



1. Introduction

This research report encompasses the findings and implications of a social phenomenon that looks into the general views of people between the ages of 21 to 40, residing in Singapore, on cohabitation.

It provides an insight into how people view cohabitation, as our societal values and cultures evolve. Our report highlights the main reasons for and against cohabitation, the acceptance level of cohabitation in Singapore and the societal problems that may result from cohabitation.

1.1 Research Topic:

The study is done specifically on "*What are the general views of people between the age of 21 to 40, residing in Singapore, on cohabitation*".

1.2 Research Objectives:

To assist in the understanding of our research topic, four research objectives had been identified to provide specific pieces of information to give the research a purposeful direction:

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- 1) To identify the reasons to which people may or may not consider for cohabitation.
 - 2) To find out the variance in the views of males and females on cohabitation.
 - 3) To identify the degrees of acceptance of cohabitation by people residing in Singapore.
 - 4) To discover the extent to which cohabitation may add on to the existing social problems, like fewer marriages and higher divorce rate.

1.3 Research Scope:

The research scope had been defined by the terms of the research question:

- (i) 21-40 years old

This is the age group that will be focused on. 21 years of age was chosen as the starting age because it is the legal age of marriage without parental consent. Respondents aged up to 40 years old was chosen to provide a mature stand on the study as they have a wider experience in life. The sample will consists of respondents from different walks of life.

- (ii) People

This sample will involve males and females who are residing in Singapore. It includes Singapore Citizens, Permanent residents and Expatriates who have lived in Singapore for at least 3 years. This is to broaden the findings and to look at the study from an Asian and Non-Asian perspective. Therefore, findings will offer a rounder coverage.

(iii) General View

The study focuses on the attitudes and opinions of people on cohabitation.

(iv) Cohabitation.

The study is based on the definition of cohabitation as “ Two unrelated adults who live in the same household, having an emotional and sexual relationship.”

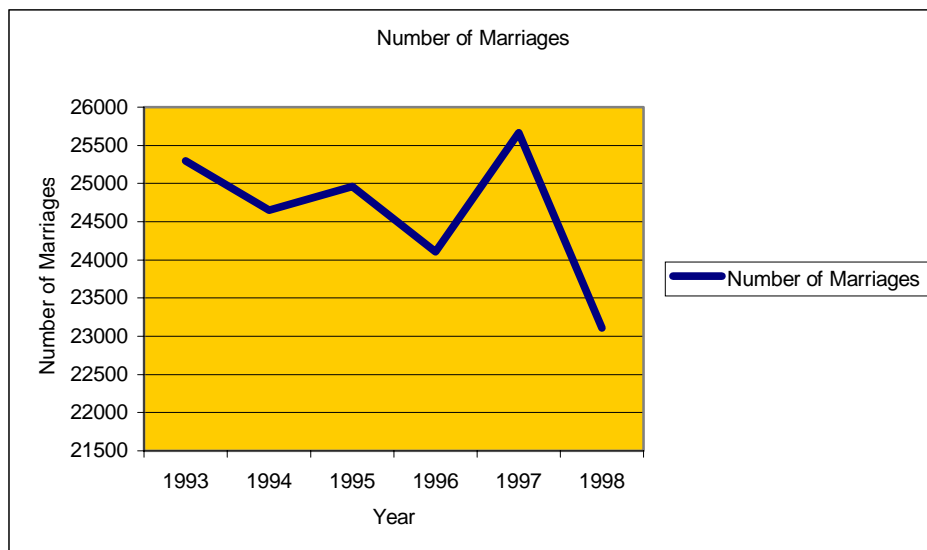


2. Literature Review

We had conducted a literature review to guide and facilitate our research topic on cohabitation. An evaluation of relevant reports and studies on marriage, divorce and changing social trends widens our knowledge and aids deeper understanding on the research topic. The following is a synthesis and critical analysis of published reports, as well as a focus on the relation of these literatures to our research topic.

