COHABITATION AMONG STUDENTS OF TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN ADAMAWA STATE, NIGERIA

BY

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ABSTRACT
The study investigated cohabitation and students’ academic performance in selected tertiary institutions in Adamawa State. The study adopted a survey research design. 300 students were selected from three tertiary institutions through stratified random sampling technique using sex, age and class level as strata. The instrument was validated by two experts in Counselling Psychology and Test and Measurement, while test-retest method was carried out to determine the reliability of the instrument, and the reliability coefficient was 0.86. Results showed that the factors influencing cohabitation included financial constraints, desire for intimacy, sex on regular basis, lack of conducive hostel facilities and peer influence. Effects of cohabitation as revealed by the study included sexually transmitted diseases, poor academic result, prostitution, prolonged years of studentship, abortion, dropout from school, death, depression, suicidal attempt and moral decadence. In conclusion, Cohabitation among undergraduates has become a contemporary issue plaguing many higher institutions of learning, and the resulting effects could lead to poor academic performance, dropout or death. The study recommended that the school management in tertiary institutions should organize seminars, conferences, workshops and public enlightenment programmes regularly to sensitize and enlighten undergraduates on the need to dress decently in the society.

Keywords: Cohabitation, sexual activities, unwanted pregnancies, health problems and moral decadence.

Introduction
Cohabitation among students has now become very rampant in most institutions of higher learning. The non-residential accommodation in many higher institutions tend to encourage this new trend of students cohabiting, unlike what was in operation in the olden times. Initially all students were accommodated within institution’s halls of residence. Those students accommodated within institution’s hall had rules and regulation guiding their stay. Thus within a short time, Nigerian tertiary institutions began to experience challenges of inadequate hostel accommodation (Aluko, 2011), because the population of students continues to grow without...
corresponding growth in the number of halls of residence and other physical facilities. Therefore, cohabitation became the order of the day among the students in higher institutions of learning.

Cohabitation among individuals of opposite sex is a predisposing factor to the initiation of sexual activities (Ogungbamila, 2013). Cohabitation results in two independent people almost like room-mate, who are sexually involved, instead of being committed to one another for the rest of their lives. Students who ought to be engaged in serious academic pursuit often end up performing below expectation because of all these distractions. Martin, Martin and Martin (2001) corroborated this idea that the number of young adults engaging in premarital sexual behaviour has increased to 60 percent in the last 20 years. According to Arisukwu (2013), cohabitation has serious health effect on the female students who may indulge in the use of oral contraceptive in order to avoid unwanted pregnancy which may truncate their educational aspirations. Should pregnancy occur, such female students are more likely to seek abortion as an alternative. This has serious health challenges for such students who may visit quack doctors and medical practitioners without adequate experiences and qualifications (Ofuegbu, 2002). Some may frown at abortion and thus give birth to unwanted babies who may not be properly catered for by these students.

According to Ajibefu, (2015), living together and having sexual relationship without being married is a trend that has virtually eroded the level of morality among youth, particularly students of higher institutions. It has been observed that many of these students cohabiting do not necessarily get to the level of marriage after all. Many of such relationship often end abruptly. Rena (2006) confirmed that couples who cohabit before marriage have a 50 percent high divorce rate than those who do not. Ogunsola (2004) in his research findings on premarital behaviours as determinant of marital stability observed that premarital cohabitations has no positive effect on marital stability of the couples in Oyo state, Nigeria. Cohabitation is totally against the norms and values of African society. Allowing young unmarried couple live together especially where they do not have family affinity is often regarded as an albatross (Arisukwu, 2013). Whereas, some students cohabit without allowing their parents to know about it, some parents are the ones encouraging their children to do so due to their inability to meet their basic needs. Many of these students are exposed to risk and harm as they cohabit. Students who cohabit are vulnerable and susceptible to attack and abuse by both outsiders and even their partners. Formerly, the culture of premarital sexual behaviours used to be a taboo in Nigeria (Alo, 2008). Unfortunately, however, the contemporary youths have abandoned this valued tradition for inglorious culture of premarital sexual activities (Adeoye, Ola & Aliu, 2012).

Alo and Akinde(2010) stated that cohabitation and sexual behaviours are more common with them, since their age range falls between 15 – 24 years. Thus, age did not have significant influence on youths’ sexual behaviours. Martin, Martin and Martin (2001) found that individuals within the ages of 15 – 17 years were more involved in premarital sexual behaviours than those in the late young adulthood.
Studies indicated that those with religious affiliations are less likely to cohabit than those without religious affiliations (Katz, 2001, Stanley, Whitten&Markman, 2004). Gault-Sherman and Draper (2012) equally observed that individual religiosity is positively associated with more traditional family attitudes and behaviour. They further stated that norms regarding family formation, behaviour of individual are commonly shaped and reinforced by religious institutions. It is further noted that strong religious parents can affect their child’s behaviour through guidance and supervision. Regardless of the child’s value on cohabitation, the child may decide not to cohabit in order to avoid embarrassing his/her parents, thus, prevent causing them negative social sanctions or instigating family conflict (Gault-Sherman& Draper, 2012). It seems there is a decline in religious authority and there are dramatic changes in religious structures (Dempsey &Devaus, 2004, Laplante, 2006 LeBourdais&Lapierre, 2004). Religious inclination notwithstanding, contemporary adolescents tend to do what they desire without any serious consideration for their religious beliefs.

