

THE EFFECTS OF COHABITATION ON ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE OF THE STUDENTS IN TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN NIGERIA

Adeniyi Adewale Ojo (Ph. D)

Faculty of Education, Department of Educational Foundations and Counseling Psychology,
Lagos State University.

ABSTRACT: *This paper examines the effects of Cohabitation on Academic Performance of the students in higher institution in Nigeria. However, it also determined the major types of cohabitation which existed many years in higher institutions such as Polytechnics, Colleges of Education and Universities. It also explained the effects of Cohabitation on the Students' Academic Achievement in higher institutions in Nigeria where the students practice it among their partners. Similarly, it is critically examined the common reasons why the students cohabitating on campuses. Yet, it emphasized the implication of cohabitation on the students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.*

KEYWORDS; Cohabitation, Tertiary Institution, Achievement, Academic, Implication, Performance.

INTRODUCTION

Cohabitation is when two people who are romantically involved choose to live together without making the formal commitment of marriage. Cohabiting couples are typically emotionally and sexually intimate. The term 'cohabitation' is not commonly used to describe people who are merely sharing a living space or who call themselves 'roommates.' Cohabitation can pertain to either heterosexual or same sex couples, but it is most commonly used in reference to heterosexual couples.

Abullahi .M (2013) states that cohabitation can be encapsulated as both a status and a process and it is also an alternative type of housing for at least one of the cohabiters . He further stated that cohabitation is not a new phenomenon. However, the prevalence and popular acceptance of the phenomenon has shifted contemporary opinion about it from deviant or alternative lifestyle choice to one that is a normative experience for young men and women.

Pollard and Harris (2008) examine that cohabitation as a new form of living arrangement is in a situation of flux associated with changing lifestyle, societal value and norm . He further stated that Students in institutions of higher learning also manifest this phenomenon. Student's cohabitation has attracted a lot of policy and academic researches and debates in recent times. Students in higher educational institutions are experiencing a critical situation in terms of higher tuition fees and other associated college costs related to facilities and services provision, especially on campus accommodation

Agboola (2002) explains that cohabitation is a crucial aspect of problems in tertiary institutions as related to this study is insufficient accommodation for students, within the campus premises. In

Nigeria, about two decades ago the number of University students increased eightfold from 55,000 in 1980 to more than 400,000 in 2002 and projected to be above the million mark in tertiary institutions. Pat-Mbano (2012) states that tertiary students reside in off-campus apartments owned by private individuals, pay high rents and struggle for accommodation with other home-seekers. In order to cut cost, cohabitation has been embraced as one of the alternative accommodation strategies. Svodziwa and Kurete, (2017) explain that shortage of on campus accommodation, students resorted to renting off-campus residential buildings. This is common with the public tertiary institutions students in Nigeria. For example, as contained in the University of Ibadan Students' Handbook accommodation is only available albeit on first come first serve basis to students in the first and final year of study.

Therefore, majority of students in second to penultimate years of studies are forced to live off-campus in communities adjoining their institutions. Arisukwu, (2013) states that Cohabitation is not limited to its prevalence but also it is also extended to its widespread and increasing social acceptance and implication on individual wellbeing and academic performance (Popenoe and Whitehead, 2002). This study, therefore, examines the link between cohabitation and academic performance in selected tertiary institutions in Ibadan, Nigeria. Ekpenyong .N. S (2002) states that cohabitation is an intimate sexual union between two unmarried partners, who share the same living quarter for a sustained period of time. Bower and Christopher (2008), emphasized at union of persons of the opposite sex living together but not married an increase in the acceptability of cohabitation can be viewed as evidence of the weakening social norms related to marriage, known as deinstitutionalization of marriage (Bumpass and Lu, 2000). Prior to the 1970s, cohabiting unions were common to some sub-groups such as the poor, those whose marriages had broken-up, some rural dwellers and those who were ideologically opposed to marriage in some European countries (Kiernan, 2001). During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the institution of marriage began to change fundamentally. Soboye (2013) identifies the major reasons for student cohabitation to include test of compatibility before marriage, sexual relationship and reduction of cost of living. He stated further that asserted that over half of today's young adults will live with someone in a romantic relationship before marriage. Therefore, inability of the tertiary institutions to manage the increasing student population through the provision of adequate hostel accommodation, have led to cohabitation among tertiary students in some public institutions.

