



Research Paper

Social-economic and Health Effects of Cohabitation Among Off Campus Students in Nigeria Tertiary Institutions: A Case Study Of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State.

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Abstract

The research study was carried out to investigate the socio-economic and health effects of cohabitation among off-campus students in Nigeria tertiary institutions with Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri as a case study. The study specifically investigated the general attitude of students to the act of cohabitation, the socio-economic and health effects and if male and female students have the same view with regards to the effects of cohabitation. The researchers used a descriptive survey with case study approach and constructed an "Effects of Cohabitation Among Students Questionnaire (ECASQ)" which was used for data collection after validation by experts and subject to an interrater reliability test in which the questionnaire showed a reliability coefficient of 0.81. The target population was all off-campus students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede of which the purposive sampling technique was used to select 320 respondents out of which 300 responded. This indicated a response rate of 93.75% which was considered appropriate for the study. The collected questionnaires were analysed using mean and standard deviation and the following answers were provided to the research questions: Great number of off-campus students practice cohabitation. The students generally believe that it is wrong to cohabit but are mostly influenced by their peers and their acclaimed love for their partners. Cohabitation mostly results in unwanted pregnancies, high crime rate, low academic performance, abortion, depression and death as evidenced by mean scores higher than or equal to 2.5 i.e. ($\bar{x} \geq 2.5$). From the analysis of variance (ANOVA), it was observed that the views of male students and female students differ significantly. The study recommended that more hostels be provided by school authorities within the school environment, owners of off-campus hostels should put measures in place to discourage cohabitation, parents/guardians should pay unscheduled visits to their children and wards as a way of monitoring their activities and orientation/reorientation programmes should be organised to caution the students on the effects of cohabitation.

Keywords: Cohabitation, socio-economic effect, health effect, off-campus, tertiary institution.

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I. INTRODUCTION

In the olden days, all students admitted into higher institutions in Nigeria were accommodated within the institutions hostel of residence (Fareo and Moses, 2018). With time, the number of students being admitted into tertiary institutions increased without a proportionate increase in provision of hostels of residence for students due to paucity of funds on the part of the Nigerian government (Onoyase, 2020; Adeniyi, 2019). This development led to most students seeking accommodation outside the school campus. In these off-campus accommodations, there are no gender restrictions placed on the occupancy of the residence unlike the institution owned hostels where there exists separate hostels for male and female students. This resulted to both male and female students living in the same hostels and with time, cohabitation became a trend. Ojewola and Akindayo (2017) stated that cohabitation is an act of a man and woman living together and sometimes sharing marital intimacy without being legally married. In the words of Adeniyi (2017), cohabitation does not refer to people who merely share a living space otherwise called "roommates". It pertains to either heterosexual or homosexual couples, who live together and are emotionally and sexually intimate.

Cohabitation results in two independent individuals, almost like roommates, who have sex, instead of a commitment to one another for the rest of their lives (Rena, 2006). In this pattern, the male and female students

rent and reside in the same apartment as married couple and even perform conjugal duties towards each other. They do all manner of domestic activities together, take joint decisions, sleep together and in extreme cases even operate joint bank account. Most of these activities are done without the awareness and consent of their parents (Rena, 2006). Sometimes, the students consider cohabitation as a substitute for marriage. Even in cases where they end up marrying each other, most marriages supplanted by cohabitation often end in divorce one-third of the time.

The culture of premarital sexual behaviours which hitherto was a taboo in Nigeria (Alo, 2008), have become order of the day and hence, a question of morality. 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 is against the norms and values of our society to allow students live together especially where they do not have any family affinity. This therefore makes the students prey to different forms of dangers as they lack the protection of both families and the tertiary institution (Arisikwu, 2013).

Statement of Problem

The number of students offered admission in higher institution has been on the increase even when the needed funding and infrastructures are not adequate. These among other factors have made the students to look for alternative means of surviving in the school environment, especially as regards accommodation. The act of cohabitation which most students resort to is fraught with many problems. This study seeks to investigate this unwholesome development of cohabitation and its socio-economic effects on off-campus students of Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri.

Objectives of Study

Specifically the study will seek to

1. Find out the attitude of students towards cohabitation.
2. Determine the social effect of cohabitation among students.
3. Investigate the socio-economic effect of cohabitation among student.
4. Determine the health implication of cohabitation.
5. Find out if male and female students have the same view on the effects of cohabitation among students.

Research Questions

From the objectives of the study, the following questions were asked.

1. What is the attitude of students towards cohabitation?
2. What are the social-economic effects of cohabitation?
3. What effect does cohabitation have on the economy?
4. How does cohabitation affect the health of students?
5. Do male and female students have the same view with regards to effect of cohabitation.