**Statement of Problem**

Many students tend to lose sight of why they are in school and are preoccupied with the unessential issues. This tends to course lots of distraction for many students. The purpose why they are in school is forgotten to other responsibilities not related to learning. This tends to make many students to perform below expectations, since often times these students are never in the school/class for any serious academic work. Cohabitation and sexual behaviours are more common with these youths. The culture of chastity and purity is no longer promoted and encouraged among these youths. This has turned many ladies to street girls and prostitutes. Cohabitation is one of the social vices that is undermining our educational systems and also threatening the survival of our youths in higher institutions; hence this study.

The objectives of the study are to:

1. Determine the factors responsible for cohabitation among students;
2. Investigate the attitude of students towards cohabitation
3. Examine the effects of cohabitation among students of tertiary institution.
4. Determine ways of curbing cohabitation among students

**Research Questions**

1. What are the factors responsible for cohabitation among students of tertiary institution in Adamawa State?
2. What are attitudes of students towards cohabitation among students of tertiary institutions?
3. What are the effects of cohabitation among students of tertiary institutions?
4. What are the strategies of curbing cohabitation among students?

**Research Hypotheses**
HO₁: There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female undergraduates towards cohabitation.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in cohabitation on the basis of religious affiliation among undergraduates in Adamawa State tertiary institutions.

Research Methodology

Research Design

The study adopted a descriptive survey research design and assessed cohabitation among students in Adamawa State tertiary institutions. This design is chosen because Fajonyomi (2003) says that survey is used for descriptive, explanatory an exploratory purpose, and of course this survey is descriptive in nature and therefore is more appropriate for this study. However, descriptive survey design is considered appropriate because it allows for collection of data from a group of people at the same time for the purpose of describing phenomena under study. Descriptive study also allows the investigator to discuss the phenomenon under study as it exists at the time of the study.

Population and Sample

The target population for the study comprised of students of three tertiary institutions in Adamawa State. Five faculties/schools were chosen by simple random sampling while 20 students were chosen from each of the faculties/schools. The sample size of 300 was chosen from the three tertiary institutions by stratified sampling technique using age, sex and level as strata.

Research Instrument

The research instrument titled “Cohabitation among Tertiary Students” (CTS) was self-developed by the researchers. The instrument was divided into 5 sections. Section A contained the demographic characteristics of the respondents; Section B contained four items which assessed the factors responsible for cohabitation among students of tertiary institutions. Section C contained three items which assessed the attitude of students towards cohabitation. Section D contained ten items which assessed the effects of cohabitation on students’ academic performance.

Validity and Reliability of Instrument

The face and content validity of the instrument was established by two experts in Guidance and Counselling and Test and Measurement in the Department of Science Education, Adamawa State University, Mubi. The reliability of the instrument was carried out in ModibboAdama University of Technology, Yola using test-retest reliability method. First test was administered on 30 students, while the second test was administered on the same set of students after two weeks. The reliability coefficient of 0.86 was obtained.
Data Collection and Analysis
The researchers administered and collected data on the spot. Thus, retrieved data were analyzed using descriptive and inferential statistics mean and Analysis of Variance (ANOVA).

Results
Research Question 1: What Are The Factors Responsible for Cohabitation among Students of Tertiary Institutions in Adamawa State?

Table 1: Factors Responsible for Cohabitation among Students using mean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cohabiting is the best means to select mates</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.38</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Many students cohabited due to financial constraint</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.83</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cohabitation is highly recognized by fellow students</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Desire for intimacy and sex on regular basis is the reason for cohabitation</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.60</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of conducive hostel facilities tend to promote cohabitation</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>3.23</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peer influence encourages cohabitation</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.51</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Accepted (\(\bar{x}\) is 2.5 and above) Rejected (\(\bar{x}\) is less than 2.5)

Table 1 shows the factors responsible for cohabitation among students. The table revealed that the respondents did not agree that cohabiting is the best means to select mates (\(\bar{x}=2.38\)). It further showed that respondents agreed that many students cohabited due to financial constraints (\(\bar{x}=2.83\)), cohabitation is highly recognized by fellow (\(\bar{x}=2.97\)), desire for intimacy and sex on regular basis is the reason for cohabitation (\(\bar{x}=2.6\)), lack of conducive hostel facilities tend to promote cohabitation (\(\bar{x}=3.23\)) and peer influence encourages cohabitation (\(\bar{x}=2.51\)). Based on the result from this table, it can be concluded that the factors responsible for career choice are financial constraint, cohabitation is highly recognized by fellow students, desire for intimacy and sex on regular basis, lack of conducive hostel facilities.