2.1 Decline in Number of Marriages

The total number of marriages registered in 1998 was 23,106, 10% lower than the 25,667 registered in 1997. Marriage trends between 1993-1998 have shown a gradual decline, with the exception of 1997. This reflects the reluctance of the general population in tying the knot. With relation to our research topic, it implies that people prefer to remain unmarried and yet live together. (Source: Statistics on Marriages and Divorces 1998).

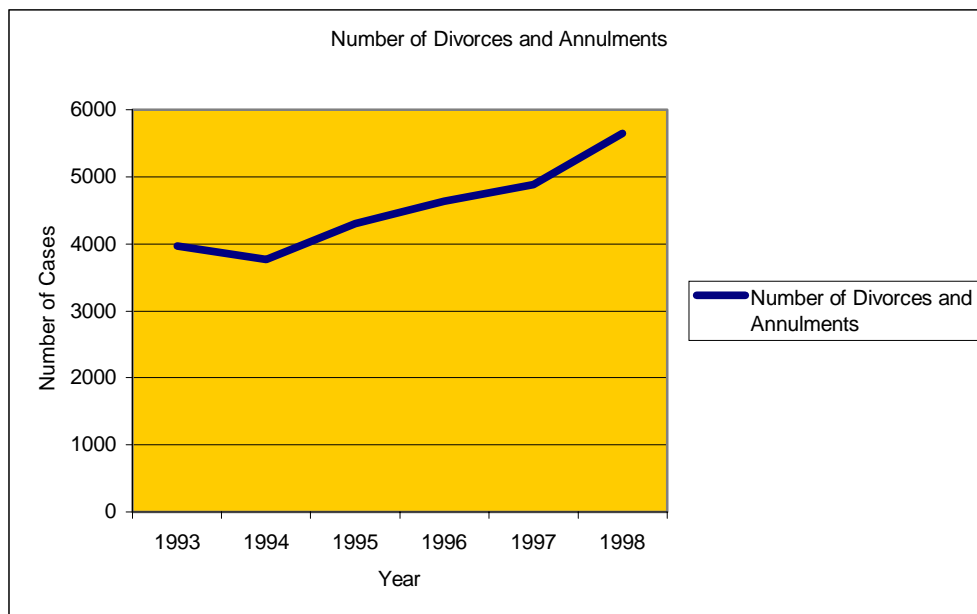


2.2 Low Age-Specific Marriage Rates

The age-specific marriage rates for males and females in 1998 were lower than those experienced in 1980 and 1990. This reflects the decline in the number of marriages of people between 20-39 years old; a range most closely identified with our research criteria. This could indicate that people between this age group hold radically different views about marriage as compared to two decades ago. Cohabitation may be an alternative to marriage. (Statistics on Marriages and Divorces 1998)

2.3 Increasing Divorce Rates

The number of divorces, granted under the Women's Charter has more than doubled over the decade, from 1,643 cases in 1988 to 3,924 in 1998. This will possibly lead to the erosion of faith in marriage, thus encouraging couples to cohabit instead. (Source: Statistics on Marriages and Divorces 1998)





3. Research Design

A research design is developed here to provide a conceptual framework whereby studies can be conducted to achieve the most valid results. The research design entails identifying an appropriate research paradigm, establishing the methodologies, as well as choosing the ideal research methods. These components of the research design are highlighted below:

3.1 Research Paradigm

A paradigm is a set of beliefs, values, and techniques which is shared by members of a scientific community, and which acts as a guide or map, dictating the kinds of problems scientists should address and the types of explanations that are acceptable to them (Sarantakos, 1999). The paradigm is used here to specify the methods and techniques most ideal for this research.

Triangulation of both *positivistic* and *phenomenological* paradigms is employed to obtain a variety of information on the same issue as well as to achieve a greater degree of validity and reliability. Furthermore, triangulation uses the strengths of one paradigm to overcome the deficiency of the other (Burgess, 1984).

The positivistic paradigm is a philosophy mainly concerned with seeking out the facts or causes of a social phenomena, with little regard to the subjective state of the individual

(Hussey and Hussey, 1997). Emphasis on this paradigm facilitates the identification and description of variables that can subsequently be used to draw a generalisation of the general population through statistical findings.

