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PREVALENCE OF RELIGIOSITY AND COHABITATION BEHAVIOUR AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS IN HIGHER INSTITUTIONS IN EKITI STATE

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ABSTRACT

The study examined prevalence of religiosity and cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State. The study adopted a descriptive research design of correlational type. The population consisted of all public tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The sample for the study consisted of 2000 undergraduate students in public tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. The sample was selected using simple random sampling technique of balloting. Data on students religion, cohabitation behaviour and gender differences were obtained using an adapted questionnaire titled "Cohabitation and Cohabitation Problems" (CCP) developed by Donald Wayne Bower and an adapted Scale tagged "Religiosity and Spiritual Scale for Youth" (RSSY) developed by Hernandez. The author reported a Cronbach alpha of α=.81, showing that the instrument was reliable. The data collected were analyzed using frequency count and percentages. Four research questions were tested with the use of t-test and ANOVA. The major findings of the study were that there is a moderate prevalence of cohabitation and a significant difference in the level of cohabitation behaviour as practiced by male and female undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State. Moreover, there is a low level of religiosity and a significant negative relationship between religiosity and cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State. It was recommended among others that religion should be allowed to maintain a prominent place in therapeutic relationships, while religious leaders should organize regular seminars to shed more light on relationship, dating, courtship as well as family life. There is also the need for counselors to implement strategies that can help undergraduates avoid, reduce their sensitivity to, and disengage them from cohabitation behaviour through restructuring.

Keywords: Cohabitation; Religiosity; Gender

Introduction

The human culture has witnessed an unprecedented transformation in the 21st century. Some occurrences, especially those that have to do with sexuality, which before now are seen as taboos are now enthroned as

virtues. A lot of shows and movies now celebrate sexual liberation which has given room for an increase in premarital sex and cohabitation among young adults. According to Kasim, Omirin and Okoro (2018), cohabitation is becoming popular among tertiary institutions students due to the emergence of sexual liberalization. Sexual liberation includes rise in the acceptance of sex outside customary monogamous relationship, normalization of contraceptive and pills use, pornography, sex before marriage and legalization of abortion (Free Encyclopedia, 2016).

It is worthy of note that pre-marital sex is one of the factors that gave room for the current lifestyle of cohabitation which is now prevalent in many universities in Nigeria (Duyilemi, Tunde-Awe & Lois, 2018). Those who are chaste are now regarded as uncivilized, while abstinence is no longer seen as a virtue. It is more worrisome to discover that those who exalt this act of sexual liberalization also belong to one religious gathering or the other. . This may not be unconnected with the current mindset of many who view premarital sex as an acceptable custom in the society. Kasim and Falola (2017) stated that cohabitation is evolving from aberrant lifestyle to one that is normal for both young men and women in the developing countries.

Therefore, globalization has aided the spread of the phenomenon of cohabitation in Nigeria tertiary institutions, a pointer that youths are in crisis and a concern for counselling psychologists and stakeholders in education industry (Mashau, 2011). This way of life has continued to attract attention especially among scholars because of the strong assumption that the continuous trend of the acts portends erosion to some of the cultural and moral values highly esteemed by our nation. Svodziva and Kurete (2017) revealed that between 25% and 50% of university students engage in the act of cohabitation. This showed that cohabitation is a menace among tertiary institutions students. Findings of Kasim and Falola (2017) showed that majority of those who cohabit reside off campus due to insufficient accommodation within the universities.

