

Impact of urbanization on co-habitation in Kampala city

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Abstract

The paper reveals that urbanization is responsible for the increasing levels of co-habitation as a type of marriage although it is not legally recognized. Qualitative and quantitative data derived from a survey and focus group discussions (FGDs) in 2004 was used in the study. Logistic regression analysis shows that the area of residence is the second most significant factor in influencing co-habitation after tribe. Respondents in urban areas were two times more likely to co-habit than their rural counterparts. The study also reveals that a significant percentage of religious marriages start by cohabiting and this is evidently higher in urban than rural areas. Studying each other, poverty, delay to inform parents, lack of accommodation and rejection of partners by parents were the main causes of co-habitation. Co-habitation is regarded as a form of secret marriage that should be legalized in order to prevent it from spreading HIV/AIDs.

Key words: Co-habitation, urbanization and type of marriage.

Introduction

Kampala, the capital city of Uganda accounts for 40% of the total urban population in the country and has approximately 5% of the total population of Uganda with a population of 1189142 in 2002 (UPHC, 2002). Modernization can be used to explain the loss of functions that society expects families to perform as a result of social changes that take place. These social changes include: erosion of traditional and religious authority; growth of individualism; mass education; a rising status of women reflected in equality and independence of women and the ideology of consumerism (Caldwell and Caldwell, 1987). Co-habitation, one of the categories of marital status is becoming more common in Uganda partly because of urbanization. Co-habitation referred to in different terms in Uganda as: informal union in which a man and woman stay together intending to have a lasting relationship, even if a formal civil or religious ceremony has not occurred. It is also referred to as “living together” (UDHS, 1995). Further, it is known as consensual union: marriage that exists simply because the parties to the marriage have agreed to live together (UPHC, 2002).

Co-habitation is a type of marriage where a man and a woman decide to live together without complying with legal requirements (Byamukama, 2006). In addition, co-habitation is regarded as the beginning of other types of marriages: *Civil* (marriage contracted before an official Government registrar under the Registrar General); *Religious* (marriage performed by one of the recognized religions in the country in a recognized place) and *Customary* (marriage contracted between two families through the performance of marriage rites as required by a particular culture(s) within which the

marriage is taking place). This type of marriage is becoming popular among the young people and therefore is given due attention by this paper.

Objectives of the paper

The main objective of the paper was to examine the impact of urbanization on co-habitation in relation to other factors. Other objectives were: To find out why urbanization encourages co-habitation. It also examines the effects of co-habitation on the family and society as a whole. Lastly, the advantages and disadvantages of co-habitation are analyzed.

Hypothesis

This paper is intended to test the hypothesis: “Co-habitation is more likely to be practiced in urban centers than in rural areas”.

Data sources and methodology

Qualitative and quantitative data was derived from a survey and focus group discussions (FGDs) in 2004. This being a comparative study, both urban and rural respondents were involved. Kampala district being 100% urban was very suitable for the study. Mpigi, Kisoro, Sironko and Arua districts represented rural areas (*see map below*). The study dealt with four tribes namely: Baganda; Bafumbira; Bagisu and Lugbara. These tribes represent the four regions of Uganda respectively namely: central; western; eastern and northern. All persons aged 15 and above found in the households qualified for the

interview. Age 15 was chosen because it is the one used to calculate singulate mean age at marriage in Hajnal (1953) formula that assumes no first marriages occur before age 15.

A total number of 1683 respondents were studied in the quantitative sub-study and 1071 answered the question on co-habitation. In the qualitative study, focus group discussions (FGDs) using an interview guide facilitated the acquisition of detailed information on co-habitation. Sixteen focus groups i.e eight from Kampala and eight from rural areas (Mpigi, Kisoro, Sironko and Arua) were used. In order to get good information from the groups, men had to be separated from women. Therefore, for each of the four tribes there were four focus group discussions: two separate ones for men and women in Kampala and also two in rural areas.

