



COHABITATION AND STUDENTS' ACADEMIC PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED TERTIARY INSTITUTIONS IN IBADAN, NIGERIA

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ABSTRACT

Cohabitation is evolving from deviant lifestyle to one that is a normative experience for young men and women in the developing countries. Shortage of on-campus accommodation predisposes tertiary students to adopt cohabitation as an alternative housing strategy. This study examined the relationship between cohabitation and students' academic performance in communities abutting tertiary institutions in Ibadan, Nigeria. Ninety-eight cohabiting students were identified using chain-referral sampling technique. A pre-tested structured questionnaire was administered on the selected students. Findings showed that majority of cohabiters were residing off-campus owing to insufficient on-campus hostel accommodation. Inadequate financial support and high cost of living off-campus were some of the factors predisposed opposite sex to cohabit. Inverse variation was established between period of students' cohabitation and academic grades in tertiary institutions. Lower students' academic performance was significantly associated with longer period of cohabitation ($\chi^2_{(1,102)} = 131.321$; $P < 0.05$). Policy that ensures increasing students' population is matched with tertiary institutions' accommodation capacity was recommended.

Keywords: *Academic performance, Cohabitation, House rent, Off campus accommodation, Tertiary institutions students, Ibadan*

INTRODUCTION

Cohabitation can be encapsulated as both a status and a process. It is also an alternative type of housing for at least one of the cohabiters (Thornton, et al., 1995). Cohabitation is not a new phenomenon. However, the prevalence and popular acceptance of the phenomenon has shifted contemporary opinion about it from deviant or alternative lifestyle choice to one that is a normative experience for young men and women (Pollard and Harris, 2013). Cohabitation as a new form of living arrangement is in a situation of flux associated with changing lifestyle, societal value and norm. Students in institutions of higher learning also manifest this phenomenon.

Student's cohabitation has attracted a lot of policy and academic researches and debates in recent times. Students in higher educational institutions are experiencing a critical situation in terms of higher tuition fees and other associated college costs related to facilities and services provision, especially on campus accommodation (Aluko, 2009). A number of challenges may exist within or outside the educational institutions that predisposes students to cohabitation (Peretomode and Ugbomeh, 2013; Oweh, 2013). However, a crucial aspect of these problems in tertiary institutions as related to this study is insufficient accommodation for students, within the campus premises. In Nigeria, about two decades ago the number of University students increased eightfold from 55,000 in 1980 to more than 400,000 in 2002 and projected to be above the million mark in 2010 (Agbola, et al., 2001; Bollag, 2002).

Pat-Mbano et al. (2012) reports that tertiary students reside in off-campus apartments owned by private individuals, pay high rents and struggle for accommodation with other home-seekers. In order to cut cost, cohabitation has been embraced as one of the alternative accommodation strategies (Umaru et al., 2012; Omonijo et al., 2015; Kasim et al., 2016). This has shaped the behaviour of many students positively and negatively (Svodziwa and Kurete, 2017). With shortage of on campus accommodation, students



resorted to renting off-campus residential buildings. This is common with the public tertiary institutions students in Nigeria. For example, as contained in the University of Ibadan Students' Handbook accommodation is only available albeit on first come first serve basis to students in the first and final year of study. Therefore, majority of students in second to penultimate years of studies are forced to live off-campus in communities adjoining their institutions (Onyike and Uche, 2010; Aluko, 2011; Arisukwu, 2013). Cohabitation is not limited to its prevalence but also it is also extended to its widespread and increasing social acceptance and implication on individual wellbeing and academic performance (Popenoe and Whitehead, 2002). This study, therefore, examines the link between cohabitation and academic performance in selected tertiary institutions in Ibadan, Nigeria

Concept of Cohabitation

According to Bacharach *et al* (2000), cohabitation is an intimate sexual union between two unmarried partners, who share the same living quarter for a sustained period of time. Cohabitation according to Bower and Christopherson (1977), union of persons of the opposite sex living together but not married. An increase in the acceptability of cohabitation can be viewed as evidence of the weakening social norms related to marriage, known as deinstitutionalization of marriage (Bumpass and Lu, 2000).