Cohabitation has been associated with a number of problems including sexual abuse and violence, sexually transmitted infections, abortion, HIV and AIDS, unwanted pregnancies, increased medical care, low academic performance and ultimately withdrawal from the institution (Imo, 2017). It also exposes students to premarital sex (Svodziwa & Kurete, 2017). Ojewola and Akinduyo (2017) affirmed that students who cohabit frequently engage in sexual activity without protection, which can lead to the transmission of sexually transmitted diseases. According to Duyilemi, Tunde-Awe and Lois (2018), cohabitation contributed to high level of moral and religious decadence in our society and has negative influence on students' moral development and invariably their health and academic development. In addition, cohabitation has a significant impact on the health of female students, who may resort to the usage of oral

contraceptives in order to avoid unintended pregnancies, which may hinder their ability to pursue their educational goals (Ojewola & Akinduyo, 2017). The behavior and practice of cohabitation subject female students to the premature responsibility of caring for infants, even when they are unprepared for it, as well as a series of abortions. Aborisade (2021) also stated that high occurrence of emotional, physical, economic, sexual and social violence is habitually experienced by female cohabiters.

Muhinat (2022) affirmed that dropout of school, social and health issues, poor academic performance, and sometimes death are some of the consequences of cohabitation. In the view of Kuperberg (2014) cohabitation increases the likelihood of relationship dissolution. The pain from sexual breakup is a factor that leads to depression and suicidal attempts by some students who have lived a life of cohabitation and it also makes students to engage in antisocial deeds in order to be able to measure up to the financial demand of such relationship.

Moreover, the significance of gender in influencing student participation in cohabitation behavior should not be underestimated, since there is a strong inclination for females to exhibit lower self-esteem and confidence in heterosexual relationships compared to males. However, Alebiosu (2020) emphasized that gender is not the sole factor that affects the participation of undergraduates in cohabitation behaviors. In other words, gender has no significant influence on the participation of undergraduate students in cohabitation behavior, as both males and females can exhibit good or negative behavior when it comes to cohabitation. In the words of Imo (2017), females cohabit more than males in Ebonyi State University and the re-occurring reason why the students cohabit is sexual satisfaction.

Onoyase (2020) stated that there is no significant difference among private, state and federal university students in their assessment of the consequences of cohabitation. Ojewola and Akinduyo found out that there is no significant difference in cohabitation among tertiary institution on the basis of age and faculties, while there is a significant difference on the basis of religious affiliation. According to Kuperberg (2014), there seems to be no significant relationship between the prevalence of cohabitation and region of the country. Also the study by Olawole, Adaramoye Joseph and Arogundade (2024) revealed that a negative relationship existed between social support and cohabitation behaviour among undergraduates in tertiary institutions in Ekiti State.

Moreover, a greater percentage of males than females have lived a life of cohabitation and more than half of those who have lived such lives believed that their parents were not aware. Duyilemi, Tunde-Awe and Lois (2018) reported that 71.8% of their respondents agreed that cohabitation contribute to high level of moral decadence in the society. This therefore shows that the culture of purity and chastity is no longer encouraged and upheld among youths who

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
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are to become leaders of tomorrow. It is on this basis that this study seeks to examine religiosity and cohabitation behaviour (prevalence and gender differences) among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State.

Statement of the Problem

The act of cohabitation cannot be totally separated from premarital sex, which has taken an upward tide among the youths including tertiary institutions students. This is more worrisome because it is a pointer that the youths are in crisis. Cohabitating students will most likely engage in unprotected sex which can result in sexually transmitted infections, unwanted pregnancy, abortion, and ultimately withdrawal from the university. The act has also contributed to high level of anti-social activities, moral decadence in the society, social, economic and emotional violence and negative impact on the students' moral development. Cohabiters also experience low academic performance which eventually results in drop-out and withdrawal from school. Thus, the culture of academic excellence, chastity and morality is fading away from our society. Although globalization has aided the spread of the phenomenon in Nigeria, it is a subject of concern to counselling psychologists, parents and other stakeholders in the education sector. If nothing is done to minimize, if not totally eradicate this evil habit, the negative consequences cohabitation has on tertiary institution students will continue to widen and portend a negative attribute to the future generation. Since each individual is associated with one religious affiliation or the other and religion tends to provide moral rules and set of norms that influences the attitude of individuals, it is hope that religion can help to reduce the menace of cohabitation. It is against this background that this study examined the prevalence of religiosity and cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State.

