

Young college adults' perceptions towards non-marital cohabitation

by

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ABSTRACT

Non-marital cohabitation is on the rise as are many other non-traditional aspects of family such as having children before marriage. With cohabitation on the rise, society seems to accept it more and more as a normal way of living. Although in the past cohabitation before marriage was not viewed as the right thing to do, it is now sometimes seen as a “necessity.” Some people do it out of preparation for marriage, while others do it out of convenience. This study examined college students who cohabit and their reasons for cohabitating with an opposite sex partner. Using a combined quantitative and qualitative design, the researcher examined cohabitation among college students related to their race, gender, and religious backgrounds, and personal beliefs. The Non-Marital Cohabitation Questionnaire, adapted from Wiersma (1983), was used to gather both the quantitative and qualitative data.

Racial background did not appear to be related to cohabitation; however with only 8 (6.9%) Black (African-American) students in the total group of 115 cohabitating students, the numbers did not allow for much statistical testing. Gender did not appear to be a major variable in why males and females cohabit. Of 112 participants who answered the question about how they came to their decision to cohabit, close to half ($n = 53$; 47%) said they cohabit for convenience; 41 (37%) said they cohabitated based on a mutual agreement of deciding to move in together, for financial reasons, or because they were currently engaged. Females were happier about their cohabitating partner and relationship than were males. Of 104 participants who responded about religious beliefs, 42 (40%) said they did not have any religious beliefs about cohabitation or their religious beliefs were not an issue related to cohabitation.

Knowledge gained from this research will help university personnel, parents, and others understand more about cohabitation on college campuses across the nation and why it is selected as a way of living.