Prior to the 1970s, cohabiting unions were common to some sub-groups such as the poor, those whose marriages had broken-up, some rural dwellers and those who were ideologically opposed to marriage in some European countries (Kiernan, 2001). During the late 1960s and early 1970s, the institution of marriage began to change fundamentally in many parts of Europe, this leads to cases where couples began to live together outside of marriage (Perelli-Harris and Gassen, 2012). In addition, some social changes has led to weakening traditional and religious authority, increasing individualism, urbanization, mass education, rising women's socioeconomic status and the growth of consumerism (Mashau, 2011).

In Africa, cohabitation could be attributed to colonialism; it gradually broke down African communal living patterns, by the acculturation of foreign cultural norms and value. This transcended to an outgrowth of historical changes in sexual behaviour such as the increased acceptance of sexual relations outside of marriage that emanate from the rise of the ideology of individualism (Rindfuss and VandenHeuvel, 1990). This ideology of individualism is exacerbated by rapid urbanization, housing problems and homelessness. This has resulted in different union formations ranging from overcrowding to cohabitation in African urban centres. Omonijo *et al* (2014; 2015) attribute the prevalence of cohabitation among Nigeria youths to sex revolution in Europe and America. He emphasised that the impact of foreign ideas, values and norms as well as social and mass communication and conditions of urban life on the behaviour and attitude of Nigerian adolescents are on the increase.

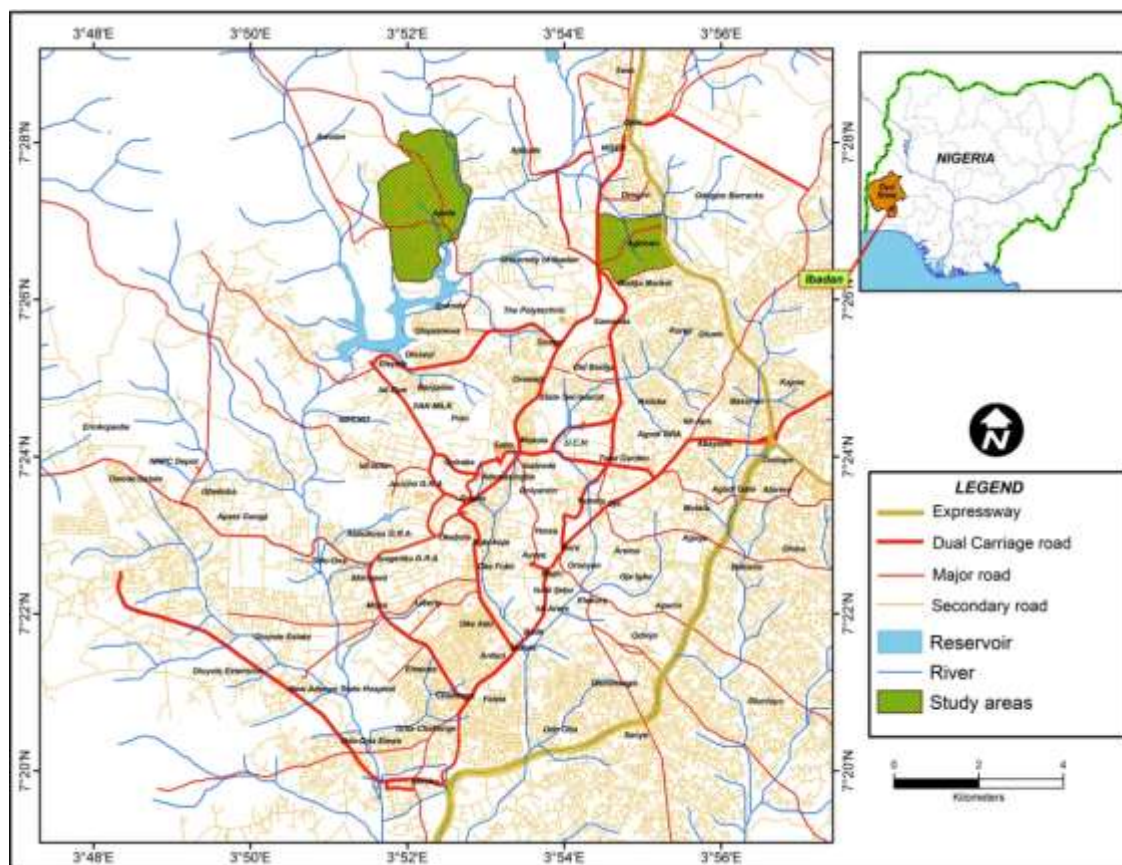
Cohabitation as a form of relationship is highly popular among young adults, particularly tertiary students due to the changing sexual codes that make sex more acceptable, shifting tertiary institutions regulations that have permitted tertiary students to live off campus. The listed are further enhanced by emergence of privately owned and accessible accommodations for tertiary students and increased usage of contraception especially the pill (Peterman *et al*, 1974; Ermisch and Francesconi, 2000). Svodziwa and Kurete (2017) note that cohabitation by students is mostly associated to or caused by inadequate accommodation. However, being a major transition in the lives of many undergraduate students, higher education life gives the students the opportunity to decide what to do without the undue influence of their parents (Ekpenyong and Ekpenyong, 2016). Soboye