Research Questions

Evolving from the statement of the problem are the following research questions:

1. What is the prevalence of cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in the higher institutions in Ekiti State**?**
2. Is there any relationship between religiosity and cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State?
3. Is there any significant difference in the cohabitation behaviour of male and female undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State?
4. What is the level of religiosity of undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State?

Literature Review

Meaning of Cohabitation

According to Bacharch, Hondin and Thomson (2000), cohabitation is defined as an intimate sexual union between two

unmarried individuals who share the same living room for a continuous period of time. Cohabitation, according to Adeyemo, Ofomata, and Duruojinkeya (2023) occurs when romantically attached individuals opt to live together outside of a marriage contract. Macionis (2010) viewed cohabitation as the sharing of a household by an unmarried couple. According to Alebiosu (2020), cohabitation refers to the situation where students of different genders live together and engage in activities typically associated with married couples who have legal, cultural, or religious commitments.

Rosenfeld (2018) stated that it is an act of residing with a significant other before marriage. In other words, it is a trial period prior to marriage. Imo (2017) perceived cohabitation as an anti-social act where couples who are not married lived together in an emotional and or physically intimate relationship. Duyilemi, Tunde-Awe and Lois (2018) stated that cohabitation among Nigerian undergraduates is usually referred to as "couples life, "campus coupling", "campus marriage" and "marrying for marriage". An increasing number of students are participating and becoming deeply immersed in this social phenomenon due to the significant amount of freedom they have, as well as the fact that many tertiary institutions are unable to offer enough on-campus residence halls for them. From the perspective of these undergraduates, participating in this lifestyle during their time in school is not anything to be overly concerned about, as everything around them indicates that it is widely accepted. The majority of movies shown on cable television, as well as online surfing and debates, proudly display their widespread acceptance and openness, leaving viewers with little hesitation in participating in such activities.

Types of Cohabitation

Imo (2017) stated that there are two types of cohabitation (full and partial cohabitation). Full cohabitation is the type in which the two individuals live together just like husband and wife. Students who engage in full cohabitation keenly repel any effort by parents to visit. Partial cohabitation is the type in which the girl partner may have her own room but resides with the boy and may occasionally return to her own room especially when parents visit. In general, Cohabitation is also referred to as a common law union or a de facto relationship (Adeyemo, Ofomata & Duruojinkeya, 2023).

Reasons why Students Cohabitate

Within the majority of educational institutions of higher learning, student cohabitation has developed into a widespread phenomenon. Studies on cohabitation among undergraduates of higher institutions in Nigeria have adduced some reasons why students cohabit. One of the major reasons according to Duyilemi, Tunde-Awe and Lois (2018) is sexual urge. Several male students usually want to test their sexual drive, capability and compatibility with a partner before they

commit to a legal union. Ariskwu (2013) also stated that in an attempt for students to avoid rent, get food and survive, they engage in the act of cohabitation. This was supported by Godwin, Mosher and Chandra (2010) who stated that extremely high cost of living off campus and tight budgets of the economy of today predisposes opposite sex to cohabit. Moreover, increase in the number of undergraduate students coupled with the inability of the school management to provide sufficient on-campus accommodation predisposes higher institution students to adopt an alternative housing strategy, which is cohabitation outside the campus (Kasim & Falola, 2017). In the view of Ojewola and Akinduyo (2017), the non-residential housing that is available at many educational institutions has a tendency to encourage students to cohabit, which is in contrast to the situation that existed in ancient times. In the view of Imo (2017) economic factor, in terms of high rate of poverty necessitated undergraduates to search for means of surviving and cohabitation is one of the means. This was corroborated by Osiesi et al. (2024) who stated that there is positive and strong correlation between undergraduate perceived poverty and educational life.