The phenomenological paradigm suggests that people are active creators of their world and have a consciousness that communicates to them everyday experiences and knowledge (Husserl, 1950). Reckoned to be a growing social phenomenon, cohabitation is researched under the phenomenological paradigm so that deeper meanings can be explored from the standpoint of the participant.

3.2 Research Methodologies

Both *survey* and *case study* methodologies were chosen as part of our research design. Triangulation of methodologies is undertaken here to enable greater validity and reliability of research findings as it can overcome the potential bias and sterility of a single-method approach.

The survey methodology draws a sample of subjects from a population and studies the sample to make inferences about the population (Zikmund, 1997). This methodology was employed to find out the people's views and attitudes towards cohabitation through the collection of standardized data

The case study methodology is employed to develop detailed intensive knowledge about this contemporary phenomenon within its real life context. A rich understanding the

research context and the processes being enacted can be gained by engaging in this research strategy.

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The collection of data was carried out using both self-administered questionnaires and in-depth interviews to achieve the following objectives:

➤ To uncover the views of how people living in Singapore feel towards cohabitation.

This was realised through conducting self-administered questionnaires with a representative sample of respondents.

➤ To gain a further insight into the contemporary phenomenon by assessing deeper qualitative meanings and attitudes through the use of in-depth interviews held with two respondents about their cohabitation experiences.

3.3.1 Self-administered Questionnaire

Self-administered questionnaires had been employed under the positivistic Paradigm to achieve the following objectives:

➤ To collect standardised quantitative data that allows easy comparison of findings.

➤ To obtain wide-ranging data in the shortest time possible, so that a generalisation can be drawn to be representative of the entire population.

➤ To recognise and describe the variability of the social phenomenon in empirical terms.

➤ To cut costs on the research to meet our tight budget.

The data collection process of self-administered Questionnaire consists of the following 5 stages.

Stage 1: Design of Questionnaire / Pilot-Testing

Brainstorming sessions were held to formulate the questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed using open-ended and close-ended questions. Likert scales were also provided to allow for variability in the responses. The questionnaire was pilot tested using a judgmental sampling of 10 friends and colleagues. The primary aim of the pilot test was to uncover hidden flaws and facilitate modification of the questionnaire.(Copies of these pilot-tested questionnaires are enclosed)

Stage 2: Printing of Questionnaire

Upon final confirmation, 200 copies of the questionnaires were printed.

Stage 3: Conducting Questionnaire

A sampling size of 200 was chosen. Quota sampling is adopted here with 100 questionnaires distributed to male respondents, and another 100 to female respondents, both between the ages of 21-40. The distribution of questionnaires was further broken down into 25 questionnaires for each age group to ensure an even sampling. All 200 questionnaires were successfully completed and returned.

Stage 4: Tabulation and Analysis of Questionnaire

SPSS (Statistical Package of Social Sciences) and Microsoft Excel were used to tabulate the data. To facilitate data entry, data was first translated into codes to represent answers

that the respondents had given. An Excel spreadsheet was also used in analysing frequencies when compiling data and for the generation of graphs and charts.

Quantitative data gathered was analyzed using exploratory data analysis, which breaks down data into categories of univariate and bivariate data. Detailed data analysis will be further elaborated in 5.1.1.

Stage 5: Presentation of Findings

Finally, the final results and outcomes of the research were presented to our clients to provide better understanding to the ideology of cohabitation.

3.3.2 In-depth Interview

In-depth interviews were conducted with two individuals who have cohabitation experiences to serve the following objectives:

- To expand our quantitative findings.
- To assess the participants' feelings and attitudes in qualitative meanings regarding the social phenomenon.
- To understand the contemporary phenomenon from the participant's experiences in real life context.

The following discussion describes our data collection process for in-depth interview, which is comprised of six main stages.

Stage 1: Formulate Questions

The questions for the in-depth interview were formulated with reference to the variables defined in the questionnaire and consistent to our research objectives.

Stage 2: Select Sample

Due to the sensitivity of the topic, participants for the interview were not readily available and to our disadvantage, our sample size was limited to two. However, we managed to find two respondents from diverse contexts and backgrounds, which enabled us to draw a clearer profile of people's views towards cohabitation.

