



Effect of morality training technique on cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students of IMO State University, Owerri

Nnadi Grace Chinyere ¹, Uzoekwe Helen Efeyadu ², Oguzie Alphonsus Ekejiuba ^{3*}, Akunne Lilian Ifeoma ⁴

¹⁻⁴ Ph.D., Department of Guidance and Counselling, Faculty of Education, Nnamdi Azikiwe University Awka, Anambra State, Nigeria

* Corresponding Author: **Oguzie Alphonsus Ekejiuba**

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Abstract

The researchers investigated the effect of morality training technique on cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in Imo state university, Owerri. The pre-test, post-test, control group quasi-experimental design was adopted for this study. Two research questions and two null hypotheses tested at 0.05 level of significance guided the study. The population of this study comprised 8,031 of 300 level students in Imo state university, Owerri. The researchers sampled 60 students for the study. The sampling techniques employed are purposive and cluster. Two instruments developed by the researchers were used for data collection, namely: Students Cohabitation Identification Scale (SCIS) and Cohabitation Detecting Scale (CDS). The instruments were validated by experts in Departments of Measurement and Evaluation as well as Guidance and Counselling. The reliability of the instruments was ascertained through test-retest method using Cronbach alpha statistics which yielded reliability coefficients of 0.81 and 0.85 for SCIS and CDS respectively. Data collected were analysed using mean score and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The hypotheses were tested using the analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 5% level of significance. The findings revealed among others that morality training technique (MTT) is significantly effective in the reduction of cohabitation among undergraduate at post-test and follow up test. From the above findings, it was recommended among others, that Counsellors should make use of morality training technique in curbing cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students to enhance their academic performance.

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Introduction

Human culture in the 21st century has been transformed by a revolution in sexual values. Promiscuity is regarded as many as a value to pursue. Youths who do not engage in premarital sex are perceived by their peers as stupid, boring and unsophisticated, with the result that children are trying sex at earlier ages than ever before (Mashaum, 2008). This has given birth to a culture of cohabitation. From 1960s cohabitation and premarital sex have been growing trend worldwide (Musick, 2007) ^[12]. Cohabitation as a lifestyle is on the rise throughout the world and Nigeria is no exception. This behaviour is fast becoming a kind of a norm among students and working youth, who not only choose to share their lodgings, but also their blankets (Dolbik-Vorobei, 2005) ^[3]. Cohabitation, or living with a man or woman together without marriage, is a dramatic, significant change in the way many students in the universities evolve from being single to being married. Cohabitation, sometimes called consensual union or de Facto marriage, refers to unmarried heterosexual couples living together in an intimate relationship (International Encyclopaedia of marriage and family, 2003). Cohabitation as such is not a new phenomenon. It has, however, developed into a novel family form in contrast with conventional marriage. Part of this change is associated with the absolute rise in cohabitational

relationships. Since 1970s, many countries, particularly those in North American and Europe, have experienced rapid growth in their cohabitation rates.

Although these numbers generally remain small relative to families composed of married couples, the absolute numbers of cohabitating couples have increased dramatically. Cohabitation was obscure and even taboo throughout the nineteenth century and until the 1970s. Non-marital unions have become common because the meaning of the family has been altered by individualistic social values that have progressively matured since the late 1940s. As post-war trends illustrate, marriage is no longer the sanctified permanent institution it once was. The proliferation of divorce, remarriage, stepfamilies, and single parenthood has transformed the institution of the family. With these structural changes, attitudes towards non-marital unions have become increasingly permissive.

Because cohabitation involves a shared household between intimate partners, it has characteristics in common with marriage. Similarities include pooled economic resources, a gender division of labour in the household, and sexual exclusivity. However, though the day-to-day interaction between cohabitating couples' parallels that of married couples in several ways, important distinctions remain. While some argue that cohabitation has become a variant of marriage, the available evidence does not support this position. Davis (1985) ^[12] points out that if cohabitation were simply a variant of marriage, then its increased prevalence vis-à-vis marriage would lack significance. Sociologists treat cohabitation as a distinct occurrence not just because it has displaced marriage, but also because it represents a structural change in family relationships.

