

CONSEQUENCES OF COHABITATION ON THE SOCIAL AND MENTAL HEALTH OF UNDERGRADUATES IN LAGOS STATE UNIVERSITY

Waliu Baabatunde OGUNBAMOWO (MPH, PhD); Olugbenga Adeyemi Bodunrin
(Ph.D) & Odebowale, Ireti Tina (Ph.D)

¹Department of Human Kinetics, Sports and Health Education, Lagos State University, Ojo.

waliu.ogunbamowo@lasu.edu.ng +2348023439881 <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-2101-0198>

^{2,3}Department of Educational Foundation & Counseling Psychology, Faculty of Education Lagos State
University, Ojo. bodunrin.olugbenga12@gmail.com +2348023507376; ireti.odebowale@lasu.edu.ng

+2348038572253

Abstract

This study aimed at examining the Consequences of Cohabitation on the Social and Mental Health of Undergraduates in Lagos State University. To achieve this study, two research questions and two hypotheses were postulated. The descriptive survey research method was adopted while the instrument for data collection was the Consequences of Cohabitation on the Social and Mental Health Questionnaire (CSMHQ). 400 questionnaires were distributed and collected on the same spot while the respondents were drawn using the multistage sampling technique of convenience sampling and the simple random sampling technique. The test-retest method of reliability was adopted. The reliability of the instrument was ascertained using the Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) and r-coefficient of 0.76 was obtained. The research instrument used for the study was a four- point likert-type rating scale questionnaire. Descriptive statistics of frequency count and percentage was used for data presentation while inferential statistic of Chi square analytical tool was used to test all stated hypotheses at 0.05 level of significance. The study showed that there was significant occurrence of social and mental health among undergraduates in Lagos State University. The researchers recommended that the Lagos University authority should make it a point of duty to make available adequate hostels at an affordable fee to help reduce contributions of off-campus hostels as a factor in the promotion of cohabitation and that the institution further provides platform which parents or guardians of undergraduates be made to see reasons on the need to regularly check on their wards.

Keywords: Cohabitation, Consequence, Social health and mental health.

Introduction

In recent times, there has been significant rise and awareness on issues surrounding the practice of cohabitation among young adults, university and college students in many parts of the world. Many people perceive Cohabitation differently but the appropriateness of their perception is just in line with the light of their understanding. The term 'cohabitation' commonly describes people who merely share a living space or refer to one another as 'roommates' in a jointly owned apartment. A scenario where two people romantically intimate with each other choose to live together without any formal or legal backing supporting marriage is considered Cohabitation (Maskens, 2015).

Worthy of note is that Cohabitation among couples is typically characterized by emotional and sexual intimacy (Giordano, Manning, Longmore & Flanigan, 2012). Cohabitation is most commonly used in reference to heterosexual couples. However, it can exist in both heterosexual or homosexual couples (Dilmaghani, 2019).

Many researches on consequences of cohabitation on the academic performance of students revealed that low performances far below what is expected is prevalent among those that carry out this practice as numerous reasons and factors causes distractions to students and lure them to it (Galster, Santiago, Stack & Cutsinger, 2016).

Consequentially, pre-marital sex is a new challenge to curtail with as there is an increasing practice of cohabitation among young adults which can't be undermined (Addo, Houle & Sassler, 2019). Young adults and children embark on different activities and actions lacking the knowledge of the resulting health implications (Ogunbamowo, Ashon, & Elemoro-Oni, 2022). According to Aina, Fadero & Akintoke, (2021), Cohabitation has 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 and should pregnancy occur, such female students are more likely to seek abortion as an alternative. This has health challenges for such students who may visit quack doctors and medical practitioners without adequate experiences and qualifications (Gebremedhin, Semahegn, Usmael & Tesfaye, 2018). Some may frown at abortion and thus give birth to unwanted babies who may not be properly catered for by these students. Cohabitation is not a practice supported by the African culture, traditions and customs. However, many students practice it without the knowledge of their parents while a few are advised by their parents to embark on such act and practices as a result of inability to provide for the need of their wards (Jiya & Alhassan, 2019). 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 (Aina, Fadero & Akintoke, 2021).