(2013) further identifies the major reasons for student cohabitation to include test of compatibility before marriage, sexual relationship and reduction of cost of living. Stanley *et al*, (2004) asserted that over half of today's young adults will live with someone in a romantic relationship before marriage. Therefore, inability of the tertiary institutions to manage the increasing student population through the provision of adequate hostel accommodation, have led to cohabitation among tertiary students in some public institutions (Joan-Nduta, 2006; Arisukwu, 2013).

Study Area

The study was carried out in Apete and Agbowo communities abutting University of Ibadan (Agbowo) and The Polytechnic, Ibadan (Apete) as shown in Figure 1. The average density of students per room is 3.16 in Agbowo and about 40 per cent of students residing off campus occupy rooms, which house between four and eight students (Agbola *et al*, 2001). The study area is overpopulated due to increasing students' population and the increasing number of people migrating into the communities from all parts of Ibadan, Oyo state and Nigeria at large. The increasing population is not matched with the increase in housing provision leading to increasing rent. Therefore, the available houses are distributed by market forces and only accessible to the highest bidder.

Figure 1: The Agbowo and Apete Communities in the Context of Ibadan Region



Source: Department of Geography, University of Ibadan (2015)



3. Methodology

The study adopted cross-sectional research design. Due to culturally induced labelling attached to cohabitation and other forms of pre marital sex in the study setting, chain-referral sampling technique was used to identify cohabiting students in Agbowo and Apete communities. The technique was used to identify 213 cohabitation students in the two communities. Nonetheless, only 98 cohabiting students were willing to participate in the study. Accordingly, 98 set of a structured questionnaire were administered on the cohabiting students. Academic grade was, albeit under strict confidentiality, obtained from the cohabiters and corroborated with end of session students' copies of academic transcripts. Parametric (Spearman correlation) and non-parametric (Chi square) statistics were used to test for variation and relationship between period of students' cohabitation and their academic performance.

Table 1: The Total Number of Students Sampled

Tertiary Institutions	Apete	Agbowo
University of Ibadan	3	40
The Polytechnic Ibadan	50	5
Total	53	45

Source: Fieldwork (2015)

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Socio-Demographic Characteristics of Cohabitors

The important social attributes of the respondents considered are age, gender, mode of study and level in study. As presented in Table 2, the age classifications show that 16-18 years old were represented by 11.2% with 15.6% and 7.5% in Agbowo and Apete respectively. About 70% (69%) were 19-24 years old, 51.1% in Agbowo and 86.8% in Apete; 17.3% constituted the 25-30 years classification, with 33.3% in Agbowo and 3.8% in Apete. The age cohort of 31 years and above, which only occurred at Apete, accounted for 1%. Also, from the population of interest, 52% were female and the remaining 40% were male. The inference from the age classifications is that the younger you are the more expose to premarital sex and the tendency to be lured by peer pressure to engage in cohabitation is high.

The income (monthly stipend) of the respondents is shown in Table 2. Majority of the respondents, 39.8% with 33.3% in Agbowo and 45.3% in Apete collected less than ₦5,000 per month whereas 15.3%, 20.1% in Agbowo and 11.3% in Apete collected above ₦15,000 monthly as living stipend. The income accruing to the respondents monthly could hardly meet the daily needs of the majority of the respondents bearing in mind the high cost of living. This could have an adverse bearing on the disposable capital and overall standard of living. The insufficiency of respondents' capacity to cope with daily living requirements may be responsible for compromising initially held standard and norm against cohabitation.