Research Hypothesis

Ho: There is no significant difference between the views (attitude) of male and female students on effects of cohabitation.

Hi: There is a significant difference between the view of male and female students on effects of cohabitation.

II. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Area of Study

The Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri was initially established as the College of Technology Owerri by Edict No. 16 dated 1st April, 1978, it was renamed, the Polytechnic by the Imo State Government. The institution was taken over by the Federal Government in April 1993 and is now governed by the Federal Polytechnic Act to perform the following functions: to provide full-time or part-time courses of instruction and training, to arrange conferences, seminars and study groups relative to the fields of learning specified in article of establishment, to perform such functions as in the opinion of the Council may serve to promote the objectives of the Polytechnic. Also the Polytechnic has thirteen (13) directorates for administrative convenience and they include: Academic Planning Unit, Physical Planning Unit, Industrial Practice Centre, Evening Programme, FEPWEP, Servicom, Research and Development, Technical Enterprise Development Center, Monitoring and Evaluation, External Funding and Negotiation, Continuing Education Centre, Medical and Health Services and Works and Services. The students' population of the polytechnic is about Twenty Four Thousand (24,000).

Research Instrument

This study was carried out using a descriptive survey with case study approach. The descriptive survey was employed because Fajonyomi and Fajonyomi (2003) opined that it serves an explanatory purpose and allows for easy data collection from a group of persons at the same time for the purpose of describing any form of study phenomena.

The instrument of data collection was a self designed questionnaire known as “Effect of Cohabitation Among Students Questionnaire (ECASQ)”.

The instrument was a 13 item questionnaire and made use of a 4 (four) point likert scale in which the students indicated agreement or disagreement to each of the 12 item either by ticking strongly Agree (SA), Agreed (A), Disagreed (D) or Strongly Disagreed SD.

Validity of Instrument

The instrument of data collection (ECASQ) was validated by two experts in the department of statistics of the Federal Polytechnic Nekede Owerri, Imo State.

Reliability of the Instrument

The reliability of the instrument of data collection was done using the interrater reliability test were forty (40) off-campus students who were not part of the main study. These forty students were randomly grouped into two groups of twenty students each and the questionnaire distributed to them. Upon collection and analysis of the two group of questionnaire, the reliability coefficient of 0.81 was obtained using Pearson’s moment correlation and hence was considered a reliable instrument of study.

Population of Study

The population of study comprised of all students living in the off-campus environment of Federal Polytechnic Nekede.

Sample Size

The purposive sampling technique was employed by the researchers to randomly select a total of 320 off-campus students comprising of 170 females and 150 males.

Data Collection

The researchers were assisted by two research assistants in the distribution of the 320 questionnaires out of which 300 (158 females and 148 males) were collected showing a response rate of 95.73. The data was collected, scored and collated. The mean and standard deviation were calculated and used in answering the research questions while the research hypothesis was tested using one-way Analysis of variance (ANOVA). To mark the agreement or disagreement level of the students, 2.50 was set as a benchmark. The test hypothesis was carried out at 5% level significance.

III. RESEARCH FINDING

Research Question One: What is the attitude of students towards cohabitation?

Table 1: Attitude of Students towards cohabitation

S/N	Item	N	Mean (\bar{x})	SD	Remark
1	A good number of student who live off campus cohabit	300	2.84	0.970	Agreed
2	Cohabitation is wrong	300	3.02	0.913	Agreed
3	A student’s decision to cohabit is influenced by peer pressure	300	2.73	0.868	Agreed
4	I can cohabit if I genuinely love my boy friend / girlfriend	300	2.53	1.063	Agreed
5	Cohabitation has become a trend among students in tertiary institution	300	2.95	1/033	Agreed

Table 1 shows that cohabitation has become a trend among tertiary institution students in Nigeria as respondents agreed to this item question with a mean score of 2.95. it is unfortunate to note that though most students see the act of cohabitation to be wrong with a mean of 3.02, a good number of students living off-campus are involved in cohabitation ($\bar{x} = 2.84$). The students stated that they can cohabit with their lovers if they are genuinely in love with a mean score of 2.53. The study also noted that a student’s decision to either cohabit or not is influenced by his/her peers.

Research Question 2: What are the social effects of cohabitation?

Table 2: Socio economic effects of cohabitation

S/N	Item	N	Mean	SD	Remark
1	Cohabitation leads to lowering of moral values	300	3.10	0.693	Agreed
2	Cohabitation makes students lose focus of their academics and hence causes low academic performance	300	2.87	0.950	Agreed
3	Cohabitors spend less financially than non cohabiters	300	2.15	0.872	Disagree
4	Cohabiting students may resort to cybercrimes and robbery to maintain their upkeep of themselves and their partners	300	3.17	5.718	Agreed

5	Cohabitation brings about unwanted pregnancy cohabitation	300	3.15	1.243	Agreed
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The investigation shows that cohabitation among students has lowered the moral values in society as the respondents responded with a mean score of 3.10 in agreement to the question item. Students who cohabit lose focus of their academics and hence perform poorly in academic activities ($\bar{x} = 2.87$).

