

# Marriage and introduction cohabitation essay



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## 1. Introduction

Cohabitation, in the basic meaning, is a physical and emotional relationship between two opposite-sex inmates involves living together without any legal sanction. Many people believe that cohabitation is definitely popular to the youngsters only; however, this can happen in the older ones as well.

Cohabitation appeared a long time ago and quickly became common in the USA and other Western countries. Over the last two decades, a dramatic increase in the number of cohabiting couples has been witnessed. As Bumpass and Lu reported, “ the proportion of all first unions (including both marriages and cohabitations) that begin as cohabitations rose from 46% for unions formed between 1980 and 1984 to almost 60% for those formed between 1990 and 1994”, (cited in Smock 2000). Because cohabitation has the possibility of existing for a long period of time, it is not too surprising to know that up to 35% of couples who never marry have their own children like a “ real family” (Smoke 2000).

The popularity of cohabitation is affecting many countries in a lot of regions, and Asia is not an exception. The young Asian people, especially college students, are influenced much by Western culture, which lead to the shift of attitude towards a lot of aspects of life involving cohabitation: they tend to be more acceptable with living without marriage. However, it still raises an argument among people of concerning that whether cohabitation should be permitted in Asia. This paper analyzes the cohabitation in Asian college students and discusses its negative effects on students.

## 2. Discussion of findings

## 2. 1. Characteristics of Asian college students who cohabit

In many Asian countries, it is not difficult for the public to realize the cohabiting students no matter how hard they try to conceal. These students usually have typical characteristics showing that they are living with another boy or girl with no legal permission, which are identified as being older, hedonistic and lacking awareness of sexuality.

The cohabiting students in other regions except for Asia also have noticeable features. In the USA, for instance, Knox et al (1999) noted that students who are “older, hedonistic, racially tolerant individuals are most likely to cohabit”. Giving more details for each feature, the authors said that students at the age of more than 20 have higher possibility of cohabiting than those under 20. As for hedonism known as “belief in the sexual values”, they give the fact that students, or any other people, following hedonistic sexual values also have the trend of cohabitation, when the relativistic ones and absolutist in these merits youngsters are more reluctant to it. About the interracial tolerance, it is reported that students having interracial dating experience are also more likely to become cohabitants, which is really surprising. In comparison with Asian students, the last characteristic is not acceptable as the interracial matter is not popular in the Asian countries. The first two ones, oppositely, are much more similar and applicable in Asian students.

Besides these features, the young cohabitants in Asia also have a shortage of sexual knowledge. This is much different from the Western countries or the USA, in which the students much better awareness about sexuality. Most

of college students still do not get complete understanding of sexuality or even have no knowledge of this. A Chinese counselor, Tang Weiyao, revealed a funny story about a couple who were universities students having married for two years. They still thought that just sleeping in the same bed would make the wife be pregnant (cited in Lim 2005). This is an obvious example of lacking knowledge in students, involving cohabiting ones. The reasons for this are probably ineffective sexual education at school and the fact that people are still too shy to talk about sex (Lim 2005). This characteristic also leads to a lot of problems concerning sexuality such as high rate of abortion, the increase in patients suffering from sexual diseases in many Asian countries.

## 2. 2. Causes of cohabitation in Asian college students

People cohabit for a variety of reasons such as fear of commitment, awareness of the high divorce rate, and so on. As for college student, meanwhile, they make their decision because they believe that it is an opportunity for them to have trial marriage. It is shown in "Contemporary adulthood", written by Turner and Helms, that: "Young men and women, especially students, consider living together as trial marriage. The younger they are, the more likely they are to view things in this way". The authors' opinion is reasonable because cohabitation provides students chances to get emotional and sexual intimacy, share the living expenses and test out their relationship when conflicts between them happen. Many students assert that this phenomenon is a "gold chance" to prepare for their marriage, so they are not reluctant to try living together.