Cohabitation is common among undergraduates because, many of them were extremely excited to enjoy liberty for the first time; hence, they tend to enjoy the freedom, independence and are less monitored by either their parents or guardians. The issues of religion is equally an important variable in cohabitation among undergraduates as it seems there is a decline in religious authority and are dramatic changes in religious. Studies indicated that those with religious affiliations are less likely to cohabit than those without religious affiliations (Kogan, & Weismann, 2020). It is further noted that strong religious parents can affect their child's behavior 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.

The trend has also increased rapidly in majority of the higher institute of learning, reason being the increase in the number of undergraduate students and the inability of the tertiary institutions in expanding and building new hostels which has forced several students to look for accommodation outside the campus (Lamidi, 2020). This has led to the emergence of an unacceptable trend in most of the universities in which male and female students cohabit in the same room.

Adeniyi (2019) stated that high rate of abortion in tertiary institutions can be attributed to cohabitation. Some of the cohabiting female students often get pregnant and because they are not prepared for parenting, some of them take to abortion which exposes the female partners to the risk of death or damaged uterus. Adeniyi also stressed that it is common place to find both cohabitants battling with one sexually transited disease or the other. Those involved in cohabiting tend to indulge in vices including stealing, lying and cyber – crimes in order to raise finances to keep the affairs going. There appears to be high

demand for university education in Nigeria. It is expected that the increase in the number of students should be matched with increase in the number of school hostels. Most students of Lagos State University have no option but to seek accommodation off campus as the accommodation facility the school boast of in no way match the teeming population the university possess. Only a few hundred of female students in the university enjoy this facility. For this cause, this study investigated the consequences of cohabitation as a pronounced practice among undergraduates on the social and mental health of undergraduates in Lagos State University.

The purpose of the study includes the followings:

1. To examine the consequence of cohabitation on the social health of undergraduates in Lagos state university.
2. To assess the consequence of cohabitation on mental health of undergraduates in Lagos state university

The following research questions were answered for the study:

1. What is the consequence of cohabitation on the social health of undergraduates in Lagos state university?
2. What is the consequence of cohabitation on mental health of undergraduates in Lagos state university?

The following research hypotheses were postulated for the study:

1. There is no significant consequence of cohabitation on social health of undergraduates in Lagos state university.
2. There is no significant consequence of cohabitation on mental health of undergraduates in Lagos state university.

Methodology

The descriptive survey research design was adopted, because of its uniqueness, relevance and appropriateness for the study. The population for this study consists of undergraduates in Lagos State University while 400 undergraduates was drawn using the multistage sampling technique of convenience sampling for selection of Eight faculties which were Education, Arts, Management Sciences, Social Sciences, Communications, Law, Transport and Engineering. while the simple random sampling technique was used for selection of respondents from each faculty. The study used a self-administered questionnaire titled Consequences of Cohabitation on the Social and Mental Health Questionnaire (CCSMHQ) to collect data from respondents. Reliability of the items was determined using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation (PPMC) with $r = 0.76$. The instrument was divided into two sections. Section A was on demographic data of respondents while section B was structure to test the hypotheses. The questionnaire adopted a four-point Likert's attitudinal scale which are Strongly agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD) to enable respondents give near accurate responses to the questions. The face and Content validity of the instrument were ascertained by a panel of three experts in the departments of Human kinetics, Sports and Health Education, faculty of education, Lagos State University, Ojo Lagos. The copies of the instrument were personally distributed with the help of two trained research assistants to the respondents. 400 copies of questionnaires were distributed and collected by the

researcher at the spot and data collection lasted for Eight weeks in various faculties among undergraduate students in Lagos State University. Copies of the administered questionnaires were checked to ensure that they were well completed before leaving the study area. The investigator monitored the process of data collection throughout. Daily review meetings were held at the beginning and end of each day with the research assistances. Data collected were analyzed using appropriate descriptive statistics of frequency counts and percentages for data presentation. While the inferential statistics of Chi-square (X^2) was used to test the stated hypothesis at 0.05 alpha level of significance. The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) version 23 was used for analyzing the data collected.