In terms of level in study (years spent in the programme of study), as shown in Table 2, 41.8% of the cohabiting students were in their first year of study (100 level/National Diploma (ND) I). This is disaggregated to 22.2% and 58.5% of the total respondents residing in Agbowo and Apete respectively. At 200 level/ND II, 23.5% of the respondents were in this category with 17.8% in Agbowo and 28.3% in Apete. The cohabiters in the 3rd year of study accounted for 14.3% out of the total cohabiters and 22.2% of them were residing in Agbowo. The number of cohabiters at 400 level/Higher National Diploma (HND) II and above of their study were represented by 20.4%. From this percentage, 37.8% were living in Agbowo and 5.7% were residing in Apete. From this analysis, the number of



cohabiters in Apete decreases with the number of years spent in school while that of Agbowo increases with the number of years spent in school. The explanation for this can be derived from the system of education in the polytechnic and the university in Nigeria. Apete community houses most of the Ibadan Polytechnic students while Agbowo provides accommodation for most of the University of Ibadan students living off campus due to the proximity of these communities to the institutions of interest. In the Nigerian education system, the polytechnic students, after the completion of a two year National Diploma programme are expected, under the extant law of National Board for Technical Education that governs the activities of polytechnics in Nigeria, to undergo a one year compulsory industrial attachment. This is to expose the students to practical and first-hand knowledge of what had been taught in school. This window of opportunity to undergo industrial attachment, most often than not, breaks the relationship that has been developed among the cohabiting students while in school. For instance, most of the students have to return home and the homes of the cohabiting students may not be in the same location.

In the event that the homes are in the same location, for the students, especially the female ones, they have to discard the pseudo married toga for religious and cultural toga where prim and proper living is one of major parental expectations and requirements from them. Also, after the one-year compulsory industrial attachment programme, most of the students will not return to school to continue their programmes at the Higher Diploma level. In addition to this, the one-year attachment offers the cohabiters the opportunity to critically reassess their experiences while in school. The reflection, to some larger extent helps in determining if the youthful exuberance associated with cohabiting is worth pursuing. Therefore, the “street- shrewdness” the one year break offers may be responsible for the reduction in the number of students cohabiting at HND level.

One of the reasons for the decrease in the number of University of Ibadan students cohabiting at the lower level of study may be attributed to the university’s accommodation strategy. The university places a premium on accommodating the first and final year students. Thus, at 100 level or first year of programme, to be accommodated within the university’s hostel is a right, not a privilege. Therefore, majority of the first year students were provided accommodation for within the university campus. However, depending on the number of years one’s programme will span in the university, one is not entitled to accommodation for two academic sessions for a four-year programme and three years for a five-year programme.

Table 2: Socio-economic Status of Cohabiting Students

Variables	Total		Agbowo		Apete	
	Resp.	Percent.	Resp.	Percent.	Resp.	Percent.
Sex						
Male	47	48.0	25	55.6	22	41.5
Female	51	52.0	20	44.4	31	58.5
Total	98	100	45	100	53	100
Age						
16-18 years	11	11.2	7	15.6	4	7.5
19-24 years	69	70.4	23	51.1	46	86.8
25-30 years	17	17.3	15	33.3	2	3.8
above 31years	1	1.0	0	0	1	1.9
Total	98	100	45	100	53	100
Monthly Stipend						
Less than 5,000	39	39.8	15	33.3	24	45.3
5,001 – 10,000	25	25.5	10	22.2	15	28.3
10,001 – 15,000	19	19.4	11	24.4	8	15.1
15,001 – 20,000	12	12.2	7	15.6	5	9.4
Above 20,001	3	3.1	2	4.5	1	1.9



Total	98	100	45	100	53	100
Level of Study						
100/ND I	41	41.8	10	22.2	31	58.5
200/ND II	23	23.5	8	17.8	15	28.3
300/HND I	14	14.3	10	22.2	4	7.5
400/HND II	17	17.3	14	31.1	3	5.7
500/ PG Diploma	3	3.1	3	6.7	-	0.0
Total	98	100	45	100	53	100