Research Question 2: What are the Attitudes of Students of Tertiary Institutions towards Cohabitation?

Table 2: Attitudes of Students Towards Cohabitation among Students using mean

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Remark</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>There is nothing wrong in cohabitation</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.43</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I can cohabit with a boy that has genuine interest of marrying me</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.40</td>
<td>Rejected</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
I know cohabitation is not morally good, but I can’t do without having sex 300 2.85 Accepted
I cannot sell myself cheap to any boy by cohabiting 300 2.55 Accepted
I cohabit in order to know my partner very well, although it affects my studies 300 2.70 Accepted
I love the idea of cohabitation because it helps me to understand female folks more 300 2.73 Accepted
Cohabitation gives me idea of what marriage is all about 300 2.98 Accepted
God forbids fornication, so I hate cohabitation 300 2.33 Rejected
It is not the business of anyone to query me for involving in cohabitation 300 2.55 Accepted
Cohabitation helps me to be serious minded with my studies through the advice of my partner 300 2.61 Accepted

Table 2 shows the attitudes of students towards cohabitation. The table revealed that respondents strongly disagree to the fact that there is nothing wrong in cohabitation (2.43), I can cohabit with a boy that has genuine interest of marrying me (2.4), God forbids fornication, so I hate cohabitation (2.33), It is not the business of anyone to query me for involving in cohabitation (2.33). Furthermore, the table also shows that respondents strongly agreed to the statements; I know cohabitation is not morally good, but I can’t do without having sex (2.85), I cannot sell myself cheap to any boy by cohabiting (2.55), I cohabit in order to know my partner very well, although it affects my studies (2.7), I love the idea of cohabitation because it helps me to understand female folks more (2.73), Cohabitation gives me idea of what marriage is all about (2.98), It is not the business of anyone to query me for involving in cohabitation (2.55) and Cohabitation helps me to be serious minded with my studies through the advice of my partner (2.61). From the table above, conclusions can be made that majority of students are vouching for cohabitation and majority have been involved in cohabitation in one way or the other.

Research Question 3: What Are the Effects of Cohabitation among Students of Tertiary Institutions?

Table 3: Effects of Cohabitation among Students of Tertiary Institutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sexually transmitted diseases</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.96</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poor academic result</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>2.61</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 3 shows the responses of respondents under research question three which is the effects of cohabitation on students of tertiary institutions. The table revealed that students are affected in ways like Sexually transmitted diseases (2.97), poor academic result (2.62), prostitution (2.82), prolonged years of studentship (2.55), abortion (3.12), dropout from school (3.1), death (2.77), depression (2.62), suicidal attempt (2.92), moral decadence (2.62). Based on the results on table 3, it can be concluded that students who cohabit are seriously affected academically and otherwise in situations that sometimes lead to death.

Research Question 4: What Are the Strategies for Curbing Cohabitation among Students

Table 4: Responses, Mean and Standard deviation of responses to items on research question 4

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Items</th>
<th>N</th>
<th>Mean</th>
<th>Remarks</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Campus hostels should be adequate, affordable and conducive</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>3.4333</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Frequent seminars to be organized by the counselling team of institutions of higher learning on dangers inherent in cohabitation</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>3.0000</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health talks and symposium to be organized by the medical experts in Health center of the institution</td>
<td>300</td>
<td>3.3167</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Rules and regulations forbidding cohabitation among undergraduates should be formulated and included in the students handbook

Accepted (x̄ is 2.5 and above) Rejected (x̄ is less than 2.5)

Table 4 shows the responses to research question 4; strategies for curbing cohabitation among students. The results show that respondents agree campus hostels should be adequate, affordable and conducive (3.43), frequent seminars to be organized by the counselling team of institutions of higher learning on dangers inherent in cohabitation (3.0), health talks and symposium to be organized by the medical experts in Health centre of the institution (3.31) and rules and regulations forbidding cohabitation among undergraduates should be formulated and included in the students’ handbook (2.62). The results show that respondents have agreed to ways of curbing cohabitation and these ways include campus hostels should be adequate, affordable and conducive, frequent seminars to be organized by the counselling team of institutions of higher learning on dangers inherent in cohabitation, health talks and symposium to be organized by the medical experts in health centre of the institution and then rules and regulations forbidding cohabitation among undergraduates should be formulated and included in the students handbook.

HO₁: There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female undergraduates towards cohabitation.