Belief of trial marriage, however, is not the only reason for cohabitation in Asian youngsters. One of the characteristics of cohabiting students is hedonism, which indicates that they are more acceptable in premarital sex than other people who do not cohabit. In the past, this sensitive matter was considered as a taboo in many Asian countries; however, things have changed in modern society. As an evident of this, a recent survey in Viet Nam shows that more than 70% of the students asked about having sex before marriage considers it as normal or do not reject to it (Tien Dung 2007). According to Dr. Duong Tu Dam, from Adolescents Institute, this result reflects the fact that the students are becoming more tolerant towards premarital sex; and their opinions of love affair and marriage are also more open (cited in Tien Dung 2007). Because cohabitation has a strong association with sexuality, the decision of living together depends much on the attitudes towards this sensitive matter. As a result, the change in attitude of youngsters these days contributes substantially to their cohabitation.

### 2. 3. Negative effects of cohabitation on students

There are some benefits of cohabitation which seem to be ideal to a lot of students. When cohabiting, they can have greater knowledge of what is involved in living with another person, increase interpersonal skill and grow in emotional maturity, etc. This phenomenon, nevertheless, also has an adverse influence on college students which possibly takes them a long time to overcome the negative effects. The first consequence of cohabitation that Asian college students have to accept is the lack of support from society. Schwartz and Scott (1994, p. 196) assert that many couples may have plenty

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of difficulties as their cohabitation may go counter to their religious upbringing or to parental values. In Asia, a majority of people, especially the older generation, still consider cohabitation as an unacceptable phenomenon because it goes counter to the traditional values. The cohabitants will unavoidably have much trouble as they have to conceal their relationship or bear the objection or even severe criticism from the public, even their parents or friends.

It is mentioned in the part two that many youngsters cohabit because they regard it as trial marriage. This style of living, on the other hand, often ends up in dissolution. Milan (2000) reported that “cohabitations tend to dissolve more rapidly than marriages. More than 50% of all these unions end in dissolution within five years” (cited in Ambert 2005). Another figure for this effect shown by Sheri and Stritof is that: “In the United States and in the UK, couples who live together are at a greater risk for divorce than non-cohabiting couples”. The most concerning problem is that cohabiting students after breaking up with their partner suffer from emotional trauma which is more serious than those who not. Ambert (2005) noted that breaking up cohabitation is certainly more stressful than breaking up with a boyfriend or girlfriend. It is easy to understand because cohabiting youngsters must have had much emotional or sexual intimacy during the time they live together, which are really hard for them to forget.

Cohabitation also has a negative effect on the Asian college students' health. These cohabiting students have great possibility of contraception or infecting the sexual transmitted diseases (STI). In fact, the abortion rate and the number of STI cases are still increasing in many Asian countries. In China, “  
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every year, 30 to 40 % increase in the reported STI cases”, according to Zhao Pengfei from the World Health Organization, (cited in Lim 2005). In the part two of this paper, it is shown that most of students in Asia do not have profound knowledge of sexuality as well as how to protect themselves from contraception or sexually transmitted diseases. This leads to their high risk of abortion or suffering from dangerous diseases such as AIDS, gonorrhoea, syphilis, and so on. This is probably the most serious consequence that any college students have to take into account when making a decision of cohabitation. If they do not want to be a “ potential sufferer”, they had better check their knowledge first.

### 3. Conclusion

The findings indicate that cohabitation is not really a wise choice for Asian college students, though it is becoming more and more popular in most of these nations. Many people in Asian countries still consider this phenomenon as a taboo which lowers the conventional merits. Cohabitation itself shows more negative effects on students than the good ones as well. Students in Asia following the lifestyle of cohabitation will be put under pressure of criticism from a majority of the public, and their health is highly in jeopardy as they lack essential sexual knowledge. It is suggested that these youngsters had better consider carefully before they make up their mind to live with their partner. They should make some questions to see if cohabitation is what they really need to do: Does it damage the reputation of students and their family? What are specific purposes of this? Are students aware of some health problems they might meet? Do they carefully understand premarital sex? Thinking carefully before making it come true is <https://assignbuster.com/marriage-and-introduction-cohabitation-essay/>

never a waste of time. With better awareness of this phenomenon, college students in Asia will probably know what choice is unwise for themselves.