Types of Cohabitation

Cohabitation occurs when a couple chooses to live together and form a romantic relationship while remaining unmarried. Researchers began paying more attention to this living situation as the number of cohabiting couples began increasing since the turn of the century. Researchers differentiate the types of cohabitation in their studies.

Limited Cohabitation;

Limited cohabitation occurs when a couple becomes romantically involved and begins spending more time together. Limited cohabitation is a natural occurrence when a couple begins spending the night together at one of their homes. This form of cohabitation can result in marriage. Alternately, a limited cohabitation can become a substitute marriage cohabitation, a premarital cohabitation or dissolve if the relationship fails.

Premarital Cohabitation

A premarital cohabitation occurs when a couple decide to get married but desire a trial marriage period. These couples often believe that premarital cohabitation gives them an opportunity to experience married life to determine if the lifestyle is right for them. Premarital cohabitation can result in a marriage or dissolve if the couple discovers that they are not ready to marry each other. Premarital cohabitation involves many of the pressures and responsibilities of marriage, such as fidelity and marital expectations.

Substitute Marriage Cohabitation

Substitute marriage cohabitation involves an agreement between two people to live together as if they were already married without a legal ceremony. Over the course of living together, responsibilities and expectations that are unique to their relationship will develop. People who were previously married are more likely to prefer this form of cohabitation as an alternative to marriage, especially when the previous marriage ended painfully.

No Alternative Cohabitation

No alternative cohabitation involves couples who are not legally permitted to get married, such as gay couples in most states. This form of cohabitation differs from a substitute marriage cohabitation because the option to marry is not available. Gay couples can form this kind of a long-term cohabitation relationship as a necessary union in the absence of legal marriage.

Convenient Cohabitation

Convenient cohabitation occurs when a couple chooses to live together as a necessary alternative to living separately. This is especially common in poorer communities, where couples live together as a means of sharing living expenses. In convenient cohabitation, the romantic relationship develops from the couple's close contact. The two people have no intention of beginning a romantic relationship when they agree to live together.

Effects of students cohabiting in tertiary institutions in Nigeria

This kind of relationships come in various guises and aliases such as campus marriages, marrying for marriage, campus coupling etc. obviously designed to give this unwholesome act an acceptable nomenclature. This growing trend is gradually eroding the level of morality among youths in Nigerian tertiary institutions. So, many reasons have been adduced for cohabiting in our institutions of learning. In one tertiary institution in Northern Nigeria, a student responded that, "We live together so that we can know each other better, but it definitely affects my studies. Another student said, "Due to lack of accommodation, I have to live with my guy and I don't see anything wrong in it." While some cohabiting students find it difficult to live apart because of financial or academic dependency, the strong physical intimacy between them makes them think sex is love. They see sex as an end not a means to love. Instead of sexual act being a life given act of mutual love, it has become an object of abuse. The funniest and laughable part is to hear that those students who indulge in this act do so to find out if they are compatible for marriage or not. What are the dangers in cohabiting? First, high rate of abortion in tertiary institutions can be attributed to cohabitation. These students are not ready for parenting; thus must do anything within their power not to keep pregnancies when they occur. However, it should be mentioned that

abortion exposes the female partners to the risk of death or damaged uterus. Second is the threat of sexually transmitted diseases. It is common place to find both cohabitants battling with one sexually transmitted disease or the other. Third, those involved tend to indulge in vices including stealing, lying and cyber-crimes etc. in order to raise finances to keep the affairs going. Fourth is monotonous fondness. When this happens, it leads to abuse and the professed love disappears. At times, the females are more often than not abused and molested by their partners or “would-be husband,” when they quarrel leading to grave psychological trauma that could affect their health and education.

Another important issue to note is the fact that the female students involved are like the parasitic host upon which the males feed, having to perform some domestic chores more even as student, cooking in ample quantity, washing more clothes including that of their partners. These are time consuming activities which give little or no time for studies which is the primary reason of being in school after all. However, this does not mean that the men or “husbands” do not have their own “duties” to perform. A student in one university revealed that the men’s job include to provide the conducive academic environment where the girl taps from. For example, if both students are in the same department, the intellectual effort geared towards the academic growth of the “couple” is mostly the task of the man whether he is cable or not.