Stage 3: Notification of Participant

The selected respondent were invited and notified of the date, time, and location of the interview through email and phone calls.

Stage 4: Formulation of Interview Structure

The interview structure comprised of the following five phases:

Phase 1: Introduction between the interviewers and interviewee.

Phase 2: We defined our research design in terms of the research purpose, interview objectives, usage of information and the length of interview.

Phase 3: Here, we examined the backgrounds of our interviewees. This provided us with an insight of the interviewees' family backgrounds, their working professions and past relationships.

Phase 4: We then probe into the interviewees' personal opinions on marriage, with close reference to what they expect out of a marriage and what factors they may consider before marriage.

Phase 5: Finally, we went on to explore the interviewees' viewpoints on cohabitation. We also looked into their previous and current experiences, if any, on cohabitation to find out about their reasons for cohabitation, the duration of each cohabitation experience, the kinds of problems faced, and what future plans they had in mind for their current relationship.

Stage 5: Conducting In-depth Interview

The interviews were conducted using mechanical aids such as video camera and tape recorder. All team members were present at each interview playing a part in the interviewing process. The participation of more team members in the interviewing process helped to minimise the risk of interviewer bias.

Stage 6: Data Analysis

Due to the qualitative and subjective nature of the data collected, non-quantifying methods of analysis such as cognitive mapping was employed.



4. Expected Outcome

Prior to our findings, our group had come up with certain expectations. Here are some of them.

4.1 EXPECTED OUTCOME TO WHY PEOPLE MAY CONSIDER COHABITATION

We feel that the two main reasons for cohabitation are

- 1) Love for their partner
- 2) The purpose of trial marriage.

4.2 EXPECTED OUTCOME TO WHY PEOPLE MAY NOT CONSIDER COHABITATION

We had expected that the two main reasons for NOT considering cohabitation are

- 1) Family objections
- 2) Societal views.

4.3 EXPECTED OUTCOME TOWARDS ACCEPTABILITY AND VARIANCE IN VIEWS OF BOTH SEXES IN SINGAPORE

Here we had thought that there is significant difference in their views and that they both are not receptive towards cohabitation.

4.4 EXPECTED OUTCOME ON WHETHER COHABITATION IS COMMON IN SINGAPORE

We felt that cohabitation is not common in Singapore.

4.5 EXPECTED OUTCOME ON COHABITATION RESULTING IN MORE SOCIAL PROBLEMS

Here, the group felt that cohabitation will lead to fewer marriages in Singapore.



5. Analysis and Findings

5.1 Quantitative data:

Quantitative data were collected through the employment of Self-Administered Questionnaires. SPSS and Microsoft Excel are used to compile all the data collected and cross tabulation, as well as the frequency distribution for each variable were generated.

5.1.1 Analysis Methods:

The method employed was one of exploratory data analysis. This method is very useful as it helps to explore and define the gathered data through summarising and presenting the data in tables, charts and cross-tabulations. It also helps look for other linkages between the diverse data. “This should not be discounted as it may suggest other fruitful avenues for analysis.” (Saunders, Lewis and Thornhill, 1997, Pg 298)

In exploratory data analysis, we covered the analysis of univariate and bivariate data. Tables and charts had been used to analyse univariate data while cross-tabulation and charts had been used to analyse bivariate data.

- **Tables**

Tables were shown to present data for an easy and summarised comparison of data. (Please refer to appendix 1 for the relevant frequency tables constructed)

- **Charts**

Charts were also used to present frequency data. The graphical representation of the processed data allows for easy comparison of data as well as relationships to be seen clearly. (Please refer to Appendix 2 for the graphical representations on the general findings.)

- **Cross-tabulations**

Cross tabulation of two variables is generated to analyse the bivariate data. This enables us to identify the differences in the perceptions of the people residing in Singapore through their gender and age group. (Please refer to Appendix 3, for simple cross tabulations)

5.1.2 Findings

Objective 1: The reasons to which people may or may not consider for cohabitation.

Issue 1: Considerations for cohabitation.