Today, people have freedom to live their lives the way they choose. The youth especially undergraduate students are not left behind in this trend as they express their freedom by living independently with fellow students of the opposite sex, outside the confines of marriage, particularly among those who live off-campus (Nwajiuba, 2010) ^[13]. There are too many reasons that may instigate undergraduate student to cohabit among which are: Wanting to test compatibility or to establish financial security before marrying. Some students decide to cohabit for economic and financial reasons. It may also be because they are unable to marry legally. Some students may also choose cohabitation because they see their relationships as being private and personal matters, and not to be controlled by political, religious or patriarchal institutions (Lambs, 2003; Nwajiuba, 2010) ^[13]. According to Nwajiuba (2010) ^[13], students who cohabit are more likely to divorce, and that unhappiness, ill health, poverty, and domestic violence are more common in people who cohabit. Furthermore, casual sex and cohabitation is now becoming of the favourite's subjects of the youths. Cohabitation and sex are likely becoming one of the means to improve love towards each other among students in recent times (Eweniyi, 2003; Dolbik-Vorobei, 2005) ^[4, 3]. Youths who abstain from sex are seen as weird or branded as religious fanatics.

Cohabitation among students may lead to unwanted pregnancy, contracting HIV/AIDS and other STDs. It is among the maladaptive behaviours that have contributed to the increase level of abortion among girls today and early exposure to the use of contraceptive. The girls are often sexually abused by boys. It could also cause a lot of added stress that they cannot anticipate. Cohabitation among undergraduate students results to spending less time on

studies, non-attendance to lectures and poor performance in academic work thereby inhabiting progress in students' career.

Having known the danger inherent in cohabitation, it is therefore pertinent that some counselling techniques be used to curb such behaviour among university students. Supporting this assertion, Oguzie and Nwokolo (2019) ^[16] stressed that the inculcation and maintenance of desirable behaviours among students are entrusted upon the shoulders of guidance counsellors, the need therefore to explore an effective counselling technique for curbing cohabitation behaviour among university students in Imo state, and Nigeria in general becomes so imperative.

Against this background, it is very important that concerted efforts be made towards assisting students to overcome the problem of cohabitation behaviour. Such efforts may involve behaviour intervention such as morality training. Achie and Eremie (2018) observed that behaviour modification is a treatment procedure psychologically meant to control, prevent, or cure problems of human behaviour. Conceptually, behaviour modification is the systematic arrangement and scientific process of altering behaviours, basically from undesirable behaviour to desirable behaviour (Onwuasoanya, 2006) ^[18]. Since, behaviour modification has to do with resolving specific cases of behavioural abnormalities, the aim can only be achieved by applying the right technique. Hence, the researchers decided to use a behaviour intervention technique called morality training in reducing cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students.

Morality training technique was developed by Lawrence Kohlberg in 1969 from his theory of moral development. This technique focuses on inculcating virtues of societal morals on the learner through processed training.

Muraina and Ugwumba (2014) ^[11] viewed morality as that which relates to a set of conventional rules for determining one's social action and which have been internalized. Morality simply refers to actions that are rational in nature, universally accepted as it symbolizes a law capable of being applied as a standard to govern the actions of all rational beings (Chima, 2006). Ejiogu as cited in Chima (2006) saw morality as goodness, integrity, virtue, virtuousness, righteousness, goodliness, honesty, probity and fair mindedness. Ejiogu believes that a person who is morally sound is free from evil, greed, deceit and tyranny. In this study, morality training can be seen as a practical experience which ensures that the virtues of societal morals are inculcated on the learner through a kind of processed training. If all these virtues of morals are inculcated on the learner through a kind of processed training that is, if all these virtues of morality training are taught to students through this study, the researchers believe that cohabitation behaviours of the students will be minimized.