Co-habiting was one of the categories of marital status. Respondents who were married were asked whether they had started their marriage by co-habiting or not. Those who co-habited were asked to give the advantages and disadvantages of the type of marriage. Chi-square statistic was used in the initial analysis and Logistic regression in the final analysis of the quantitative data.

Map showing Location of the study districts in Uganda.



Source: Population and Housing Census Map, 2002

Co-habitation as one of the categories of marital status

Cohabiting couples were those who admitted that they were married yet their marriage was not religious, civil nor customary. The study revealed that the majority of the respondents were married (66% rural and 54% urban), followed by those who were never married (22% rural and 29% urban), cohabiting (3% rural and 7% urban) widowed (5% rural and 4% urban) and separated/divorced (4% rural and 5% urban) as shown in Table 1. The never married category was 29% in urban and 22% in rural areas due to the higher age at marriage for the former.

Co-habitation appeared to be more popular with urban respondents (7%) compared with 3% for the rural respondents. This was attributed to economic situation that is hindering formal marriage. Most young women always aspire to marry men of more economic means than themselves so as to ensure that their children are not born in poverty. Conversely, men of low incomes tend to fear marrying women with high incomes so as to avoid to be dominated by women.

Table 1: Marital status by sex and residence

Males	Area of residence					
	Rural		Urban		Total	
Marital status	N	%	N	%	N	%
Never married	112	25.4	135	32.3	247	28.8
Married	294	66.7	236	56.5	530	61.7
Widowed	7	1.6	5	1.2	12	1.4
Separated/div	11	2.5	9	2.2	20	2.3
Cohabiting	17	3.9	33	7.9	50	5.8
Total	441	100.0	418	100.0	859	100.0
Chi-square = 13.536, p = 0.009						

Females						
Never married	67	17.1	115	26.6	182	22.1
Married	259	66.1	225	52.1	484	58.7
Widowed	34	8.7	32	7.4	66	8.0
Separated/div	24	6.1	34	7.9	58	7.0
Cohabiting	8	2.0	26	6.0	34	4.1
Total	392	100.0	432	100.0	824	100.0
Chi-square = 13.536, p = 0.009						
Both sexes						
Never married	179	21.5	250	29.4	429	25.5
Married	553	66.4	461	54.2	1014	60.2
Widowed	41	4.9	37	4.4	78	4.6
Separated/div	35	4.2	43	5.1	78	4.6
Cohabiting	25	3.0	59	6.9	84	5.0
Total	833	100.0	850	100.0	1683	100.0
Chi-square = 34.717, p = 0.000						

Factors that affect co-habitation

Area of residence

Respondents who were married in church or mosque were asked whether they had started their marriage by co-habiting or not. Table 2, shows that 15.6% of the respondents married in church or mosque (religious marriages) started by co-habiting. The percentage of respondents who co-habited before formal marriage was higher in urban areas (23.9%) than rural areas (8.5%). Results of the Chi-square test reveal that area of residence is significantly associated with co-habitation ($p = 0.000$). Therefore, urbanization plays a significant impact on co-habitation.

Table 2: Co-habitation by sex and residence

Males	Rural		Urban		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cohabited	26	9.0	49	21.2	75	14.4
Never cohabited	263	91.0	182	78.8	445	85.6
Total	289	100.0	231	100.0	521	100.0
Chi-square =15.521, p = 0.000						
Females						
Cohabited	23	8.0	69	26.2	92	16.7
Never cohabited	265	92.0	194	73.8	459	83.3
Total	288	100.0	263	100.0	551	100.0
Chi-square =32.916, p = 0.000						
Both sexes						
Cohabited	49	8.5	118	23.9	167	15.6
Never cohabited	528	91.5	376	76.1	904	84.4
Total	577	100.0	494	100.0	1071	100.0
Chi-square =47.922, p = 0.000						

Religion

According to Table 3, the percentage of co-habitation before formal marriage was much higher among Moslems (28%) than Catholics (12%) and Protestants (15.8%). Christianity discourages co-habitation because co-habitation encourages sex before wedding in church, which is considered by Christians as a sin and fornication. In the Catholic church penalties are even imposed on parents of couples co-habiting by being prevented from taking holy communion in church and being godparents at baptism. Holy communion and baptism are important sacraments in church. Chi-square results show significant association between co-habitation and religion (p = 0.001) for both sexes and males alone but not for females alone.

