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Perceived Effects of Premarital Cohabitation on Students Academic Performance in Tertiary Institutions in Anambra State: Counseling implications

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ABSTRACT

The study investigated the effects of premarital cohabitation on students academic performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra state. Specifically, the study sought to find out the factors responsible for premarital cohabitation and the effects of premarital cohabitation on academic performance of undergraduates in tertiary institution in Anambra State. Descriptive survey design was used in order to carry out the study. The population of the study comprised of all the second year students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, this population was chosen because they are the group most likely to engage in premarital cohabitation. Proportionate Stratified random sampling was used for the study and in all 300 students were involved in the study. Instrument for data collection was self constructed questionnaire titled "Premarital Cohabitation and Academic Performance Scale" (PCAPS). In order to ascertain the validity of the instrument, the questionnaire was given to two experts in Educational Psychology for face and content validation. The data analysis techniques used in this study are mean and standard deviation and chi-square for the research hypotheses. From the result of data analyzed, it was found that premarital cohabitation has negative impact on students' academic performance; the study recommended that parents should be encouraged to visit their children and find where and whom they live with while in school.

Keywords: Premarital Cohabitation; Students; Academic Performance; Tertiary Institutions

INTRODUCTION

The increase in population of tertiary education students and the inability of the government to adequately provide the

needed social infrastructures has led to risky coping mechanisms among the students. This therefore exposes the

students to all forms of risk and harm as they continue to cohabit. Students who live together with their partners lack both family and the university's protection and support. Cohabitation is defined by social scientists as two adults of the opposite sex living together in an intimate, non-marital relationship. There has been an eight-fold increase in the number of cohabiting households since 1970, the growth of which has been accelerating [1]. In 2002, roughly 50% of women, and 45% of men had already cohabited outside of marriage by age 25, with nearly 10% of males and 16% of females under age 20 previously in a cohabiting union [2]. In contrast, only 2% of women had married by age 20, and 27% had married by age 25 [3].

[4], estimated that 58% of women aged between 25 and 29 had cohabited at some point in their lives. Young people approve of cohabitation at much higher rates than their older counterparts, so it is likely that cohabitation rates will continue to rise [5]. Over the years, the rates of cohabitation of the unmarried couple sharing a household have greatly increased and, perhaps as a consequence, the average age at which people are getting married has risen significantly. Cohabitation results in two independent people, almost like roommates, who have sex, instead of a commitment to one another for the rest of their lives [6]. [7],

also describes the practice as a situation where a man and a woman, without being customarily or officially married, live together and share all or some of the benefits of marital relationship. Premarital cohabitation is thereby conceptualized as sharing in the legal and social rights of consortium which is customarily meant for the married people. This is consistent with [8] that refers to cohabitation as a practice in which a man and a woman dwell together in the same place in the manner as husband and wife before the actual marriage. According to [9] it is a situation where unmarried people live together like husband and wife to test their compatibility before the actual marriage. In attempting to understand the causes and consequences of the rise in cohabitation, scholars have tried to identify whether cohabitation is an alternative to marriage, a prelude to marriage, or a convenient dating arrangement.

The participants in a premarital cohabitation setting are not immune from the various problems that besiege it. Problems such as sacrificing of the primary aim of being in school, unwanted pregnancy, the use of oral contraceptive by female students and the danger inherent in such practices, sharing of domestic chores among others. Financial involvement can also bring the unit into

serious conflict. The multi-dimensional consequences facing cohabiters are quite numerous. One of the consequences is unprotected sex and its attendant effects such as unwanted pregnancies and other sexually transmitted diseases. These diseases can also affect the financial positions of the cohabiters therefore affecting other aspects like education. There are other educational consequences associated with cohabitation like poor academic performance. Cohabiting students will most likely engage in unprotected sex which could result sexually transmitted infections and the much dreaded HIV/AIDS disease [9]. This practice of cohabiting has serious health issue to the female students that may indulge in the use of oral contraceptive, unwanted pregnancy that may lead to truncated educational aspirations [7].

In general, there has been no study so far that has addressed the effects of cohabitation on students' academic performance of undergraduate in Anambra state. Although the prevalence and patterns of cohabitation have generally been well documented, we know very little about the outcomes of premarital cohabitation. This is especially true for young participants; despite the increasing significance of cohabitation at younger ages, the cohabitation literature continues to focus on adults, and treats the experiences of cohabitation the same

at all ages. In general, there is dearth of study on academic performance in relation to cohabitation of students. Therefore, there is need to find out the effect of premarital cohabitation on academic performance of undergraduates in tertiary institution in Anambra state.

PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE OF THE STUDY

The main purpose of this study is to examine perceived effects of premarital cohabitation on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra state; the present study could enrich educational practitioners' sphere of knowledge concerning the phenomenon of premarital habitation. It will also help the parents to understand the effects of cohabitation on students' academic engagement in tertiary institutions. To the government and other policy makers the study findings will provide information on the inequality in hostel facilities and they will also reveal to them that this facility is not only grossly inadequate but also by considering other factors that affects academic engagement of undergraduates in tertiary institution. Researchers could also take advantage of this study by using it as a reference for further investigation on other contexts of cohabitation among undergraduates.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. What are factors responsible for premarital cohabitation among undergraduates in tertiary institution in Anambra State?
2. What are the effects of premarital cohabitation on academic performance of undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Anambra State?

HYPOTHESIS

In line with the study objectives, the following null hypothesis was framed for present study:

1. Cohabitation has no significant effects on the academic performance of undergraduates in tertiary institution in Anambra State.

DESIGN OF THE STUDY

Descriptive survey design is used in order to carry out the study. A survey research is one in which a group of people is studied by collecting and analyzing data from only few people considered to be

representative of the entire group, the method was considered appropriate for the present study because it has been used successfully in related research.

AREA AND POPULATION OF THE STUDY

The accessible populations for this study comprised of all the second year students in tertiary institutions in Anambra State, this population was chosen because they are the group most likely to engage in premarital cohabitation.

SAMPLE AND SAMPLING TECHNIQUES

The sample techniques used in this study is proportionate stratified random sampling, a stratified sample is a probability sampling technique in which the researchers divides the entire target population into different subgroups and then randomly selects the final subjects proportionally from the different strata. In all 304 participants were involved in the study as shown in table 1.

Table 1: Sample size used in the study

S/N	Tertiary Institution	% Population	No of sample
1	Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Awka	0.9	85
2	College of Agriculture (Anambra state polytechnic) Mgbakwu	0.9	32
3	Federal College of Education (Technical) Umunze	0.9	40
4	Federal Polythechnic Oko	0.9	54
5	Nwafor Orizu College of Education Nsugbe	0.9	39
6	Anambra State University, Igbariam	0.9	55
TOTAL			304

INSTRUMENT FOR DATA COLLECTION

Instrument used for the study was self constructed 4-part Premarital Cohabitation and Academic Performance Scale (PCAPS). Section A contains the introductory letter detailing the major theme and researchers involved while section B contains the respondents' personal data, instruction and responses guide, it contained twenty items on a four point Likert-scale of strongly agree (SA = 4 points), Agree (A=3 points), Disagree (D=2 points) and strongly disagree (SD=1 point). The overall theme was on effects of premarital cohabitation on students' academic performance in tertiary institutions in Anambra state.

VALIDATION OF INSTRUMENT

In order to ascertain the validity of the instrument, the PCAPS was given to two experts in Educational Psychology for face validation. The experts went through the instrument and made their comments. Their input was used by the researchers to modify the items of the questionnaire before final draft.

RELIABILITY OF THE INSTRUMENT

METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis techniques used in this study are mean and standard deviation and chi-square for the research

To ascertain the reliability of the instrument, the researchers used twenty (20) students who did not participate in the main study, copies of the questionnaire were given to them to fill and these were collected immediately. The items of the questionnaire were reshuffled and re-arranged and then administered to the same students two weeks later. The scores of data collected were Correlated using person product moment correlation which gave rise to 0.89.

METHOD OF DATA COLLECTION

The researchers administered the questionnaire personally. They administered 304 copies of questionnaire to the selected respondents. They were collected from the respondents almost immediately; however, 300 copies of the questionnaire was retrieved which yielded 98.6% return rate.

hypotheses. Thus, formulae for calculation the mean scores and standard

deviation of the respondents are shown in equations 1 and 2.

$$\text{Mean} = \bar{X} = \frac{\sum FX}{N}$$

$$\text{std dev} = \sqrt{\frac{\sum fx^2}{N} - \left(\frac{\sum fx}{N}\right)^2}$$

Where \bar{X} = mean of response on each respondent

F = Frequency of each questionnaires item.

D = Deviation of each scale point from the mean.

N = Total number of respondents on each questionnaire.

X = each of the rating scale point.

(1) Calculation of the design point or cut off means using the four point scale

SA = 4 points

A = 3 points

D = 2 points

SD = 1 point

Cut of mean = $\frac{4+3+2+1}{4} = \frac{10}{4} = 2.50$

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Research question 1: What are the factors responsible for premarital cohabitation among undergraduates in tertiary institution in Anambra State?