72 % of the respondents feel that love constitutes the most important reason for cohabitation. While 48% of the respondents choose Peer Influence as the least important factor. (Please refer to Appendix 4 for details and graphs)

Issue 2: Considerations for not cohabiting.

Majority of the respondents, which is 51.5% of them had taken the stand that the main factor deterring them from cohabiting would be family objections. This is followed by the factor, personal moral values. This result may support that cohabitation is generally not receptive in Singapore.

It is also shown that the least important factor influencing the choice for cohabitation would be that of friend's opinions, at 23%. (Please refer to Appendix 5 for the graphs and further details)

Objective 2: To identify the variance in the views of males and females on

Cohabitation.

Issue 3: The preferred mode of living.

The results showed, regardless of gender, that the preferred mode of living by respondents is to get married rather than cohabit before marriage or to cohabit. Cross tabulation was also constructed to ascertain if the gender of the respondents were determinants of their choice in their preferred mode of living. (Please refer to Appendix 6 for the results and graphical representations from cross-tabulation results.)

Out of the 200 respondents, 156 (78%) of them, 84 males and 72 females, choose to get married. This implies that majority of the respondents are more conservative in their thinking and values. This reinforces our findings that cohabitation is not supported in Singapore (Discussed in Issue 7)

Issue 4: Financial expectations on cohabitation

From the answers given by the respondents on the question “ Do you think both parties should be financially stable first before cohabiting and if yes, by how much?” The following findings have been derived:

Majority of both genders feels that a couple should both be financially stable before cohabiting, which are 80% females and 82% males. This may suggest that the financial

factor may also be an important factor that respondents may look into before considering cohabitation.

Out of the overall 81% of the respondents who agreed that the couple should be financially stable before cohabiting also determined the range of income that each cohabitant should be earning. Both income ranges of \$2001-\$3000 and \$3001-\$4000 accounted for 30% of the respondents respectively. (Please refer to Appendix 7 for graphs and further details.)

Issue 5: Contribution to household expenses.

As shown in the results (Refer to appendix 8 for graphs), 38.5% of males and 46% females feel that the cohabiting partner should contribute to the household expenses. This implies that cohabiting couples may expect an equal share of financial expenses.

Issue 6: Opinions on cohabitation

Based on question 16a “ Women cohabit for marriage and men cohabit for mainly sexual reasons”. 38% of female respondents strongly agreed with the statement while 14% of male respondents strongly disagreed. (Please refer to Appendix 9 for graphs)

Objective 3: To identify the degree of acceptance of cohabitation by people residing in Singapore

Issue 7: The degree of support on the idea of cohabiting.

Cross tabulation methods were used to further analyse if the different ages and gender of the respondents made a difference in the level of their support for the idea.

The findings for this particular issue were derived from a breakdown of the 4 age groups:

- 21-25
- 26-30
- 31-35
- 36-40

In each age group, the responses from both genders are clearly displayed to identify if majority of them supports or do not support cohabitation.

Regardless of gender, in the age group of 21-25 and 31-35, 66 %, which makes up the majority of the respondents do not support cohabitation. While in the age groups of 26-30 and 36-40, 64% of the respondents support cohabitation. (Please refer to Appendix 10 for the graphs and summary table)

Issue 8: The degree of acceptance on the issue “ if your child were to cohabit one day.”

71% of the respondents, including both male and female, do not allow their children to cohabit. This implies that the level of acceptance of cohabitation in Singapore is not high.

Adults are still generally conservative and traditional in their up bringing. (Please refer to Appendix 11 for graphs and more details)

Issue 9: To determine if cohabitation is common in Singapore.

58% of the respondents feel that cohabitation is not common in Singapore. This suggest that majority of the Singaporeans are not receptive towards the idea of cohabitation. (Please refer to Appendix 12 for graph and details.)

Objective 4: To discover the extent to which cohabitation may add to the existing social problems like fewer marriages and higher divorce rate.

Issue 10: Possible social problems arising from cohabitation.

