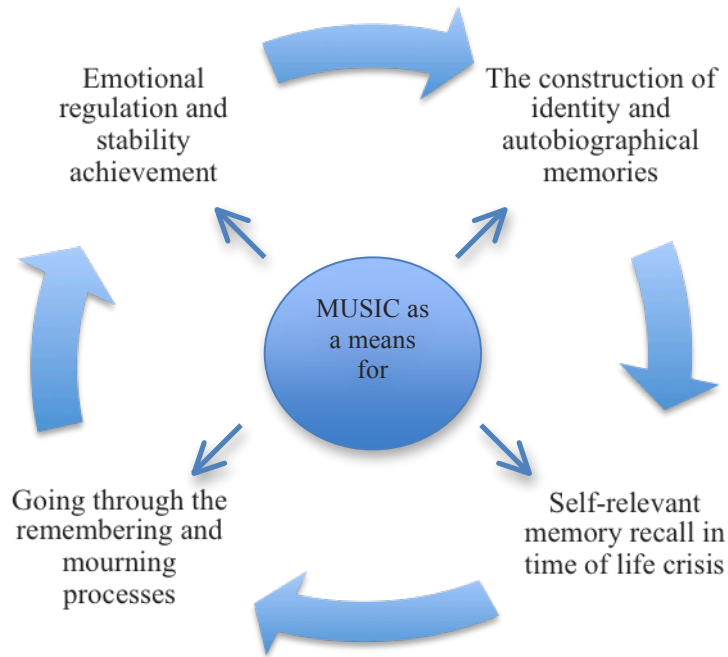


Table 2. The presence of music from memory construction to emotional regulation

Furthermore, the difference between encounter styles is an interesting result in the discussion of self-regulatory methods; previously it was shown that low-avoidant individuals are more prone to nostalgia and also stronger in support-seeking behavior (Wildschut, Sedikides, & Cordaro, 2010). On the other hand in the current study, individual participants showed differences in their encounter style towards nostalgic experiences, preferring either avoidance or acceptance of the nostalgic mood. Preference for these styles was influenced by the personal experiences and mood (including depression) of the participants. This result might address some general individual differences in emotional self-regulation. Individuals with acceptance encounter style in nostalgia might be more aware of psychological changes and their emotional needs, and also might be more skillful in regulating and stabilizing their psychological states.

5.1 Considerations

The project took place in a relatively small scale for various reasons. It was retained small as a plan that initially probes for better and more understanding and comprehension in the field, when music and nostalgia meet, work along, and are synthesized in a migrated form of life in order to achieve psychological balance.

Regarding the research design (semi-structured interviews, the size of sampling population, mutual backgrounds, etc.), there might be some other factors present in a nostalgic experience in migration. Some of those ‘possible’ factors influencing the quality of nostalgic-experience and the issue of nostalgia-proneness will be briefly discussed below:

5.1.1 Cultural Attributes and Socio-Economical Circumstances

The concept of homeland and its importance are among cultural and historical attributes of many cultures, and nostalgia, depression, grief and homesickness are of consequences of becoming detached from the Mother Nature. This paradigm of exile for Iranians resides in poetry and literature (Naficy, H., 1991). It has to be emphasized that poetry is an influential actor in Iranian culture that shapes and suffuses its attributes and is presents in Iranians’ worldviews and thoughts. The most popular and famous example for the concept of exile and nostalgia is a poem by Molana (Rumi), ‘Song of Reed’. In this piece the reed tells its life story, in which it got detached from its origins, and now the reed has become the symbol for expressing exile and detachment:

Song of Reed*

1. Now listen to this reed-flute's deep lament
About the heartache being apart has meant
2. 'Since from the reed-bed they uprooted me
My song's expressed each human's agony,
3. A breast which separation's split in two
Is what I seek, to share this pain with you:
4. When kept from their true origin, all yearn
For union on the day they can return.
5. Among the crowd, alone I mourn my fate,
With good and bad I've learned to integrate,