Onoyase (2020) stated that high rent fixed on private accommodations within the campus, financial distress, freedom from parental supervision and control make some students engage in the act. Students in higher institutions also cohabit because of love. In other words, it is to fortify their relationship and prevent other students from taking their partner from them (Ariskwu, 2013). This assertion was corroborated by Otieno (2021) who reported that majority of students emphasized the need to maintain strong and intimate relationships with their loved ones, as well as the absence of family support and parental affection, as factors contributing to students cohabiting. Kasim, Omirin and Okoro (2018) reported peer pressure and poverty as cohabitation casual factor, while Muhinat (2022) stated that the fear of losing loved ones, moral and religious decadence are reasons why students cohabit. Cohabitation in higher institutions of learning in Nigeria has therefore continued to attract scholarly attention because of the strong assumption that the phenomenon gives warning to the erosion to some of the cultural values and religious discipline highly revered in the country.

A study conducted at the University of Ibadan in Nigeria revealed that cohabitation is due to the increase in the number of undergraduate students and the inability of the school authorities to provide accommodation (Arisukwu, 2013). In addition, it was revealed that the most common cause for cohabitation among undergraduate students at Ebonyi State University was the need to satisfy their sexual needs. In the study carried out by Otieno (2021) respondents claimed that it is a good idea for a couple to live together before getting married in order to find out whether they can really get along. Findings from the study showed that majority of the

respondents (32%) highlighted to be close and intimate to loved ones as the main reason why students cohabit. Moreover, 13% highlighted lack of family support and parental love. Otieno (2021) also stated that the decline in the influence of religion account for the increase in cohabitation among students.

Religiosity and Cohabitation

Of the values and attitudes associated with sexual liberalization cohabitation is an important concern among young people in their late teens. Religious influences play a significant part in the process of instilling sexual conduct codes in individuals during their primary and secondary socialization, as stated by Konga and WeiBmann (2020). These rules are implanted during the individual's formative years. In light of the fact that sexual restraint and conservative perspectives on sexuality can be found in every religion, one could even argue that they are an essential component of religions in general. Otieno (2021) also stated that cohabitation is not widely embraced as a societal norm in numerous Nigerian societies. This is because religious institutions and parents express disapproval towards cohabitation on campus, and individuals who engage in such behaviour are often characterised by denial and rationalization. According to Kogan and Weibmann (2019), young Muslims and Christians with strong spiritual principles are more likely to reject cohabitation behaviour.

Through parents and educational institutions, codes of sexual behaviour are instilled in a child and religious influences play an important role in this process (Gault-Sherman & Drapen, 2012). Religious concepts and teachings therefore significantly influence the extent to which undergraduates engage in cohabitation behavior (Alebiosu, 2020). Imo (2017) stated that cohabitation is not an accepted norm in many Nigerian societies. Moreover, religious organizations and parents frown at it. However, less devout individuals of any religion are less likely to adopt instructions imposed on them by religion than their more religious counterparts. Although all religions highly admire abstinence before marriage, Islam and Christianity are particularly vocal in denouncing cohabitation (Kalmin and Kraaykamp, 2018). According to Hense and Schorch (2013), unmarried cohabitation is forbidden in Islam, due to the pronounced norm of virginity. Since marriage is also a norm in Christianity, cohabitation or pre-extra marital relations are not accepted. This norm however, is no longer as fiercely enforced by Christian churches as it used to be in the past (Vignoli and Salvini 2014).

Measures of Curbing Cohabitation

It is worthy of note that most religion endorses sexual morality. Consequently, individuals who are more religious should have more conservative attitudes towards cohabitation, irrespective of their faith. It was also suggested by Duyilemi, Tunde-Awe and Lois (2018) that cohabitation could be curbed if the university management

could provide adequate accommodation for students who live off campus, while parents and guardians monitor regularly their children and wards in schools. According to Onoyase (2020) adequate number of halls of residence for the students will go a long way to reduce cohabitation among students in higher institutions. Imo (2017) suggested that accommodations owned by the university should be constructed in places where the behaviours of the students can be regulated. Enlightenment and exhortation on the dangers of cohabitation would also help in reducing cohabitation on campus which can be done by the various religious bodies.