Table 3: Co-habitation by sex and religion

	Catholic		Protestant		Moslem		total	
Males	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cohabited	28	11.7	30	13.4	17	30.4	75	14.4
Never cohabited	212	88.3	194	86.6	39	69.6	445	85.6
Total	240	100.0	224	100.0	56	100.0	520	100.0
Chi-square =13.189, p = 0.001								
Females								
Cohabited	33	14.0	48	17.7	11	25.0	92	16.7
Never cohabited	203	86.0	223	82.3	33	75.0	459	83.3
Total	236	100.0	271	100.0	44	100.0	551	100.0
Chi-square = 3.631, p = 0.163								
Both sexes								
Cohabited	61	12.8	78	15.8	28	28.0	167	15.6
Never cohabited	415	87.2	417	84.2	72	72.0	904	84.4
Total	476	100.0	495	100.0	100	100.0	1071	100.0
Chi-square = 14.497, p = 0.001								

Level of education

The study found that co-habitation increases with level of education as observed in Table 4. Respondents with no education had the lowest co-habitation (4.9%), followed by Primary (11.7%), Tertiary (22.3%) and Secondary (23.9%). This is because education influences choice of spouse. The higher the education, the higher the chances of the respondent choosing for himself/ herself the marriage partner. The Chi-square results show significant association between level of education and co-habitation ($p = 0.000$) for both sexes and males and females separately.

Table 4: Co-habitation by sex and Education

	No education		Primary		Secondary		Tertiary		Total	
Males	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cohabited	2	5.1	20	8.6	35	20.7	18	22.5	75	14.4
Never cohabited	37	94.9	212	91.4	134	79.3	62	77.5	445	85.6
Total	39	100.0	232	100.0	169	100.0	80	100.0	520	100.0
Chi-square = 18.698, p = 0.000										
Females										
Cohabited	6	4.9	34	14.8	39	27.9	13	22.0	92	16.7
Never cohabited	117	95.1	195	85.2	101	72.1	46	78.0	459	83.3
Total	123	100.0	229	100.0	140	100.0	59	100.0	551	100.0
Chi-square = 26.661, p = 0.000										
Both sexes										
Cohabited	8	4.9	54	11.7	74	23.9	31	22.3	167	15.6
Never cohabited	154	95.1	407	88.3	235	76.1	108	77.7	904	84.4
Total	162	100.0	461	100.0	309	100.0	139	100.0	1071	100.0
Chi-square = 40.388, p = 0.000										

Tribe

As can be observed in Table 5, the Baganda had the highest co-habitation rates (27.0%), followed by the Lugbara (18.7%), Bagisu (14.1%). The Bafumbira had the lowest rate of co-habitation (5.7%). This is in agreement with the focus group findings that co-habitation was unacceptable to the Bafumbira and regarded as prostitution. The Baganda had the highest rate of co-habitation probably because of greater influence of urbanization. The rural district (Mpigi) of the Baganda respondents is a few miles from Kampala. Chi-square test shows a strong association between tribe and co-habitation (p= 0.000).