6. That we were friends each one was satisfied
But none sought out my secrets from inside;
7. My deepest secret's in this song I wail
But eyes and ears can't penetrate the veil:
8. Body and soul are joined to form one whole
But no one is allowed to see the soul.'
9. It's fire not just hot air the reed-flute's cry,
If you don't have this fire then you should die!
10. Love's fire is what makes every reed-flute pine,
Love's fervor thus lends potency to wine;
11. The reed consoles those forced to be apart,
Its notes will lift the veil upon your heart,
12. Where's antidote or poison like its song,
Or confidant, or one who's pined so long?
13. This reed relates a tortuous path ahead,
Recalls the love with which Majnun's heart bled:
14. The few who hear the truths the reed has sung
Have lost their wits so they can speak this tongue.
15. The day is wasted if it's spent in grief,
Consumed by burning aches without relief--
16. Good times have long passed, but we couldn't care
When you're with us, our friend beyond compare!
17. While ordinary men on drops can thrive
A fish needs oceans daily to survive:
18. The way the ripe must feel the raw can't tell,
My speech must be concise, and so farewell!

*Translated by Jawid Mojaddedi. From "Rumi: The Masnavi,
Book One," New York: Oxford University Press, 2004

In addition, the sample population of this project was limited to students from the same ethnicity; the interviewees were all Iranians in their late twenties (except one). They all have lived (or had the experiences of living for a long time) in Tehran, Iran's capital. Besides their length of stay in the foreign country varied from 6 months to 2/5 years (except one). This age group (again except one interviewee) are born after the 1979 revolution, and have experienced the socio-economical consequences of an eight years war (Iran-Iraq) during their childhood (Although probably not in a very close encounter with war, because the war took place mostly in the south-eastern Iranian border, although there were some missile attacks to some parts of Tehran).

Specific socio-economic circumstances, and possible psychological consequences might influence the intensity and quality of nostalgic experiences for a specific generation. The phenomena of Iranian exile and nostalgia have been studied by Naficy (1991) on exiled population of Iranians and their popular culture and media.

5.1.2 Host Country

Another factor that brought limitation to the results is the social, political, economical and cultural attributes of the host country. Besides, climate can be highly effective as well. Living in a new cultural framework, coping with different social and political issues, different climate and even different social regulation for migrants are all among the issues that an international student is confronted with. The range of similarity or dissimilarity of mentioned cases (in comparison with their home country) can impact the psychological conditions of international students.

The author received Emails from other Iranian students in Spain, France, Netherlands, Belgium, Sweden, and the United States in addition to Finland and Germany. Unfortunately as this research is a part of a master degree and thus it is not part of a funded project, traveling to other countries and interviewing with other volunteers was not possible as a result of financial difficulties.

However this project can be extended to other countries with various climates, social, political, and economical conditions to examine the role of host country on the nostalgic experiences of a specific generation of a country and in order to expand the knowledge about the phenomenon.

5.1.3 Methodological Considerations; Advantages and Limitations

This Research primarily has a grounded theory approach, in which the phenomenon of nostalgic experiences in migration is the central concern. Nostalgic episodes are lived experiences of many people in migration as it is described and studied previously (Akhtar, 1999; Volkan, 1999), but the aim of this research was to explore this lived experience in the association and presence of music. Data analysis was accomplished by coding and categorizing the interviews' transcriptions, and finally by generating theoretical constructs based on what was said by interviewees (Auerbach and Silverstein 2003).

In this research in order to explore the field and subject (Nostalgia and Music), it was decided to design and conduct the research in a qualitative manner. One important issue for this consideration was ‘reflexivity’ that is described as: “It is an awareness of, a sensitivity to and engagement with the social and cultural embedded-ness of our theories, methods and research questions, as well as a way of checking and critiquing one's assumptions about the research.” (Frost, N. 2011)

This topic is a lived experience of the author herself (as an Iranian student living abroad), and thus she was also involved in such experiences (Music-related nostalgic experiences), and it is one of her fields of interest in musical engagement. On the other hand, studying mood regulation and emotional engagement in daily life, is a field that is more suitable to be expressed or narrated by the experiencer and discussed with the presence of both researcher and researched.