Source: Fieldwork (2015)

Cohabiting Tertiary Students' Academic Performance

The academic grade of cohabiting students is presented in Table 4. However, it is important to note that the nomenclatures for grading in the university differ from that of polytechnic. The grading system in the university are pass, third class, second class lower, second class upper and first class; that of the polytechnic comprises: pass, lower credit, upper credit and distinction. As presented in Table 3, 4.1% cohabiters, with 3.1% in Agbowo and 1% in Apete, were within the academic grade of pass and third class. Students with second class lower grade category accounted for 15.3%; disaggregated to 14.3% and 1% students residing in Agbowo and Apete, respectively. About 22% were within second class upper grade level, 19.3% in Agbowo and 2.0% in Apete. Those in lower credit category were represented by 10.2% with 1% in Agbowo and 9.2% in Apete. The respondents with upper credit grade level accounted for 15.3%, 2% in Agbowo and 13.3% in Apete. Those that were awaiting their results constituted 33.7%.

Table 3: Academic Grade of Respondents

Variables Academic Grade	Total		Agbowo		Apete	
	Resp.	Percent	Resp.	Percent	Resp.	Percent
Pass and Third class	4	4.1	3	6.7	1	1.9
Second class lower	15	15.3	14	31.1	1	1.9
Second class upper	21	21.4	19	42.2	2	3.8
Lower credit	10	10.2	1	2.2	9	17.0
Upper credit	15	15.3	2	4.4	13	24.5
Awaiting result	33	33.7	6	13.3	27	50.9
Total	98	100	45	100	53	100

Source: Fieldwork (2015)

The academic grades of students may have been affected by the length of time they have been cohabiting. Table 4 shows the cross-tabulation of period of students' cohabitation and academic grades. It shows that 34.6% of students had cohabited for less than 12 months; 25.5% of students had cohabited for a year; about 40% of students had cohabited for more than a year; 20.4% had cohabited for 2 years; and only 14.2% had cohabited for more than 2 years.



Table 4: Cross-tabulation of Period of Students' Cohabitation and Academic Grades

Period of Cohabitation (in Months)	Academic Grade							Total
	Pass	Lower credit	Upper credit	Second class (lower division)	Second class (upper division)	Awaiting result	Third class	
2	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
3	0	1	0	0	0	0	0	1
4	0	0	0	0	0	3.1	0	3.1
5	0	0	1	0	0	3.1	0	4.1
6	1	0	1	0	1	11.2	0	14.3
7	0	1	1	0	2	3.1	0	7.1
8	0	0	1	0	0	1	0	2
9	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
11	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
12 (1 year)	1	3.1	5.1	1	7.1	8.2	0	25.5
15	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	2
18	0	0	0	1	2	0	0	3.1
24 (2 years)	0	4.1	4.1	5.1	6	0	1	20.4
27	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	1
30	0	0	0	2	0	0	0	2
36 (3 years)	0	1	1	3.1	2	2	0	9.2
48 (4 years)	0	0	0	1	0	0	0	1
60	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	1
Total	3.1	10.2	15.3	15.3	21.4	33.7	1	100

Source: Fieldwork (2015)

Further analysis, using Spearman Correlation, shows an indirect (inverse) variation between period of students' cohabitation and academic grades, which is significant at 5% level as shown in (Table 5). This implies that, as the period of cohabitation increases, students' academic performance reduces and vice-versa.

Table 5: Correlation between Period of Students' Cohabitation and Academic Grades

Variables		Period of students' cohabitation	Academic grade
Period of students' cohabitation	Pearson Correlation	1	-0.184
	Sig. (2-tailed)		0.07
	N	98	98
Academic grade	Pearson Correlation	-0.184	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	0.070	
	No. of Valid Cases	98	98

Source: Generated from Table 4

The chi-square analysis was used to verify the relationship between period of students' cohabitation and their academic performance. The result, as illustrated in Table 6, shows a significant relationship between the period of cohabitation and students' academic performance ($P < 0.05$). From the analysis, the influence of cohabitation on tertiary



students' academic performance is significant. The observed difference in students' academic grades for different periods (length) of cohabitation cannot be attributed to chance occurrence. Thus, cohabitation has great consequence on academic performance of cohabiters as noted by Bello and Ogunsanwo, (2013).