In question 15, the four possible social problems arising from cohabitation includes:

- a) Erosion of traditional values
- b) Fewer marriages
- c) More unwanted pregnancies
- d) Disintegration of family bonds

Fewer marriages is the most problem by majority of the respondents, standing at 73.5%. Closely up the list will be the Erosion of traditional values. 61.5% of them feels that

cohabitation will lead to this problem.(Please refer to Appendix 13 for graphs and details.)

Issue 11: The extent to which people feel that cohabitation has an impact on Fewer marriages and higher divorce rates

Question 16(c) and 16(d), are in Likert format, which required the respondents to indicate their level of agreement or disagreement with the sentences listed in the question. (Please refer to appendix 14 for the graphs and further details.)

These questions not only aim to discover the extent but also to reinforce the views of people on the issue of cohabitation leading to social problems.

From the findings, it can be established that a majority of 32.5% of the respondents are neutral to the notion that cohabitants who marry will end up in a divorce. Thus, indirectly leading to higher divorce rate. And a majority of 29% of the respondents are also neutral to the statement that the longer a couple cohabits the less likely they will get married.

This implies that most of the respondents are still uncertain about their stand on this issues, as they may not have personally experienced or seen for themselves, as cohabitation is not supported or perceived as common in Singapore.

5.2.2 Qualitative Data

“Qualitative data generated using in-depth interview provides a more valid explication of the respondent’s perception of reality”. (Minichiello, Aroni, Timewell and Alexander 1991, p.65) Given the reliance on verbal accounts and direct observation during the interview, our qualitative data analysis thus involves a mixture of the rational, explorative and intuitive elements. These require that the collected data be reduced, structured and detextualised.

Having adopted a phenomenological attitude, the **non-quantifying method** of data analysis is used as we feel that individual cases are meaningful and unique in their own right. Further understanding of each case will thus aid in the provision of new integrative insights. This is done using cognitive mapping.

5.2.1 Cognitive Mapping

According to Kelly’s (1955) theory, we make sense of the world in order to predict how, all things being equal, the world will be in the future, and to decide how we might act or intervene in order to achieve what we prefer within that world.(Hussey & Hussey, 1997) Cognitive mapping allows us to structure, analyse and make sense of verbal accounts of social realities, which in our case, revolve around our topic on cohabitation.

The cognitive mappings of our two respondents, who have current and past experiences on cohabitation, reveal a pattern of reasoning in a way that linear text cannot. This aids in

the explanation, comparison and conclusion about the views and opinions of our respondents.

The mapping process involves the extraction of responses from our audio and video recordings, as well as from notes taken during the interviews. These responses are then reorganised into categories reflecting the various areas of concern of our objectives. As there were only two case studies, the categories identified in both were almost similar.

(Please refer to Appendices A and B for the cognitive mappings and the summary of our qualitative data.)

5.2.2 Findings

Issue 1: Views on Marriage

Marriage is seen as an institution created to provide security, protection and stability, through legally binding a couple together. According to the views of our respondents, the implications brought about by a worsened marriage relationship make the institution seem irrelevant in our society today. Complicating lawsuits and high maintenance fees when contemplating divorce will indirectly force a married couple to stay together despite reluctance to do so by either party. In short, marriage is seen as unnecessary.

However, in order to fulfil the wishes of elders in the family, marriage is still seen as an option to, or an eventual outcome of cohabitation, though respondents are generally uncertain about when this may happen.

Issue 2: Reasons for Cohabitation

Cohabitation is viewed as the choice of living with someone you love without having to make official statements about one's relationship. Trial marriage is seen as the main reason behind the choice to cohabit. Our respondents cohabit for love and companionship. However, it is interesting to note that our younger respondent sees freedom and fear of responsibility as one of the contributory factors, while Philip, who is 40, describes cohabitation as a stable and mature relationship in which he feels very comfortable with.

Issue 3: Allocation of Household and Financial Responsibilities

The division of household responsibilities and financial burden is seen as fair and equal. There is little conflict regarding household expenses, as both partners are working and thus able to support themselves and to pay for additional bills. However, conflicts from having to manage and tidy the household arise in the early stages of living together. This was when both parties were still trying to adjust to the new lifestyle. Staying with the partner's family reduces financial burden to some extent, thereby lessening a major source of pressure in the cohabiting relationship.