Empirically, Okafor (2014) ^[17] revealed that morality training had a positive effect on the maladjustment behaviour of the students. In consonance, Ogunsola (2011) ^[15] advocated for necessary empowerment of the youngsters, especially the female teenager, through proper sex education to avoid the harmful consequences of premarital behaviours that often lead to sexual activities. Igba, Ofem and Isu (2016) ^[5] who revealed that good guidance and counselling are good strategies for restoring morality among youths within families. Maqsd as cited by Okafor (2014) ^[17] asserted that, moral training is a training that should be able to produce an individual who could manifest the following behavioural

traits; a positive commitment towards the value of morality, ability to communicate with others and the ability to understand the feelings of others and those of his own. However, Mumbula (1999) considers moral training superior to any other form of education, as without it, other types of education would lose their efficacy.

Gender issue was considered in the study as a factor in cohabitation because gender effect on behaviour is not finally determined. Gender in its narrowest sense means socially constructed sex roles of female or male. Consequently, there might be differences in male and female behaviours, this is partly as a product or outcome of gender roles orientation in social construction of a particular environment in which they belong to (Masten, 2001) ^[10].

Purpose of the Study

The main purpose of this study is to examine the effect of morality training technique on cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students in Imo state university, Owerri. Specifically, the study determined:

1. The effect of morality training technique on cohabitation behaviour of undergraduates' students when compared with those in the control group using their pre-test and post-test mean scores.
2. The retention of the effect of morality training technique (MTT) on cohabitation behaviour among undergraduates' students when compared with those in the control group using follow-up test scores.

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed to guide this study:

1. What is the effect of morality training technique (MTT) on cohabitation behaviour of undergraduate students when compared with those in the control group using their pre-test and post-test mean scores?
2. What is the retention of the effect of MTT on cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students when compared with those in the control group using follow-up test scores?

Hypotheses

The following null hypotheses were formulated and tested at 0.05 level of significance:

H₀₁: There is no significant difference between the mean scores of the students treated with MTT and control group at pre-test and post-test periods

H₀₂: There is no significant difference between the mean score of the students treated with MTT technique and control group at follow-up-assessment.

Methods

This study adopted the pretest - posttest control group quasi-experimental design. Quasi experiment is a study where random assignment of participants to experimental and control groups is not possible (Nworgwu 2015). The population of this study comprised 8,031 of 300 level students in Imo state university. The researchers sampled 60 students using purposive and cluster sampling techniques. Instruments

used for this study were Student's Cohabitation Identification Scale (SCIS) and Cohabitation Dictating scale (CDS) which was adequately validated and found to be reliable at 0.81 and 0.85 coefficients respectively using Cronbach alpha statistics. The students' cohabitation scale (SCIS) was used to identify students that involved in cohabitation in school during the pre-test. The treatment lasted for six weeks using one-hour pre section. The experimental group was treated with morality training technique, while the control group received conventional counselling from the researchers, but not on morality building. At the end of the treatment, the SCIS was reshuffled and re-administered to both the experimental and control groups. After four weeks, the post-test follow-up test was given to the experimental and control groups by administering the Cohabitation Detecting scale (CDS). This was to find out the retention of the effect of modelling morality training technique treatment at an interval of four weeks. In doing this, the researcher's ensured good testing conditions and the instruments were retrieved on the spot to avoid possible losses. Data collected were analysed using mean score and standard deviation to answer the research questions. The hypotheses were tested using Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) at 5% level of significance.

Results

Table 1: Mean scores of the students treated with morality training technique (MTT) and control group at pre-test and post-test periods

Test		Pre-test		Post-test	
Group	N	X	S	x	s
MTT	30	69.27	3.74	28.47	2.01
Control	30	69.77	3.32	69.07	3.63

Table 1 shows the mean scores of the students treated with MTT and control group pre-test and post-test periods. The table indicated that at pre-test, students under MTT and control groups had mean scores of 69.27 and 69.77 respectively but at post test their mean scores were 28.47 and 69.07 respectively. With this, it shows that morality training is effective in the reduction cohabitation among undergraduate.

Table 2: Mean scores of the students treated with MTT technique and control group at follow-up-assessment period.