Table 5: Difference between the Attitude of Male and Female Undergraduates Towards Cohabitation using ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variable</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F-cal</th>
<th>F-crit</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Between Groups</td>
<td>2.083</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2.083</td>
<td>1.869</td>
<td>3.87</td>
<td>Accepted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Within Groups</td>
<td>332.167</td>
<td>298</td>
<td>1.115</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>334.250</td>
<td>299</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Not Significant: P<0.05

The F-value of 1.869 obtained as shown in table 5 is lower than the critical F-value of 3.87 at P>0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore not significant. Hence, there is a significant difference between the attitude of male and female undergraduates towards cohabitation.

HO₂: There is no significant difference in cohabitation on the basis of religious affiliation among undergraduates.

Table 6: Difference in cohabitation on the basis religious affiliation among undergraduates in Adamawa State tertiary institutions using ANOVA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Variable</th>
<th>Sum of Squares</th>
<th>df</th>
<th>Mean Square</th>
<th>F-cal</th>
<th>F-crit</th>
<th>Decision</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
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</tbody>
</table>
The F-value of 43.641 obtained as shown in Table 6 is higher than the critical F-value of 3.87 at P > 0.05 level of significance. The null hypothesis is therefore rejected, and the alternative which is “There is significant difference in cohabitation on the basis of religious affiliation among undergraduates in Adamawa State tertiary institutions”, with Christians more involved than Muslims.

**Discussion**

The main objective of this study was to find out about cohabitation and students’ academic performance in selected tertiary institutions in Adamawa State. The study revealed that many students cohabit due to financial constraints, desire for intimacy and sex on regular basis is also a reason for cohabitation, lack of conducive hostel facilities tends to promote cohabitation, and that peer influence encourages cohabitation. This conforms to Ojewola & Akinduyo, (2017). This study also found out that cohabitation is wrong, with negative effects such as sexually transmitted diseases, poor academic result, and prostitution, prolonged years of studentship, abortion, dropout from school, death, depression, suicidal attempt and moral decadence. This is in consonance with Joan-Nduta, (2006) and Jones & Espy, (2008) that students’ cohabitation and sexual relationship is on the increase and common in most African schools which leads to high incidence of unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases and low academic performance. In line with the findings from this study, Mlyakado and Timothy (2014) noted that students’ involvement in sexual relationship exposes them to a lot of emotional, relational and social problems. This may adversely affect their social as well as academic lives. Likewise, Ekpenyong and Ekpenyong (2016) argue that sexually active students are faced with several overt (missed classes, missed assignment) and covert (emotional, societal acceptance) challenges which compromised their academic performance and achievement.

The study found out that means to curb cohabitation among students of tertiary institutions include provision of conducive and affordable hostels by administrators, organizing of seminars at regular intervals by counselling units of institutions, as well as formulation and enforcement of rules and regulations forbidding cohabitation among undergraduate students of higher institutions of learning.

Based on the analysis of hypothesis one “There is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female undergraduates towards cohabitation”, it was found out that there is no significant difference between the attitude of male and female undergraduates towards cohabitation, which means that both the male and female gender are having favourable reviews of cohabitation, hence, indulge without thinking of its consequences. Also, based on the analysis of Hypotheses two “There is no significant difference in cohabitation on the basis of religious affiliation among undergraduates in Adamawa State tertiary institutions”, the study found out that there is significant difference in cohabitation on the basis of religious affiliations, with Christian students more involved than their counterparts.
Conclusion
Cohabitation among undergraduates has become a contemporary issue plaguing many higher institutions of learning, and the resulting effects could lead to poor academic performance, dropout or death. The tertiary institutions management realistically cannot meet the backlog of accommodation requirements in a short term. This is due largely to paucity of fund, poor political will, existing regulation and increasing students’ enrolment. However, to assist in learning effectively and maintaining personal development, parents and guardians should adopt high-investment strategy (financial and moral supports) for students living off-campus.

Recommendations
The following recommendations are made to reduce the negative consequences of cohabitation among the undergraduate students of university of Ibadan.

- The living conditions of the hostels provided must be examined to make them more conducive for students to habit.
- The university authority must find a way of regulating and monitoring the conducts of the students who live off campus with the help of the community leaders within the neighbourhoods where students live.
- Students should be adequately enlightened during orientations about the dangers of cohabitation.
- Parents should be encouraged to visit their children and find where and whom they live with while in school.
- Students should be encouraged to meet guidance counsellors whenever they are in danger or being abused by their cohabiters quick to save their live and enhance their academic performances.

References


Joan-Nduta, M. K. (2006). Factors that contribute to the prevalence and practice of cohabitation among Kenyatta University students, Nairobi, Kenya. *A Thesis Submitted to the School of Environmental Studies and Human Sciences, Kenyatta University for the Award of Degree of Master of Science in Family and Consumer Sciences*.