Results

Data Presentation

Table 1:
Distribution of respondents by Age, Sex, Level, Religion and Accommodation

Age	Frequency	Percentage%
15-20yrs	93	23
21-25yrs	211	53
26-30yrs	68	17
31 and above	28	7
Total	400	100

Sex	Frequency	Percentage%
Male	132	33
Female	268	67
Total	400	100

Level	Frequency	Percentage%
100L	66	17
200L	106	27
300L	86	22
400L	117	29
500L	25	6
Total	400	100

Religion	Frequency	Percentage %
Christianity	263	66
Islam	124	31
Others	13	3
Total	400	100

Accommodation Types	Frequency	Percentage %
Single Room	196	49
Room Self-Contain	97	24
Room &Parlour	40	10
Flat	67	17
Total	400	100

Table 1 showed that 23% (93) of the respondents were within age bracket 15-20years, 53% (211) were within 21-25years, 17% (68) were 26-30years and 7% (28) of the respondents were 31years and above in age. This implies that respondents in the age bracket of 21-25 years have the highest representation in the study. Consecutively, 33% (132) of the respondents were male, while the remaining 67% (268) were female. This implies that Female has higher representation in the study than Male and the demographic analysis of respondents by Level. 17% (66) of the total respondents are 100 level students, while 27% (106) of the respondents are 200 level students, 86 (22%) are 300 level students while 117 (29%) of the respondents are 400 level students and 25 (6%) of the respondents are 500 level students. This implies that 400 level students have higher percentage representation in the study than other levels. Further, 66% (263) of the respondents practice Christianity, 31% (124) of the respondents practice Islam while 3% (13) of the respondents practice other religions. This implies that respondents that practice Christianity have the highest representation in the study. Finally, 49% (196) of the respondents live in a single room, 24% (97) of the respondents live in a room Self-contain, 10% (40) of the respondents live in a Room and Parlour while 17% (67) of the respondents live in Flats. This implies that respondents that live in a single room have the highest representation in the study.

Table 2:
Factors Responsible for Cohabitation among LASU Undergraduates

Factors Responsible for Cohabitation among LASU Undergraduates		SA	A	D	SD	Total
1.	Students engage in cohabitation to exercise their freedom from their parents' control.	141 (35.2%)	202 (50.5%)	47 (11.8%)	10 (2.5%)	400 (100%)
2.	Students engage in cohabitation to avoid the rules and regulations of on-campus hostels.	131 (32.8%)	173 (43.2%)	80 (20%)	16 (4%)	400 (100%)
3.	Cohabiting undergraduates suffer economic instability during the period of cohabitation	82 (20.5%)	203 (50.7%)	108 (27%)	7 (1.8%)	400 (100%)
4.	Cohabitation affects the ability to make new friends and integrate into the university community	81 (20.25%)	183 (45.8%)	118 (29.5%)	18 (4.5%)	400 (100%)
5.	Cohabiting undergraduates are likely to be exposed to domestic violence during the period of cohabitation	137 (34.3%)	201 (50.1%)	53 (13.3%)	9 (2.3%)	400 (100%)
6.	Cohabitation leads to sexual exploitation	155 (38.8%)	205 (51.1%)	35 (8.8%)	5 (1.3%)	400 (100%)
7.	Cohabitation can lead to mood disorders such as depression	124 (31.1%)	204 (50.9%)	66 (16.5%)	6 (1.5%)	400 (100%)
8.	Some undergraduates who engage in cohabitation may suffer from trauma-related disorders such as post traumatic stress	144 (36.1%)	207 (51.6%)	45 (11.3%)	4 (1%)	400 (100%)