Test		Pre-test		Follow-up-Test	
Group	N	X	S	X	S
MTT	30	69.27	3.74	30.13	2.85
Control	30	69.77	3.32	70.03	3.89

Table 2 shows the mean scores of the students treated with MTT technique and control group at follow-up-assessment period. The table indicated that at pre-test, students under MTT and control groups had mean scores of 69.27 and 69.77 respectively but at follow-up-test their mean scores were 30.13 and 70.03, respectively. With this, the conclusion is that morality training was still effective in the reduction of cohabitation among undergraduate after four weeks of the treatment (follow up assessment period).

Table 3: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) test for Hypothesis 1.

Test of Between-Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: Post-Test					
Source	Types III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	24732.896 ^a	2	12366.448	1433.173	.000
Intercept	260.295	1	260.295	30.166	.000
Pre –Test	7.496	1	7.496	.869	.355
Treatments	24536.650	1	24536.650	2843.603	.000
Error	491.837	57	8.629		
Total	167916.000	60			
Corrected Total	25224.733	59			

a. R Squared = .981 (Adjusted R Squared = .980).

Table 3: shows that the f-calculated is 2843.603. The table also indicated that the sig. value of the f-calculated is .000 which is less than the significance level of 0.05. the conclusion from here is to reject the null hypothesis and

deduce that there is significant difference between the mean scores of the students treated with MTT and control group test and post-test periods.

Table 4: Analysis of Covariance (ANCOVA) test for Hypothesis 3.

Test of Between- Subjects Effects					
Dependent Variable: follow-up-Test					
Source	Types III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	23959.022 ^a	2	11979.511	1146.536	.000
Intercept	110.412	1	110.412	10.567	.002
Pre –Test	78.872	1	78.872	7.549	.008
Treatments	23561.355	1	23561.355	2255.011	.000
Error	595.561	57	10.448		
Total	175055.000	60			
Corrected Total	24554.583	59			

a. R Squared = .976 (Adjusted R Squared = .975)

Table 4 shows that the f-calculated is 2255.011. The table also indicated that the sig. value of the f-calculated is .000 which is less than the significance level of 0.05. Thus, the second null hypothesis is rejected. Therefore, there is significant difference between the mean scores of the students treated with MTT technique and control group at follow-up-assessment period.

Discussion of findings

The findings of this study revealed that morality training is effective in the reduction of cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students. When tested, the finding proved significant. This implies that comparing the control group and morality group, it shows that morality training was effective in reducing cohabitation among undergraduate students. This finding is in line with Okafor (2014) ^[17] findings which revealed that morality training had a positive effect on the maladjustment behaviour of the students. In consonance, Ogunsola (2011) ^[15] advocated for necessary empowerment of the youngsters, especially the female teenagers, through proper sex education to avoid the harmful consequences of premarital behaviours that often lead to sexual activities. It is an essential step taken to properly inform the young adults about the obstructive outcome of premarital behaviours such as romantic intimacy and sexual relationships to avoid its negative consequences in their future marriages, hence the usefulness of morality training.

Another finding of this study revealed that morality training was still effective in the reduction of cohabitation behaviour among the students after four weeks of the treatment (follow up assessment period). When tested, the finding proved significant. This finding is in line with Igba, Ofem and Isu (2016) ^[5] who revealed that good guidance and counselling

are good strategies for restoring morality among youths within families. Maqsd as cited by Okafor (2014) ^[17] asserted that, moral training is a training that should be able to produce an individual who could manifest the following behavioural trait; a positive commitment towards the value of morality, ability to communicate with others and the ability to understand feelings of others and those of his own. However, Mambula (1999) ^[8] considers moral training superior to any other form of education, as without it, other types of education would lose their efficacy.

Conclusion

The study concluded that morality training technique is an effective psychotherapy which helps in the reduction of cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students even four weeks after the experimental treatment.

Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

1. Counsellors should make use of morality training in controlling of cohabitation behaviour among undergraduate students.
2. The university administrators should organize and sponsor school counsellors on workshops, exhibitions, seminars and conferences on a regular basis in order to update their knowledge, expressing and drilling then on the use morality training.
3. The school authorities and government should ensure that they provide accommodations where there is none to the students and the existing ones should be monitored in order to check the activities of the occupying students.

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