Most of the students who cohabit find it difficult to graduate, and they make lower grades because there isn’t enough time to read. Majority often withdraw from school, while some spend longer time than necessary as a result of carry-overs. Relationships that were formed in school had sometimes led to marriages but that of cohabitation rarely does. This is because the economic situation will not and has not permitted most men to marry immediately after graduation. Therefore, the NYSC period will provide a vacuum that will obliterate campus life. Friendship and social networking is part and parcel of students’ lives. However, the extent to how that is done matters. In view of this, parents, more than the school authorities, have plenty work to do. Schools have little or no authority to exert on students because this cannot be happening in the hostels. Parents, who toil to see their wards through school should, as matter of urgency, form the habit of paying unscheduled visits to them in order to ascertain what they are up to. If students know that their parents could visit without notice, the extent to what they do will be curtailed.

Common Reasons for Cohabitation

There are three common reasons why couples choose to live together.

First, many couples state the primary reason for living together is to find out if they are compatible. Some view living together as a way to determine whether they can agree to a longer-term marital commitment. Cohabitation gives the couple an opportunity to see how they would adjust to each other's habits and living patterns on a more intensive basis. Living together before marriage also gives each party the option to end the relationship without the many legal complications involved in divorce. Many couples also move in together in an effort to spend more time together. Working separate jobs, living in different geographic locations, and having different daily routines can leave little room to be together. Cohabiting affords the couple the convenience of more time to weave their routines and interests and assess the relationship. When they have already established that they care for one another and want to see where the relationship is going, they see moving in together as a way to save on rent, food, and other living expenses.

How Common Is Cohabitation

The number of couples who choose to live together prior to marriage has been steadily increasing. In 1960, when it was officially illegal in the U.S. to cohabit, there were an estimated 450,000 couples living together. By 2011, that number had increased to 7.5 million. A recent study estimated that 48% of first cohabiting women choose to live with their male partner. This is up from 43% in 2002 and 34% in 1995. Among people who are currently married, approximately two-thirds say they lived together before making a marriage commitment.

Implication of cohabitation on academic performance of the students

Indeed, many students are involved in cohabitation ignorantly because they do not understand the repercussion of cohabitating each other's. However, this may mar their studies. Yet, thousands of both males and females are still practicing it because they have freedom from control of their parents or guardians but at the end the relationship may become sorrowful because it is possible that many students could not be able to complete their studies. Similarly, thousands of students performed woefully because of cohabitating each other while they are studied. Even many students end their studies with lower grades or ordinary passed which it cannot be used for them for further education while others may be expelled a year or two years after they have been admitted because of their inability to spend their time on reading but they cohabit each other's. Basically, there are many challenges which affect successful completion of many students who have been cohabitated in tertiary institutions in Nigeria such as following;

Unwanted pregnancy; undoubtedly, many students are victims of cohabitation in higher institutions in Nigeria and this affects their lives. For instance, a female student of university of Ibadan who carried pregnancy for her course mate could not be able to complete her programme years ago because of unwanted pregnancy.

Lack of concentration; yet, cohabitation is a major challenge of many students of tertiary institutions in Nigeria, because once they are cohabitated it may be difficult for them to face their education anymore longer, because they will procrastinate their studies. Similarly, the students involve always loose concentration and this leads to the mass failure among students in tertiary institutions in Nigeria.

Spread of diseases; many students in higher institutions in Nigeria today contract diseases such as HIV, Syphilis and communicable diseases through cohabitating each other. For instance, two female students of university of Ife and four of university of Lagos were contacted with different types of diseases which led to the end of their studies through cohabitating with their partners on campuses.

Anti-social behaviour; in fact, many students join bad gangs because of cohabitating with bad friends. For instance, one female lost her life in university of Benin in 2015, because she cohabitated with her mate who was an armed robber and led to her death. Even, many students become involved in drugs trading in tertiary institutions in Nigeria through cohabitating each other and this affected their academic performance.

CONCLUSION

Undoubtedly, cohabitation contributed high to the problems of many students. Moreover, the challenges many students are facing today in tertiary institutions in Nigeria occur through cohabitating each other, although majority of those students believed is the part of enjoyment

while other thought that only way for truly relationship for the future partnership but many relationship with cohabitating each other's ended with sad and achieved nothing in their studies.

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