disorder due to domestic violence

9.	Cohabitation leads to substance abuse disorders among undergraduates.	114 (28.6%)	233 (58.1%)	45 (11.3%)	8 (2%)	400 (100%)
10.	Some undergraduates who engage in cohabitation may suffer from eating disorders such as anorexia nervosa, anorexia bulimia or binge eating to fit into the body type or shape demanded by their partner.	121 (30.3%)	210 (52.4%)	62 (15.5%)	7 (1.8%)	400 (100%)
Total		1230	2021	659	90	4000
%Approx.		34	46	16	4	100

Hypothesis One

Hypothesis one states that there is no significant consequence of cohabitation on social health of undergraduates in Lagos State University. This hypothesis was tested using Chi-square at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented on the table 3 below.

Table 3:

Chi-square analysis on the consequence of cohabitation on social health of undergraduates in Lagos State University.

Responses	FRQ	%	DF	LS	Cal X^2	P value	RMK
SA	455	28.4	21	0.05	12.00	0.217	Not Significant
A	792	49.5					
D	314	19.6					
SD	39	2.5					
TOTAL	1600	100					

Table 3 projects the data collected from the respondents on hypothesis one. It shows that 28.4% of the respondents strongly agreed while 49.5% of the respondents agreed, 19.6% of the respondents disagreed while 2.5% of the respondents strongly disagreed to the items. However, it further reveals a calculated X^2 value of 12.00 which is statistically not significant at $p = 0.217 < 0.05$ at 21⁰ of freedom hence the acceptance of the null hypothesis. It therefore implies that there was no significant consequence of cohabitation on social health of undergraduates in Lagos State University.

Hypothesis Two

Hypothesis two states that there is no significant consequence of cohabitation on mental health of undergraduates in Lagos State University. This hypothesis was tested using Chi-square at 0.05 level of significance. The result is presented on the table below.

Table 4:
Chi-square analysis on the consequence of cohabitation on mental health of undergraduates in Lagos State University.

Responses	FRQ	%	DF	LS	Cal X ²	P value	RMK
SA	503	31.4	9	0.05	11.09	0.02	Sig
A	854	53.4					
D	218	13.6					
SD	25	1.6					
TOTAL	3200	100					

Table 4 projects the data collected from the respondents on hypothesis two. It shows that 31.4% of the respondents strongly agreed while 53.4% respondents agreed, 13.6% respondents disagreed and 1.6% respondents strongly disagreed to the items. However, it further reveals a calculated X^2 value of 11.09 which is statistically significant at $p=0.02<0.05$ at 9⁰ of freedom hence the rejection of the null hypothesis. It therefore implies that there was significant consequence of cohabitation on mental health of undergraduates in Lagos State University

Discussion

Hypothesis one stated that there is no significant consequence of cohabitation on social health of undergraduates in Lagos State University. Chi square (χ^2) analysis revealed a value of 12.00 which is statistically significant at 21⁰ of freedom. Since the $p=0.217<0.05$, the null hypothesis was therefore accepted. This finding disagrees with Rhoades, Stanley & Markman, (2012) in their work the impact of the transition to cohabitation on relationship functioning: cross-sectional and longitudinal findings. They carried out two studies where they compared dating and cohabiting relationship in terms of commitment and quality of relationship which served as indices for predicting their social health. The first study group consisted of 1294 samples of unmarried nationals that cohabits while still engaging in sexual relationship. Findings showed that cohabiting relationships were characterized by lower satisfaction, more negative communication, and more physical aggression than dating (non-cohabiting) relationships which are social indices found to be unhealthy and tilted away from what is expected as a good social health. Study 2 used a subsample of the Study 1 sample to longitudinally examine a move from dating to cohabitation could affect the quality of relationship and their social health. Result from this study showed that a sharp decline in the indices of relationship quality and interpersonal communication was experienced although they spent more time having sex. This finding further disagrees with Omidvar, Danesh, Mazandarani & Javad, (2022) in their work Sociological analysis of the phenomenon of cohabitation from the perspective of clerics and sociologists. Cohabitation was analyzed from the purview of both the cleric and the sociologist. They established that cohabitation is a proof of the sharp and rapid growing decadence in the moral values, cultural stature, religious grip and fall of thorough behavior pattern that impedes the social health of the global society today. Some of the unhealthy social include poor communication skill, consistent of aggression, constrain relationship with family and members of the society and lack of regard for social norms and morals. This finding also disagrees with Manning, Longmore &