Table 5: Co-habitation by sex and tribe

	Baganda		Bafumbira		Bagisu		Lugbara		Total	
Males	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cohabited	15	23.1	8	4.8	17	14.5	35	21.3	75	14.6
Never cohabited	50	76.9	158	95.2	100	85.5	129	78.7	437	85.4
Total	65	100.0	166	100.0	117	100.0	164	100.0	512	100.0
Chi-square = 22.398, p = 0.000										
Females										
Cohabited	50	28.4	10	6.8	10	13.3	21	15.6	91	17.0
Never cohabited	126	71.6	138	93.2	65	86.7	114	84.4	443	83.0
Total	176	100.0	148	100.0	75	100.0	135	100.0	534	100.0
Chi-square = 28.101, p = 0.000										
Both sexes										
Cohabited	65	27.0	18	5.7	27	14.1	56	18.7	166	15.9
Never cohabited	176	73.0	296	94.3	165	85.9	243	81.3	880	84.1
Total	241	100.0	314	100.0	192	100.0	299	100.0	1046	100.0
Chi-square = 48.714, p = 0.000										

Occupation

Table 6 shows that the farmers least co-habited (5.6%) while the students were found to have the highest incidence (100%). Students are less attached to cultural norms, which discourage co-habitation unlike the farmers who respect them most. Other occupations with high percentages of co-habitation included the traders (19.3%) and the professionals (17.6%). The Chi-square results show a strong association between occupation and co-habitation (p = 0.000).

Table 6: Co-habitation by sex and occupation

	Professionals		Farmer		Trader		Student		Other		Total	
Males	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Cohabited	23	20.7	9	4.8	9	12.2	3	100.0	31	21.5	75	14.4
Never cohabited	88	79.3	179	95.2	65	87.8	0	0.0	113	78.5	445	85.6
Total	111	100.0	188	100.0	74	100.0	3	100.0	144	100.0	520	100.0
Chi-square = 41.705, p = 0.000												
Females												
Cohabited	8	12.9	15	6.3	20	26.3	2	100.0	47	27.2	92	16.7
Never cohabited	54	87.1	223	93.7	56	73.7	0	0.0	126	72.8	459	83.3
Total	62	100.0	238	100.0	76	100.0	2	100.0	173	100.0	551	100.0
Chi-square = 47.799, p = 0.000												
Both sexes												
Cohabited	31	17.9	24	5.6	29	19.3	5	100.0	78	24.6	167	14.4
Never cohabited	142	83.1	402	94.4	121	80.7	0	0.0	239	75.4	904	85.6
Total	173	100.0	426	100.0	150	100.0	5	100.0	317	100.0	1071	100.0
Chi-square = 81.035, p = 0.000												

Relative effect of urbanization vis-à-vis selected factors on co-habitation

The logistic regression model was used to assess the impact of selected variables on co-habitation. The multivariate analysis found residence, tribe and occupation to be significant factors in affecting co-habitation. The results of the analysis in Table 7 show that respondents in urban areas were 2 times (Exp (B) = 2.1) more likely to have co-habited before formal marriage than their rural counterparts. Area of residence, and therefore urbanization was the second most significant factor influencing co-habitation. Urban residents had more reasons for co-habitation (Table 8). For example, some urban respondents could still stay with their partners despite the rejection by the parents. This is because urbanization creates independence and reduces communal dependence of

married couples on their parents. Therefore, the hypothesis that: “co-habitation is more likely to be practiced in urban centers than rural areas” is accepted.

The results also reveal that tribe was the most significant factor in influencing cohabitation. The Baganda showed the highest level of co-habitation. They were 5 times (Exp (B) = 4.9) more likely to practice co-habitation than the Bafumbira (reference category). The Lugbara were 3 times (Exp (B) = 3.1) and the Bagisu slightly less than 3 times (Exp (B) = 2.7) more likely to practice co-habitation than the Bafumbira. This concurs with the focus group discussion findings that emphasized that the Bafumbira were strongly opposed to co-habitation.

The results further show that co-habitation increases with the level of education.

Respondents with primary education were nearly at par (Exp (B) = 1.4) with those with no education (reference category). The respondents with secondary education were 2 times (Exp (B) = 2.1) and those with tertiary education also 2 times (Exp (B) = 2.3) than those with no education.