Furthermore, the topic resides the issue of retrospective and current recalling of memories and emotions expression. Nostalgic memory as a psychological process can be recalled (or possibly stimulated) at the present time, as the author believes. If the actual nostalgic experience is recalled to the forefront of one’s consciousness, the individual will more vividly and realistically illustrate it. Regarding current recall of memories and the issue of reflexivity, discussing the experience in the presence of two individuals (the interviewer and interviewee) seemed more suitable for the aim of this research.

In addition to the issue of reflexivity, interviewer doesn’t differ with interviewee in terms of experience as a presumption, because they both can be considered as insiders to the topic. The interviewer also belongs to the same generation and cultural background and possibly has lived the same experience.

However, choosing the method of “interview” for this research does not neglect other methods of exploring a phenomenon, and other methods can be useful and also complementary. Therefore, other methods of investigation can be utilized and implicated in order to portray the whole picture.

On the other hand personality questionnaire could be given to the interviewees, in order to obtain a better understanding of individual differences and how personality differences affect individual responses and methods of encountering the experience. However, the author discarded this idea for which the reason was to retain the classical interview format and avoid any discomfort for the interviewee, which could result in more distance and possible conservatism in self-expression.

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Appendix A:

The Email that was sent for people who announced they would like to participate in a study in the field of music and emotion:

(The first invitation Email):

“Hello !

I am conducting an exploratory study about music and nostalgic experiences; investigating about people living outside their home country and experiencing nostalgia through music.

I will be glad and thankful if you want to participate in my study. If you are interested, please continue reading :)

Nostalgia sounds like a familiar feeling to some of us. Dictionaries define nostalgia as;

A bittersweet longing for things, persons, or situations of the past. (American Heritage Dictionary of English)

A sentimental longing or wistful affection for the past.

(The New Oxford Dictionary of English)

In my research, I am interviewing people, discussing about nostalgia. Before the interview I need you to collect some of “**your**” nostalgic music, three to five pieces of any kind of music that are nostalgic to you, and you experience nostalgia while listening to them.

Please take your time and choose the pieces that you really feel nostalgic with.

Please remember it is not important (at least for aim of my research) that what kind of music do you feel nostalgic with, is it old, new, in your own language or not, from what genre of music is it or is it vocal or instrumental or even some pieces like prayers (like “Rabana” by Shajarian”). There won’t be a place for justifying of your taste; it is just about selecting the music that is the most nostalgic for “you” in your personal music life.

So if you want to participate, please reply to this Email and please name the pieces of music in your nostalgic collection.

Looking forward to hearing from you!”

Appendix B:

The questionnaire that the interviews' discussion was based on it and was conducted regarding it:

- **What is your nationality?**
- **How long did you live in your home country?**
- **How long you have been out of your home country?**
- **Which country do you live at the moment and for how long?**
- **How much are you satisfied with your new life in the new place in overall?**

Please rate:

Totally unsatisfied	Somehow unsatisfied	Neutral	Somehow satisfied	Totally satisfied

- **How much do you experience feeling Nostalgic?**

Please rate:

Never	Rarely	Sometime	Often	Always

- **What are the elements that make you feel nostalgic?**

(Music, places, events, smells)

- **How do you define your nostalgic experiences?**

(How do you feel)

- **What do you think of the nature of this feeling?**

(Is it negative, positive, bittersweet, complicated)

- **Does feeling nostalgic help you feeling better?**

If yes, explain how does it work for you? Do you try to remember your friends, family or any specific event or do you listen to your nostalgic music?

- **Please talk about it? What do you imagine when you feel nostalgic?**

(Listening task)

- **Do you think that this music makes you feel better afterwards?**

(Do you feel less lonely, or more relaxed and confident in new society)

- **Do you use sometime your nostalgic music collection intentionally to make yourself feel better?**
- **How does the music listening help you toward the society?**

(Do you feel more confident? Does it help you to feel better in the society? Does it help you to experience less negative emotions in life toward others in the new context?)

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