

**FACTORS THAT CONTRIBUTE TO THE PREVALENCE AND PRACTICE OF
COHABITATION AMONG KENYATTA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS, NAIROBI,
KENYA.**

BY

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ABSTRACT

Cohabitation is emerging as an important factor in mate-selection in many societies. It has however been associated with a number of problems including unwanted pregnancies, abortions, marriage failures, sexual abuse, Sexually Transmitted Diseases and HIV/AIDS. In Kenya, cohabitation has widely been a matter of public debate with limited systematic studies to map out the trend, nature and correlates amongst various groups of the population. In an effort to fill this gap the current study focused on cohabitation among university students. The objectives of this study were aimed at: Identifying factors that contribute to cohabitation by university students and establishing the prevalence of cohabitation among university students. The study also sought to establish the relationship between parents' socio-economic and demographic status on the prevalence and practice of cohabitation. The study also aimed at establishing the influence of peers on the prevalence and practice of cohabitation among university students. The conceptual framework for this study was derived from Erick Erickson's theory of personality development and Bronfenbrenner's Ecological Model of Human Development. One hundred and seventy six respondents in their second and fourth years of study were selected using a stratified random sampling technique. The survey design with the use of questionnaires was employed to gather information from the respondents. In addition, Key Informants interviews were carried out with persons involved in students' affairs to provide more in depth understanding of the issues under study. The quantitative data collected from fieldwork were entered into a computer spreadsheet and analysed using the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). The tools used in the analysis included frequencies, percentages, means and Chi-Square test of significance. The results showed that there is a prevalence rate of cohabitation of 27.4 percent. The significant factors that influenced the students cohabitation behavior included fathers' occupation ($p=0.016$), mothers' occupation ($p=0.029$), parents' residence ($p=0.000$), parents'/guardians' income ($p=0.000$), peer pressure ($p=0.000$), year of study (0.064) and fathers' level of education (0.074). The other factors, which included sex, age, and mothers' level of education, were not significantly related to cohabitation. The results of the study also revealed that majority of the respondents (63%) indicated that they are aware of students' cohabiting in campus. Most of the students had a negative attitude toward cohabitation before marriage (59%). Majority of the students in the study (77%) had a positive attitude towards peer counseling and religious teaching as deterrent measures of cohabitation. The researcher recommended that counseling services to the students need to be strengthened in the universities. It would also be important to review from time to time the financial assistance accorded to students from low-income households to ensure that adequate funds are awarded in line with the prevailing living standards and inflation. It is also recommended that the university authority should consider establishing special hostels for ladies who are expectant or who have children as a result of cohabitation.