Table 2: mean and standard deviation of responses on factors responsible for premarital cohabitation among undergraduates in tertiary institution in Anambra State

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	T.	Mean	Std Dev	Dec
1	Age and peer influence are important factor that could influence cohabitation among students	150	60	44	46	300	3.05	1.12	A
2	Cohabitation is common among undergraduates because many of them are being free for the first time	36	35	192	37	300	2.23	0.82	R
3	Students with religious affiliations are less likely to cohabit than those without religious affiliations	220	31	22	27	300	3.48	0.97	A
4	Regardless of the child's value on cohabitation, the child may decide not to cohabit in order to avoid embarrassing his/her parents	266	17	9	8	300	3.80	0.61	A
5	The culture of chastity and purity is no longer promoted and encouraged among the	45	22	39	194	300	1.73	1.12	R

students										
6	Many students cohabited due to financial constraints	18	9	128	145	300	1.67	0.8	R	
7	Students cohabited due to insufficient hostel facilities in tertiary institutions	14	33	132	121	300	1.80	0.81	R	
8	Desire for “sexual gratification” has made the students resort to cohabitation	213	13	45	29	300	3.37	1.05	A	
9	students cohabited because they have intentions of getting married after school	199	16	9	76	300	3.13	1.3	A	
10	Dependency Syndrome	79	94	38	89	300	2.54	1.17	A	

Table 2 above showed the views of students on factors responsible for premarital cohabitation among undergraduates in tertiary institution in Anambra State; it is surprising to observe that students do not necessarily cohabit as a result of insufficient hostel facilities in tertiary institutions with a mean of 1.80, this opinion can be amplified considering that cohabitation can also take place within the school owned hostels. However, they agreed that age and peer influence are important factor that could influence cohabitation among students (2.17), this correlated the position of [10] who upheld that premarital cohabitation thrives due to liberty undergraduates enjoy with peer

while in school; the students agreed that desire for “sexual gratification” has made the students resort to cohabitation with a mean score of 3.37 and standard deviation of 1.05. In general, items number 1, 3, 4, 9 and 10 yielded a mean score of 3.05, 3.48, 3.80, 3.13, 2.54 and standard deviation of 1.12, 0.97, 0.61, 1.3, 1.17 respectively and thus was accepted while item 2, 5, 6 and 7 gave the mean score of 2.23, 1.73, 1.67 and 1.80 corresponding to standard deviation of 0.82, 1.12, 0.8, 0.81 and thus was rejected.

Research question 2: What are the effects of cohabitation on academic performance of undergraduate in tertiary institution in Anambra State?

Table 3: Mean and standard deviation of responses of students on the effects of cohabitation on academic performance of undergraduate in tertiary institution in Anambra State.

S/N	ITEM	SA	A	D	SD	T.	Mean	Std	Dec
11	Cohabiting students lacks the relevant privacy needed for academic studies	121	111	23	45	300	3.03	1.04	A
12	Poor academic results are consequences of cohabitation among students in tertiary	265	23	11	1	300	3.84	0.48	A
13	Cohabitation exposes students to Gender Based Violence	8	17	34	241	300	1.31	0.7	R
14	Students who cohabited in school are prone to infidelity after marriage	34	23	209	34	300	2.19	0.78	R

15	Cohabitation exposes students to premarital sex, unwanted pregnancies, abortion, complications and sexually transmitted infections	201	34	32	33	300	3.34	1.05	A
16	Student engagement in premarital cohabitation leads to loss of self respect	199	18	49	34	300	3.27	1.1	A
17	Some female students regret losing their virginity in the course of cohabitation	121	101	39	39	300	3.01	1.03	A
18	Couples who live together are often less committed to the relationship over the long-term	48	69	88	95	300	2.23	1.06	R
19	Relationships that were formed in school had sometimes led to marriages but that of cohabitation rarely does	55	67	91	87	300	2.30	1.08	R
20	Most of the students who cohabit find it difficult to graduate.	86	76	37	101	300	2.49	1.22	R

Table 3 above showed that based on the analysis made on research question 2 the respondents agreed that poor academic results are consequences of cohabitation among students in tertiary (3.48); in relation to students self respect and composure, there are indications that engagement in premarital cohabitation leads to loss of self respect (3.27); on the whole, items 11, 12, 15, 16, 17 were accepted with a mean score 3.03, 3.84, 3.34, 3.27, 3.01, corresponding to standard deviation of 1.04, 0.48, 1.05,

1.1, 1.03, respectively, while items 13, 14, 18, 19, 20 were rejected with a mean score of 1.31, 2.19, 2.23, 2.30, 2.49 and standard deviation of 0.7, 0.78, 1.06, 1.08, 1.22 respectively. Table 3 also showed that the negative implication of cohabitation rests on the female as most of them regret losing their virginity in the course of cohabitation.