Table 7: Logistic regression showing the relative impact of urbanization and other factors on co-habitation

Residence	Urban	.749	.238	9.866	.002	2.114
	Rural #	0(a)	.	.	.	.
Religion	Protestant	-.023	.206	.013	.910	.977
	Moslem	.240	.285	.707	.400	1.271
	Catholic #	0(a)	.	.	.	.
Education	Primary	.326	.413	.623	.430	1.385
	Secondary	.718	.424	2.862	.091	2.050
	Tertiary	.814	.481	2.870	.090	2.258
	None #	0(a)	.	.	.	.
Tribe	Baganda	1.598	.305	27.441	.000	4.944
	Bagisu	.990	.335	8.710	.003	2.690
	Lugbara	1.125	.304	13.713	.000	3.081
	Bafumbira #	0(a)	.	.	.	.
Occupation	Professional	.560	.365	2.347	.126	1.750
	Other	.716	.320	5.022	.025	2.047
	Trader	.518	.362	2.049	.152	1.679
	Student *	22.077	.000	.	.	3871212926.156
	Farmer #	0(a)	.	.	.	.

= Reference category

* Very few cases

Regarding occupation, the farmers had the lowest practice of co-habitation. The professionals were 2 times (Exp (B) = 1.8), other category 2 times (Exp (B) = 2.1) and traders 2 times (Exp (B) = 1.7) more likely to practice co-habitation than the farmers (reference category).

Reasons for co-habitation

Co-habitation was further analyzed in detail by examining the reasons for its occurrence, how it is influenced by the background factors and whether urbanization has a significant

impact on it. Table 8 shows that urban respondents gave more reasons for co-habitation than their rural counterparts. Poverty was noted to be responsible for co-habitation in rural areas (44%) especially among men (77%). To formalize marriage, whether traditionally or religiously, money is needed for the introduction ceremony. In Luganda, the ceremony is called “*kwanjula*”. In many cases bride price has also to be paid. Studying each other as a reason for cohabitation was more prevalent among the rural females (50%).

Table 8: Reasons for co-habitation according to sex by area of residence.

Rural						
	Male		Female		Total	
Reason	N	%	N	%	N	%
Poverty delayed proposal	10	76.9	2	14.3	12	44.4
Still studying each other	0	0.0	7	50.0	7	25.9
Had not yet decided	2	15.4	1	7.1	3	11.1
Not yet informed parents	1	7.6	1	7.1	2	7.4
Still student/ under age	0	0.0	2	14.3	2	7.4
Small house	0	0.0	1	7.1	1	3.7
Total	13	100.0	14	100.0	27	100.0
Rural Chi-square = 15.942, p = 0.014						
Urban						
Still studying each other	14	43.7	24	47.0	38	45.8
Poverty delayed proposal	3	9.4	9	17.3	12	14.5
Not yet informed parents	4	12.5	7	13.5	11	13.2
Still a student/ under age	4	12.5	6	11.8	10	12.0
Small house	3	9.4	0	0.0	3	3.6
My parents rejected my partner	2	6.3	1	2.0	3	3.6
Not officially married	1	3.1	1	2.0	2	2.4
Had not yet decided	0	0.0	2	3.9	2	2.4
Nature of work i.e police transfer	0	0.0	1	2.0	1	0.2
She was second wife	1	3.1	0	0.0	1	1.2
Total	32	100.0	51	100.0	83	100.0
Urban Chi-square = 13.989, p = 0.173						

In the urban centers, studying each other was reported by the majority of both males (44%) and females (47%). It helps the individual to know more about the type of family (“*empisa mumaka*”) of the partner and the health as well as the behavior of the partner according to Baganda. Formal marriage is a total commitment. Many respondents were not ready to rush into it.

Advantages and disadvantages of co-habitation

The respondents were asked what they considered to be the advantages and disadvantages of co-habitation. Apart from the Bafumbira in rural areas, other members of focus group discussions (FGDs) gave the following as advantages of cohabitation. The partners are able to prove manhood and womanhood after getting children. Co-habitation acts as proof of fertility after the two have stayed together for a period of time. This was regarded important especially in traditional societies where marriage is considered incomplete without children. For example, among the Bagisu, a woman did not achieve the title of married woman (“*umugyerema*”) until she had produced a child.

