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## FAMILY FORMATION: LIVED EXPERIENCES OF YOUNG ADULT COUPLES IN COHABITATION

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### *Abstract*

*This study aimed to determine the lived experiences of the participants toward cohabitation. The descriptive phenomenological method was used to provide the real essence or description of the phenomenon for young adult couples aged from 18 to 25 years old. This study revealed that childbearing is the common motivation of the participants to engage in such situations, and the participants experienced struggles within the arrangement of cohabitation, such as financial constraints, limited activities and controlled time, troubled life, and priority conflicts, among others. In conclusion, the participants described the phenomenon of cohabitation as a big challenge to their everyday lives. Thus, it is recommended that the LGU provide an intensified program regarding the issues arising from the arrangement.*

**Keywords:** *cohabitation, young adults, marriage, family formation, qualitative*

### **Introduction**

Cohabitation is the living arrangement of two individuals in one household without marriage. In our modern society, young adults are commonly engaged in this arrangement nowadays. The rising cases of nonmarital births and the decreasing rate of marriage have been linked to cohabitation. Lamidi and Manning (2016) stated that for most young adults, cohabitation is part of their relationship as couples and has become the “new normal” for family transition, replacing marriage. People's perception of this arrangement varies in different locations from certain aspects. Cohabitation has been studied mostly among highly urbanized locations, and Western countries or places influenced by Westernized ideologies, and studies about this arrangement in rural areas are less extensive. Therefore, exploring this phenomenon in places far from being highly urbanized is needed. Despite the Philippines being a conservative and religious country, cohabitation has existed for a very long time today; studies about this arrangement in the country are lacking and have been mostly conducted in highly urbanized areas. Thus, exploring this phenomenon in places far from being highly urbanized can provide a different reality of this arrangement.

According to the Philippine Statistics Authority [PSA] (2023), the number of cohabitants in the country increased by 5.5% from 2015, with 9.2% of cohabitants, to 2020, 14.7%. Dapitan City had 5,146 cohabitants in 2015, with young adults ages 20-24 having the highest number of 1,187 (PSA, 2016). This implies that cohabitation in the country is still increasing as years pass by, and despite the city being far from being highly urbanized, this phenomenon is still rampant, specifically among young adults.

In this modern world, romantic relationships are common among young adults; they were commonly perceived to be born in a new culture and era, which most likely affects how they view cohabitation. This arrangement will likely be normative in the country as the percentage of cohabiting couples is continuously increasing. However, there are limited studies about this phenomenon, and there needs to be studies about this among young adults in rural areas in the country. Therefore, this research study aimed to determine how people in Dapitan City perceived this phenomenon. To address the research problem, this study answered the main question: What are the participants' lived experiences as cohabiting couples?

This study utilized Hycner's descriptive phenomenological method to uncover the experiences of young adult couples toward cohabitation. Utilizing the descriptive phenomenology theory can effectively show the meaning cohabiting young adults put into the phenomena of cohabitation. The study solely focused on how these individuals perceived this family type and did not cover other related cohabitation-related problems. The study can be beneficial to young adults, parents, community, readers, and future researchers as the findings of this study can provide insights and reveal the real essence of this phenomenon to cohabiting couples, which in turn could eradicate the stigma behind this arrangement. The exploration of this phenomenon in the country can fill the gaps between the discipline of the reason behind this arrangement and provide additional knowledge to society as this phenomenon is prevalent and continuously increasing. However, its contexts and implications still need to be studied specifically in rural areas or places far from being highly urbanized.

## Methods

The study used a descriptive phenomenological method of research, which, according to Creswell (1994, as cited by Rusianty, 2015), aims to find detailed explanations of a phenomenon. This focused on revealing the meaning of a phenomenon rather than exploring related problems connected with it. This method was suitable for this study since it only investigated the perception of young adults toward cohabitation in the community. The participants of this study were young adults, ranging in age from 18 to 25. This age range is considered young adults who start self-exploration, build romantic relationships, and form an identity (Bonnie, 2015; Higley, 2019).