Moreover, there is need for religious organizations to put more efforts in speaking to their congregation on the menaces associated with cohabitation while on campus (Akanbi, 2017). In the words of Ojewola and Akinduyo (2017), religious bodies, university authorities and parents should try and alleviate the problem of cohabitation by providing affordable, suitable and conducive accommodation within the university environment. Counselling on the other hand should be given on a regular basis to students on the need for good moral and chaste living. Kasim, Omirin and Okoro (2018) posited that parents should safeguard the wellbeing and welfare of their children by ensuring that their basic needs while on campus are provided.

Theoretical Framework

A significant characteristic of contemporary sociological study on social exchange is its focus on the correlation between social exchange theory and theories pertaining to social network, influence, attachment, social status, solidarity, trust and emotion (Cook, Cheshire, Rice & Nakagawa, 2013). Social Exchange Theory developed by George Homans and Peter Blau postulates that social interaction is guided by what each person stands to benefit or loss from the interaction (Ahmad, Nawaz, Ishaq, Khan, & Ashraf, 2022). In cohabitation, people look for companions who offer at least as much in terms of physical attractiveness, wealth, intelligence and protection as they offer in return. The theory also enables us to appreciate the reason why some students shun practices when they estimate that what they may loose from their parents if they live such life will be much more than what they stand to gain from cohabitation.

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study was to examine the prevalence of religiosity and cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State. Conducting the current study is important for higher institution administration to assess the prevalence and menace of cohabitation behaviour among students in the tertiary institutions. Knowledge about the prevalence of this act may shed some light to some approaches that can be adopted to reduce if not eradicate it especially

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.13 (3), September-December, 2024 https://ajemates.org

through religious means. This can also help the school management provide new strategies to help students, counsellors and other authorities work better to reduce cohabitation among students, thus paving way for good moral and chastity.

Research Method

Research Design

The research design used in this study is a descriptive research design of correlational type in which questionnaire was used to collect data from the respondents. This method seeks to establish by observation the variables of interest in which the researchers has no control over and therefore cannot manipulate them. It is expected that the sample drawn would be generalized and inferences drawn from the whole population of the study. Also, the variables were being observed as have been treated in their natural occurrence.

Sample and Sampling Procedure

The population for the study comprises all public tertiary institutions in Ekiti State. Simple random sampling technique of balloting was used to select five (5) faculties in each of the tertiary institutions. One hundred students were randomly selected from each faculty. Five hundred (500) undergraduate students were used for the study in each of the tertiary institution. The total number of two thousand (2000) students was used for the study. However, out of 2000 questionnaire administered, 1801 questionnaires were received back, giving the attrition rate of 9.95%.

The summary of biodata information received from the participants, showed that 829 46.0(%) were male while 972 (54.0%) were female.1441 respondents (80%) were in monogamy family while 360 respondents (20%) were from polygamy family. In relation to religion, 1544 respondents (85.7%) were Christians while 234 respondents (12.9%) were Muslims while 18 (4.7%), while 22 respondents (1.2%) fell into African Traditional Religion. Additionally, 1340 respondents representing 74.4% reside in off campus, 305 respondents representing 16.9% reside on campus, while 156 respondents representing 8.7% live with parents or guardians. Respondents parents' marital status shows that 984 (54.6%) were married, 648 (36.0%) were single, 33 (1.8%) were divorced, 112 (6.2%) were widowed while 24 (1.3%) were remarried. A further breakdown showed that 10 (0.6%) of the respondents were below the age of 16years, 1292 (71.7%) of the respondents were between the age range of 16-21years and 499 (27.7%) of the respondents were above 22years. Their mean age was 19.5years. A further breakdown showed that 10 (0.6%), 1292 (71.7%) and 499 (27.7%) of the respondents were between the age range of below 16, 16-21 and above 22 years respectively. Their mean age was 19.5.