Table 6: Chi-Square Tests for Cohabitation and Tertiary Students' Academic Grade

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	131.321 ^a	102	0.027
Likelihood Ratio	106.796	102	0.353
Linear-by-Linear Association	3.288	1	0.07
N of Valid Cases	98		

a. 123 cells (97.6%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .01.

Source: Derived from Table 5

DISCUSSION

Traditionally, cohabitation is forbidden in most Nigerian cultures. It is seen as an act that must not be conducted or practiced even secretly (Bello and Ogunsanwo, 2013). However, recent studies reveal that students' cohabitation and sexual relationship is on the increase and common in most African schools which leads to high incidence of unintended pregnancies and sexually transmitted diseases and low academic performance (Joan-Nduta, 2006; Jones and Espey, 2008; Mgalla et al., 1998; Abubakar, 2008; Mlyakado, 2013; Soboye, 2013; Mlyakado and Timothy, 2014; Ekpenyong and Ekpenyong, 2016; Svodziwa and Kurete, 2017). For instance, Joan-Nduta (2006) observes a prevalence rate of cohabitation of 27.4 percent among university students in Kenya. A representational survey also revealed that about two-third of high school students supported the idea of a couple to live together before getting married in order to find out if they would get along (Popenoe and Whitehead, 2002). As observed from the study, inability of the tertiary institutions to match increasing student population with on campus accommodation led to students seeking alternative accommodation under unfavourable market price regime. This may predispose student to cohabit (Arisukwu, 2013, Kasim et al, 2016) buttressing Stanley *et al*, (2004) assertion that over half of today's young adults especially tertiary students will live with someone in a romantic relationship before marriage.

From the analysis, there exist an association between academic performance of students and period of cohabitation. Evidences from the study and other sources suggest that student cohabitation leads to poor academic performance (Mlyakado and Timothy, 2014; Ekpenyong and Ekpenyong, 2016). In line with the findings from this study, Mlyakado and Timothy (2014) noted that students' involvement in sexual relationship exposes them to a lot of emotional, relational and social problems. This may adversely affect their social as well as academic lives. Likewise, Ekpenyong and Ekpenyong (2016) argue that sexually active students are faced with several overt (missed classes, missed assignment) and covert (emotional, societal acceptance) challenges which compromised their academic performance and achievement.

Active sexual relationship and cohabitation among students is often short-term, a potential collapse in such relationship could lead to an emotional imbalance and depression (Ali, 2013; Tesfaye, and Jibat, 2014). This also has a bearing on academic activities of student. For instance, Bello and Ogunsanwo (2013) indicate that depression is one of the major consequences associated with broken cohabitation relationship among students. This form of psychological disturbance would, in turn, affect students academically (Ekpenyong and Ekpenyong, 2016). Indeed, Abubakar (2008) and Bello and Ogunsanwo (2013) affirm



that cohabitation relationships have great consequences on the academic performance of cohabiting couples. And according to Abdullahi and Umar (2013) one of the major distractions to academic activities of most students is regularly engagement in pre-marital sex. The situation is made worse if cohabitation is adopted as a pre test to marital and or to strengthen pre-marital sex relationship.



6. Conclusion

Attending tertiary institution is about experiencing new ways of life and this experience depends largely on where the students reside and the personality of the students. Inadequate provision of on-campus accommodation students may increase the likelihood of students engaging in cohabitation. This in turn, could affect students' academic performance. Therefore, concerted effort should be made to provide additional on-campus hostel facilities to accommodate increasing students' enrolments in higher institutions. In this regards, tertiary institutions control bodies should make adequate students' accommodation as a pre-requisite for accreditation of new course/programme. Similarly, institutions of higher learning should, as a policy direction, collaborate with private sector through public private partnership in providing hostels accommodation on campus to meet up with increasing students' population. The tertiary institutions management realistically cannot meet the backlog of accommodation requirements in a short term. This is due largely to paucity of fund, poor political will, existing regulation and increasing students' enrolment. However, to assist in learning effectively and maintaining personal development, parents and guardians should adopt high-investment strategy (financial and moral supports) for students living off-campus.

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