Research Hypothesis 1: Cohabitation has no significant effects on the academic performance of undergraduates in tertiary institution in Anambra State

Table 4: Chi Square analysis on cohabitation and academic performance of undergraduates in tertiary institution in Anambra State.

No	SA	A	D	SD	TOTAL
1	121(113.8)	111(53.9)	23(61.3)	45(71)	300
2	265(113.8)	23(53.9)	11(61.3)	1(71)	300
3	8(113.8)	17(53.9)	34(61.3)	241(71)	300
4	34(113.8)	23(53.9)	209(61.3)	34(71)	300
5	201(113.8)	34(53.9)	32(61.3)	33(71)	300
6	199(113.8)	18(53.9)	49(61.3)	34(71)	300
7	121(113.8)	101(53.9)	39(61.3)	39(71)	300
8	48(113.8)	69(53.9)	88(61.3)	95(71)	300
9	55(113.8)	67(53.9)	91(61.3)	87(71)	300
10	86(113.8)	76(53.9)	37(61.3)	101(71)	300
TOTAL	1138	539	613	710	3000

Table 5: Decision statistics for Hypothesis 1

Parameter	Value
Degree of Freedom (<i>df</i>)	27
Level of Significance	0.05
X^2 Critical Value	40.11
X^2 Calculated Value	1848.79

Decision Rule: If X^2 cal. > X^2 crit. that reject the null hypothesis, but otherwise accept.

Therefore, since the calculated X^2 value (1848.79) is greater than the X^2 critical value (40.11) at *df* 27 and 0.05 level of significant, we reject the null hypothesis and conclude that cohabitation has a very significant effects on the academic

performance of undergraduates in tertiary institution in Anambra State.

COUNSELING IMPLICATION

From the findings of this study, the issue of premarital cohabitation leads to poor performance of some students while

some drop out of school completely. A student that becomes pregnant may not be able to complete her education, if the parents are not supportive. Some may contact sexually transmitted diseases or infections. Thus all hands must be on deck, the parents, school counselors, University authorities, religious bodies especially, the school counselors must be able to speak against these new trends of cohabiting among undergraduates. Some cohabit due to ignorance and inexperience, the desire to explore, and the sudden freedom is what prompts many of these students to misbehave [11]. The respondents agreed that dependency syndrome is a major factor leading to

premarital cohabitation; hence, counselors who are used to work with students need to realize that cohabiting students may have special needs with regard to commitment and dependency. Few cohabiting students who enter a counselor's office may have decided what their futures will look like would be inadvisable. In our experience, it is sometimes difficult for a student to directly acknowledge this core relationship issue leading to cohabitation, the less dedicated partner may not wish to upset the status quo and the more dedicated partner may wish to retain some level of denial about the reality of the situation.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

The results of this study provide further support for peer cluster theory, the respondents upheld that age and peer influence are important factor that could influence cohabitation among students, this is in line with the results obtained by [12] in his study on the effect of premarital cohabitation on quality of relationship and marital stability of married people in southwest Nigeria; the results showed the importance of parent bonding with their children in relation to core family values, that is why the child may decide not to cohabit in order to avoid embarrassing his/her parents. [4] has similar opinion in their report on

cohabitation and children's living arrangements. This study revealed that respondents viewed premarital cohabitation to have negative impact on students' academic performance. This finding is similar to earlier study by [10] who found that premarital cohabitation is linked with decreased commitment and concentration in academic activities. However, the results showed that premarital cohabitation does not necessarily lead to extra years in school. This finding is related to some previous studies. [13], who decried the prevalence of premarital cohabitation and premarital sexual behaviour among undergraduates

in Nigeria. After presentation and analysis of collected data, the null hypothesis was tested, in the course of this research work, the following findings were arrived at: The hypothesis which stated that cohabitation has no significant effects on the academic performance of undergraduates in tertiary institution in Anambra State was rejected. It was tested and ascertained that the practice of premarital cohabitation has significant influence on students' performance. Students in tertiary institutions should be 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.

Another important step for future research is to examine the family composition history and socio economic status of the students engaging in premarital cohabitation. Further research may also want to use a sample of young adults who are not in tertiary institution. The fact that these individuals attend college in the first place creates a strong underlying similarity.

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