Instrumentation

The instrument that was used for the study was a questionnaire titled "Cohabitation and Cohabitation Problems"

(CCP) used in description and analysis of cohabiting sample in America by Donald Wayne Bower. 10 items were adapted from cohabitation questionnaire. The response format was four-point scale and Cronbach alpha reliability rate was established for this study. Moreover, "Religiosity and Spiritual Scale for Youth" (RSSY) developed by Hernandez (2011) was also used for the study. It has 72 items out of which 20 items were adapted. The items were rated on a 4-point scale ranging from 0 = never, to 4 = almost always indicating the degree to which respondents participate in or agree with each item. The author reported a Cronbach alpha of α=.81.

Presentation of Results

The study investigated into religiosity and cohabitation behavior (prevalence and gender differences) among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State. Four research questions were formulated and tested.

Research Question One: What is the prevalence of cohabitation behavior among undergraduate students in the higher institutions in Ekiti state?

Table 1: Descriptive Statistics showing the prevalence of cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti state

Prevalence of cohabitation	Frequency	Percentage
Low	672	37.3
Moderate	852	47.3
High	277	15.4
Total	1801	100.0

Table 1 revealed that 672 participants which represented 37.3% scored low in cohabitation measure, 852 respondents representing 47.3% scored moderate while 277 participants representing 15.4% scored high in cohabitation measure. This implies that majority of the students used for this study scored moderate. Hence, there is moderate prevalence of cohabitation among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti state.

Research Question Two: Is there any relationship between religiosity and cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti state?

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.13 (3), September-December, 2024 https://ajemates.org

Table 2: Descriptive statistics and correlation between religiosity and cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State

Variables	N	Mean	SD	R	Sig
Religiosity	1801	2.47	.537	.-295	.000
Cohabitation behavior	1801	1.78	.689		

The result on table 2 shows the descriptive statistics and correlation between religiosity and cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti state. As shown in table 2, religiosity is significantly correlated inversely with cohabitation behaviour ($r = .-295$; $p<.05$). This means that those who score high in religiosity diagnostic measure scored low in cohabitation behavior and vice versa. Hence, there is a significant negative relationship between religiosity and cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti state. This finding is consistent with the research conducted by Konga and WeiBmann (2020) which confirmed that the majority of religions tend to promote strict adherence to their particular understanding of sexuality among their followers. Consequently, individuals who are less religious in any given religion are less likely to have appropriate view of cohabitation behaviours compared to their more religious peers. The finding also affirmed the view of Kogan and Weibmann (2020), who stated that young Muslims and Christians with strong spiritual principles are more likely to reject sexual liberalization.

Research Question Three: Is there any significant difference in the cohabitation behaviour of male and female undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State?

Table 3: T-test showing the difference in the level of cohabitation among the male and female undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti state

Variable	**N**	**X**	**SD**	**T**	**Df**	**P**	**Remark**
Male	829	1.82	.676	10.468	1799	.001	S
Female	972	1.73	.698				

The result on table 3 above shows that, the value of $t = 10.468$, $df = 1799$, $p<0.05$. Since $p<0.05$, therefore, there is significant difference in the level of cohabitation behaviour as practiced by male and female undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti. This result indicates that gender is a factor affecting cohabitation behaviour as male mean is significantly higher than female mean score despite the increase in the number of female used in the study. This finding aligns with that of

Research Question Four: What is the level of religiosity of undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State?

AJEMATES
African Journal of Educational Management, Teaching and Entrepreneurship Studies
VOL.13 (3), September-December, 2024 https://ajemates.org

Table 4: Descriptive Statistics showing the level of religiosity of undergraduate students' in higher institutions in Ekiti state

Level of Religiosity	Frequency	Percentage
Low	892	49.5
Moderate	135	7.5
High	774	43.0
Total	1801	100.0

Table 4 revealed that 892 participants which represented 49.5 scored low in religiosity diagnostic measure administered, 135 respondents representing 7.5% scored average while 774 participants representing 43.0% scored high in religiosity measure. This implies that majority of the undergraduate students in this study scored low in religiosity measure. Hence, there is low level of religiosity among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti state.