Co-habitation helps in giving time to prepare for formal marriage when one is sure of the partner. It helps the partners to learn each other’s behavior and know the likes and dislikes of each other. When they find themselves incompatible, they end the relationship early enough to avoid disappointments and regrets later in life. Commitment, love, faithfulness and patience are tested. This concurs with the reason of still studying the partner as one of the causes of co-habitation. In Table 8, it was observed that in urban

areas, 44% of the male and 47% of the female respondents referred to studying each other as the main cause of cohabitation.

Introduction ceremony, payment of bride price, acquiring of necessities in a home and the wedding ceremony all require money. Co-habitation allows fulfilling each of them without undue pressure. This is in agreement with the findings in Table 8 that the most common cause of co-habitation in rural areas was poverty (77%).

Co-habitation helps one to understand the family members before the formal marriage. This covers aspects of behavior, religion, traditions, problems and chronic diseases such as asthma, sickle cell, cancer, tuberculosis and many others.

On the other hand, respondents cited more disadvantages of co-habitation than advantages. They observed that co-habitation could be responsible for the spread of venereal diseases including HIV/ AIDS. This was thought so because of what was termed: *“freedom of movement of either partner before the formal marriage”*.

Lack of respect was also emphasized as the outcome of co-habitation. The people involved lose dignity and respect in the community as they stay together without informing their parents. There is no respect for the parents. This is because in marriage, the parents need to know who their in-law is and vice versa. This was more emphasized in Kisoro by the Bafumbira who called it illegal marriage done in hiding. *“The whole thing is like prostitution”*, said a Mufumbira elder. The couple may be cursed by the parents in

case they come to know about the relationship. *“Parents are interested in church marriages and always expect their daughters to be virgins before marriage”*, commented a Muganda in Mpigi.

Co-habitation was regarded as a secret marriage without proper child upbringing. Children need love and care of both parents all the time in order to be nurtured properly. Many of the focus groups regarded co-habitation as trial marriage and unstable. A Muganda respondent said:

“There is a lot of instability in the marriage, the husband comes and goes and the children may not be sure of the actual father”.

Co-habitation was thought to lead to disappointments after staying together for sometime and the two did not get formally married. The chances of the woman getting married to another man are reduced. This is because she is to some people already known as a married woman and therefore, co-habitation, depreciates the eligibility of remarriage for women. The Bagisu women said:

“The woman may be called a prostitute (“Malaya”) after co-habiting with many men”.

Loss of interest in marriage was also cited after failure to marry the first partner one co-habited with. It was further observed that some of the people who co-habit are not serious with formal marriage. They may not be interested in formal marriage and are negligent. Co-habitation was regarded as marriage of convenience for such people.

In addition, co-habitation was seen as a cause for increasing expenditure as one tries to impress the partner before the formal marriage. This was taken to be important by male respondents who noted that these days, women enter into relationships for the sake of money (*“Kukuura ebiinyo”*) or “de-toothing” as referred to by the Baganda, a jargon in urban areas to-day. When money is exhausted then the woman goes to another man leading to disintegration of their relationship. This was cited as one of the causes of poverty because it reduces the savings of individuals involved.

Conclusion

From the above analysis, it can be stated that co-habitation forms a good proportion (7.7%) of the currently married (married and co-habiting) and that 15.6% of the formal marriages started as informal marriages (co-habitation). According to the laws of Uganda, co-habitation type of marriage is not legal because it does not fall in any of the following types of marriage: Civil; Religious and Customary. Legally recognized marriage is important because it confers upon parties legal rights, such as right to property, maintenance and inheritance. With the increasing levels of urbanization, co-habitation is set to become more common. The study reveals that co-habitation has more disadvantages than advantages. One of the most prominent disadvantages is that co-habitation is regarded as secret marriage and therefore, it should be legalized in order to discourage spread of HIV/AIDs.

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