Issue 4: Problems Faced

Problems faced include those arising from any other normal relationship, such as occasional quarrels, disagreements or a growing boredom. It is noted that there are

greater difficulties in managing lifestyle differences. If unresolved, these differences may result in increased tension, and eventually, become a determining factor for the end of the cohabiting relationship.



6. Final Findings

6.1 To understand the reasons why people may consider cohabitation.

Prior to carrying out our questionnaires, our group had expected that the two main reasons for anyone who cohabit is due to love for their partner, as well as to test their compatibility using cohabitation as a form of trial marriage. This expectation is reflected in our researched literature from the Internet.

The questionnaire was carried out and we found out that we were half-right. 72% of our total targeted respondents revealed that should they ever cohabit, it would be out of love for their partner. 49% of them also cited reasons of companionship for considerations of cohabitation. (Refer to Appendix 4 for findings)

The conclusion from our in-depth interview showed that respondents supported our expected outcome on love and trial marriage.

6.2 To find out the reasons why people may not consider cohabitation.

Our expected outcome for this section is that should people not consider cohabiting, it would be due to family objections and of perceived social views.

From our findings, we can see that 51.5% of our respondents' feel that family objections play a major role of disavouring cohabitation. 23% of them also feel that having a sense of personal moral value, cohabitation is “immoral” and will not even consider it. Here, our expectations were once again partially right. (Refer to Appendix 5 for findings)

However, findings from our depth interview show little objection from family members and that moral value is of less importance.

6.3 To identify the degree of acceptance and the variance in the views of males and Females on cohabitation in Singapore.

Before our survey, the group thought that since men and women have always been different in perceptions on issues, thus there will be a significant difference in their views about cohabitation. Although, the analysis showed that there is a definite difference, however the variance between both male and female was not significant at all.

Out of the 100 male respondents, 45% of them support cohabitation while 55% of them are against cohabitation.

From the 100 female respondents, 53% of them support and 47% of them do not support the idea of cohabitation.

Here, it can be seen that there are more supporters from the females while most of the males do not support. The variance between male supporters versus female non-

supporters stand at 2% (45% vs 47%) while the variance between male non-supporters versus female supporters stand at also 2%(55% vs 53%).

The totality of supporters (both male and females) amounts to 49% while non-supporters stand at 51%. Therefore, it can be seen that most of our respondents do not support cohabitation while a difference in views of the genders stand at a variance of 2%.

(See Appendix 6,7,8 &9 for findings that includes the views of both Gender.)

6.4 To find out if cohabitation is common in Singapore

Before the research, we expected that cohabitation is not common in Singapore. This is because Singapore is afterall an Asian society and cohabitation is seen as “ shameful” by the older generation. Therefore, not many people would cohabit so as not to “ embarrass” their family.

Our expectations concurred with our findings (See Appendix 12 for Findings) and it showed that 58% of our respondents think that cohabitation is not common in Singapore.

Despite Personal experiences in cohabitation, our in-depth interview respondents also recognised that cohabitation is not a common trend in Singapore.

6.5 To discover the extent to which people feel that cohabitation leads to more social Problems.

Here, we identified several social problems that we think will result from cohabitation and the one that we feel most strongly is the problem of fewer marriages. Our researched material also provided the evidence that cohabitation will lead to fewer marriages.

Through our final findings, this is actually the case with our respondents. 73.5% of them actually rated that the immediate resulting social problem would be of fewer marriages. (See Appendix 13 for findings)



7. Key Learning

7.1 Difficulties Encountered

7.1.1 Questionnaire

- **Sampling Size**

Due to limitation of manpower, the research team could only afford to collect data from a sample of 200 people, which we feel were not sufficient to provide a more rounded research.

- **Minority Racial Groups**

The research team could not locate sufficient Malays, Indians and Eurasians to take part in our questionnaire. As a result, our respondents were mainly Chinese.

- **Explanation of Key terms in the questionnaire**

A few people could not understand what certain terms meant. To prevent any misinterpretation of the questions, our researchers had to explain to them till they understand (even sought to using dialects).