Discussion and Findings

The result of the first research question showed that 43.7% of the respondents scored moderate in the cohabitation measures. Hence, majority of the students used for this study scored moderate. Therefore, there is moderate prevalence of cohabitation among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti state. This aligns with Duyilemi, Tunde-Awe and Lois (2018) who reported that 47.7% of university students participate in cohabitation, indicating that cohabitation is a problem among university students. Moreover, Imo (2017) affirmed that 11% of the undergraduate students of Ebonyi State University cohabit. The result also correspond with that of Ojewola and Akinduyo (2017) who opined that undergraduates of Adekunle Ajasin University, Ondo State, Nigeria stated that cohabiting is the best means to select companions. Furthermore, Adeyemo, Ofomata, and Duruojinkeya (2023) have discovered that there is a significant prevalence of cohabitation among students at Federal Polytechnic Nekede, Owerri, which necessitates the implementation of measures to regulate it.

The result of the second research question shows that religiosity is significantly correlated inversely with cohabitation behaviour. Hence, there is a significant negative relationship between religiosity and cohabitation among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State. This is in relation to the assertion by Kogan and Weibmann (2019) who stated that young Muslims and Christians with strong spiritual principles are more likely to reject sexual liberalization. Furthermore, the research conducted by Otieno (2021) revealed that the decrease in religious impact can be attributed to the rise in cohabitation rates among undergraduate students at the University of Ibadan. However, this result did not align with the result from the study of Alebiosu (2020) which indicated a

positive but insignificant relationship between religion and undergraduates' involvement in couple life behavior.

The result on table 3 shows that there is significant difference in the level of cohabitation behaviour as practiced by male and female undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti. This result indicates that gender is a factor affecting cohabitation behaviour as male mean is significantly higher than female mean score. This finding does not align with that of Imo (2017) who established that female cohabits more than males in Ebonyi State University. Alebiosu (2020) in his own study reported that gender has no significant influence on the participation of undergraduate students in cohabitation behavior. The result however correspond with that of Kupernerg (2014) who reported that a greater percentage of males than females have lived a life of cohabitation.

The result on table 4 shows that majority of the undergraduate students in this study scored low in religiosity measure. Hence, there is low level of religiosity among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State. The result of this finding align with Gault-Sherman and Drapen (2012) who stated that religious inclination is no longer a barrier for young people who wish to fulfil their desire to cohabit. Since there is a significant negative relationship between religiosity and cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti state, it implies that the level of cohabitation among the students is not low.

Conclusion and Recommendation

The study investigated religiosity and cohabitation behaviour (prevalence and gender differences) among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti State. The study concluded that there is a moderate prevalence of cohabitation among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti state. On the other hand, there is a significant negative relationship between religiosity and cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti state. Moreover, there is significant difference in the level of cohabitation behaviour as practiced by male and female undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti.

Finally, there is a low level of religiosity among undergraduate students in higher institutions in Ekiti state.

The findings have some implications for school counsellors, parents, management of tertiary institutions and the government. Institutions should provide a forum where parents and guardians of the students will be advised on the need for them to always find time to visit their children on a regular basis. This will enable them to assess the social life of their children on campus as well as magnify the family love. Moreover, higher institutions should strengthen their counselling unit so that students can easily meet the counsellors whenever they are in danger or being abused. They should implement strategies that can help undergraduates avoid, reduce their sensitivity to, and disengage them from

cohabitation behaviour through restructuring.

Students should also be enlightened during orientation about the dangers of cohabitation and should also be able to afford campus accommodation so that those whose parents are low income earners are not susceptible to cohabitation and other forms of exploitation. Given religion's power to shape values, it is important that it maintains a prominent place in therapeutic relationships, while religious leaders should organize regular seminars to shed more light on relationship, dating, courtship as well as family life.

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