Giordano, (2018) in their research study Cohabitation and intimate partner violence during emerging adulthood: High constraints and low commitment. They established that cohabitation is pronounced among young adults and further analyzed it from the purview of the Social exchange and commitment theory using Toledo Adolescent Relationships Study data ($n = 926$). They found that Intimate partner violence was dominant among couples that cohabit and this was best explained due to great constrain experienced in the quality and consistency of relationship and social interaction that they keep between themselves and other members of the community.

Hypothesis two stated that states that there is no significant consequence of cohabitation on mental health of undergraduates in Lagos State University. Chi square (χ^2) analysis revealed a value of 11.09 which is statistically significant at 9⁰ of freedom. Since the $p = 0.02 < 0.05$, the null hypothesis was therefore rejected

This finding therefore agrees with Braithwaite & Holt-Lunstad, (2017) in their work Romantic relationships and mental health. They reviewed researches on relationship and mental. They try to establish the association between relationship and the mental health of cohabiting couples and married ones and they agreed that the association between relationship and mental health is bidirectional with beneficial or implicating effects on each other as the case may be. Their research further revealed better commitment level and healthy relationship exist more among married couples compared to those cohabiting hence increasing the severity of mental health when things go sore suggesting that the causal arrow flows more strongly from relationships to mental health than vice versa with relationship being the major predictor. Improved relationship improves mental health but the later has less influence on relationship.

Also, this finding is in consonance with Whitton, Weitbrecht, Kuryluk & Bruner, (2013) in their study on Committed dating relationships and mental health among college students which examined the involvement of committed dating relationships and their association with university students' mental health, depressive symptoms and problem alcohol use, including binge drinking and if they differ based on gender. This research was carried out using a sample of 889 undergraduate students aged 18 to 25 and the use of an online survey questionnaire was adopted. This finding revealed that college students dating but not cohabiting show lesser mental health issues compared to those who are cohabiting.

This finding is also consistent with van Hedela, Martikainen, Moustgaard & Myrskylä, (2017) in their study Cohabitation and mental health. They established that Marriage has a positive influence on mental health while they suggested that mental health of cohabiting couples as produced mixed results. They further carried out a comparison of the mental health of both married couples and cohabiting couples using panel data from 11% random sample of the population residing in Finland for the years 1995 to 2007, with annual measurements of all covariates. Descriptive results indicate that the likelihood of purchasing psychotropic medication for mental illness was lowest among married individuals, slightly high among cohabiting individuals and highest among singles. Cohabitation had no independent influence on mental health, despite men and women who cohabited had lower mental health than those who were married. Single individuals remained to be disadvantaged, even when controlling for selection.

Conclusion

Based on the findings of this study, it was concluded that:

There was no significant consequence of cohabitation on the social health of undergraduates in Lagos State University while Cohabitation had significant consequence on the social health of undergraduates in Lagos state University.

Recommendation

Based on the findings of the study, it was recommended that:

1. The university authorities and management should make it a point of duty to make available adequate hostels at an affordable fee to help reduce contributions of off-campus hostels as a factor in the promotion of cohabitation.
2. The various religious leaders should organize regular seminars to shed more light on relationships, dating, courtship as well as family life. This will indeed equip the young people as they struggle to achieve their academic dreams.

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