- **Difficulties In Arranging the Sequence Questions To Suit Our Research Topic As**

There Is Too Much To Cover

7.1.2 In-depth Interviews

- Problems finding suitable candidates

As cohabitation is a relatively sensitive topic, not many people are willing to be involved in our case studies.

- Interviewer Bias/Different Perceptions Of The Topic

7.2 What we did well

7.2.1 Questionnaire

- Format of the questionnaire

Our format of the questionnaire is structured in a way that there is a progressive flow to the next question , making it easier for the respondents to relate to the questions.

- Pilot Test

We did a pilot test to check if there are any mistakes and redundant questions in our questionnaire to streamline our questionnaire to provide us with more relevant information.

- Time Management

The research teams were able to complete the task of distributing, collecting, analysing and tabulating in the designated time frame.

7.2.2 In-depth Interview

- Participative interviewees

The interviewees were very participative during the interview. They were responsive, cooperative and contributed a lot to the interview. The research team had gained tremendous insight to the world of the cohabitants.

- We have also utilises Audio and Video equipment to aid in recording.

7.3 What will we do different next time?

7.3.1 Questionnaire

- Design of Questionnaire

The questionnaire was not catered to the needs of people who do not understand English. There are a number of respondents who have actually requested for a mandarin interpreter to translate the questions.

In our future design, we hope to incorporate a questionnaire that satisfies all language barriers.

7.3.2 In-depth Interview

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- A more conducive environment

The research team requested for a private room with soft music initially but due to cost constrains, we were unable to provide a conducive environment to the interviewees.

Instead, a more relaxed environment such as a cafe was suggested.



8. Political & Ethical Implications

The findings of this research can be used to understand the reasons behind cohabitation and the progress of this particular trend. The study of the social problems related to cohabitation allows the government and social welfare institutions to come up with ways of coping and solving them.

8.1 Political Implications

The findings of our research allow the government to address issues related to the formation of family units and childbirth. New policies with respect to housing, tax-rebates, and other incentives can be introduced so as to shift the current trend towards one that is family-oriented. Education plays an important role in rebuilding a traditional, pre-westernised value system with regard to living together as a couple.

8.2 Ethical Implications

Our research topic on cohabitation is a highly personal, sensitive and often tabooed one, especially in the context of an Asian society like Singapore. However, because our research scope included all residents, regardless of race and ethnic group, we were able to gain valuable perspectives from non-Asians as well. Still, ethical considerations during interviews remain an important priority.

8.3 Proper Identification

In order to "break the ice" and encourage participation, proper identification was given prior to the interview. This took the form of clearly stated research topic, objectives and usage of information on the cover page of the questionnaire. A similar piece of information was also given to the interviewees of the case study. For these two cases, name cards were exchanged to maintain a bridge for further research purposes.

8.4 Confidentially and Anonymity

Names and contact details are optional for the survey. However, interviewees were encouraged to at least provide their names for reasons of authenticity. As for the case studies, fictional names were used to protect the interviewees' rights to privacy and anonymity. This allows a more open and honest conversation.

8.5 Sensitivity

The topic deals with sensitive areas whereby personal views are often sought. For this reason, interviewers were cautioned to be sensitive to the interviewees' uneasiness and reluctance to answer certain questions. This applies mainly for the two case studies. This is to respect the choices of the interviewees, and to proceed with the exploration of other crucial areas of the interview.



9. Conclusion

In conclusion, people living in Singapore generally do not perceive cohabitation to be a common phenomenon. This could signify that the general population still preserves some conservative values.

The findings have revealed that the general population does not support cohabitation and the greatest deterrent factor against cohabitation is family objections. Sentiments are that love and companionship are the most cited reasons for considering the option of cohabitation.

Our research findings have also shown that cohabitation is perceived to contribute to existing social problems whereby the major concern is that it leads to fewer marriages. This may sound bells of warning for the government, which may have to bear the costs of an ageing and declining population. The findings from this research can be used to help the government and social welfare institutions to devise ways to address these problems.

Therefore, it is imperative that the government and related organisation stay proactive to the progress of this contemporary phenomenon so as to steer free of undesirable consequences and keep the population in good shape.



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