Cohabitation is not cheaper as noted with a response mean of 2.15 and most cohabiting students resort to crime in order to maintain the financial demands of cohabiting with their partners ($\bar{x} = 3.17$). In the society, there is also an upsurge of unwanted pregnancies among cohabiting students as the respondents agreed with a mean score of 3.15.

Research Question 3: How does cohabitation affect the health of students?

Table 3: Health effects of cohabitation

S/N	Item	N	Mean	S.D	Remark
1	Cohabiting students are at risk of contacting sexually transmitted diseases	300	2.86	0.945	Agreed
2	Abortion results due to unwanted pregnancies among cohabiting students.	300	2.79	0.997	Agreed
3	Cohabitation among off campus students lead to depression, high rate of divorce and death	300	2.56	1.018	Agreed

Cohabiting students were found to be at risk of contacting sexually transmitted diseases with a mean score of 2.85. The resultant effect of pregnancies occurring among cohabiting students is a high rate of abortion as agreed by respondents ($\bar{x} = 2.79$). Students who cohabit are at high risk of depression, experience high rate of divorce and are exposed to death ($\bar{x} = 2.56$).

Research Hypothesis: There is no significant difference between the views of male and female students on effects of cohabitation.

Table 4: One way analysis of variance on the difference between the views of male and female students on the effects of cohabitation among off-campus students.

Variables	Sum of squares	Df	Mean square	F-cal	F-crit	Level of Significance
Between Groups	3960.334	1	3960.334	12.770	4.26	
Within Groups	7443.334	24	310.139			
Total	11403.668	25				0.05

Table 4 showed a calculated F value of 12.770 which is greater than F-critical (4.26) at 5% level of significance. This therefore led to a non-acceptance of the null hypothesis. Hence, it was concluded that the views of male students differ significantly with that of female students.

IV. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

The research revealed that cohabitation among off-campus students in Nigeria tertiary institutions has become a trend with a mean score of 2.95. As a good number of students living off-campus cohabit ($\bar{x} = 2.84$). This is in line with the view of Faroe and Moses (2018) who stated that cohabitation among students has now become very rampant in most institutions of higher learning, though the respondents noted that cohabitation is wrong ($\bar{x} = 3.02$). Most of the cohabiting students are influenced into the act by their peers ($\bar{x} = 2.73$) and genuine love for their lovers ($-\bar{x} = .53$).

In table 2, the research showed that some of the socio-economic effects of cohabitation among students are moral decadence ($\bar{x} = 3.10$), low academic performance ($\bar{x} = 2.87$), unwanted pregnant ($\bar{x} = 3.15$), and increase in crime rate ($\bar{x} = 3.17$). This agrees with the view of Onoyase (2020) who stated that some cohabiters may involve themselves in stealing and cybercrimes in order to raise money for their upkeep and that cohabitation has eroded the level of morality among the youths. This study lays credence to the study carried out by Alo and Akinde (2010) which opined that unwanted pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases results from unprotected sex among cohabiting students. Other health implications of cohabitation revealed by the study are that cohabitation can bring about abortion ($\bar{x} = 2.79$) depression death and high diverse rate ($\bar{x} = 2.56$) and an upsurge of STD (sexually transmitted diseases) with a mean score of 2.86.

It was revealed in the research that there is a significant difference between the views of male students and that of female students on the effects of cohabitation among students. As the male students do not have the same opinion with the female students as regards to the socio-economic and health effects of cohabitation among off-campus students.

V. CONCLUSION

The researchers, based on their research findings concluded that there is high level of cohabitation among off-campus students. This shows a lowering level of moral values and brings about low academic performance, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, high crime rate, sexually transmitted diseases, depression and even death.

VI. RECOMMENDATION

Based on the findings of the study and its conclusion, the following recommendations were made by the researchers.

1. Institutions of higher learning should endeavor to provide enough accommodation spaces for their students.
2. Orientation and reorientation programmes should be organized from time to time to educate the students on the issue of cohabitation and its attendant effects.
3. Owners of off-campus hostels and lodgings should put in place strict measures and restrictions against cohabitation in their hostels.
4. Parents / guardians of tertiary institution students should make unscheduled visitation to their children / word in order to monitor some of their activities.
5. Students who are found cohabiting should be heavily sanctioned by school authorities in order to put an end to the act.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The authors have not declared any conflict of interest regarding this work.

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