This study used purposive and snowball sampling techniques to select the participants. The researchers designed criteria in the selection of the participants: (1) must be at least 18 years old to 25 years old, (2) straight male and female cohabitants, (3) must be cohabiting for at least a year as people generally consider this a long-term relationship to have a constructive connection (Applebury, 2020; Roy, 2020) which can ensure the validity of their responses, and (4) their willingness to participate in the research and that their responses would be audio-recorded. Data collection continued until data saturation was reached at a total of eight participants. Pseudonyms were used to protect the identity of the participants: the first couple was named Thalia and Matthew, the second couple was Aria and Kenzo, the third couple was Sammy and Paulo, and the last couple was named Lisa and David.

The raw data was collected using semi-structured interview guide questions designed by the researchers and validated by the research adviser. The first part of the

interview guide contained the profiles of the participants, which included (1) sex, (2) age, (3) number of years cohabiting, and (4) contact number. The second part of the interview guide was the questions asked to the participants: (5) could you tell us about your life so far being in the situation? (6) Can you further describe your situation? (7) what motivated you to engage in this arrangement? and (8) Do you still have something to add?

The study was only conducted in Poblacion Barangays of Dapitan City due to limited time and resources; these are the old and central areas of the city. This city is far from being highly urbanized as, according to PSA (2022) in the 2020 census, this area is a component city and is not a highly urbanized area but rather a rural area with an urban population of 3,386. In 2015, the city had 5 146 cohabitants, with young adults ages 20 to 24 having the highest number of 1,187 (PSA, 2016). This implies that cohabitation in the community is prevalent among young adults. Hence, exploring this phenomenon in the community is significant in providing the community with a deep understanding and knowledge of this arrangement.

Collected raw data were analyzed using the adapted step-by-step guidelines of Hycner (1985, as cited by Groenewald, 2004). The following steps were demonstrated: (1) Transcription, (2) Bracketing and the Phenomenological Reduction, (3) Listening to the interview for a sense of the whole, (4) Delineating units of general meaning, (5) Delineating units of meaning relevant to the research question, (6) Training independent judges to verify the units of relevant meaning, (7) Eliminating redundancies, (8) Clustering units of relevant meaning, (9) Determining themes from clusters of meaning, (10) Writing a summary for each interview, (11) Return to the participant with the summary and themes, (12) Modifying themes and summary, (13) Identifying general and unique themes for all the interviews, (14) Contextualization of themes, and (15) Composite summary. The researchers conducted these steps after analyzing the collected raw data, as it is necessary to ensure that the findings will reveal the real essence of the phenomenon in the whole context.

Ethical principles were considered in the conduction of this study by utilizing informed consent from the participants indicating the following terms: that the study was only for academic purposes, that the study was purely voluntary, and that participants could choose to decline any time. The collected raw data was treated with utmost confidentiality to ensure that their identities would not be exposed, describing that no participants would be forced to participate. Two years after the study was approved and published, all the data collected was deleted to ensure that all information from the participants would not be leaked.

## **Results and Discussions**

The study used Hycner's descriptive phenomenological method to uncover the experiences of young adult couples toward cohabitation. The data were gathered using the major interview questions focused on: (1) a description of their lived experiences in cohabitation and (2) motivation for engaging in cohabitation arrangement. After the interview, the responses of the coupled participants revealed nine sub-themes which were then grouped into final theme clusters. Pseudonyms were used in the presentation of the results to maintain confidentiality.

**Table 1**

*Profile of the Participants*

Variables	Couple Participant 1		Couple Participant 2		Couple Participant 3		Couple Participant 4	
	Names	Thalia	Matthew	Aria	Kenzo	Sammy	Paulo	Lisa
Sex	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Age	18	25	21	22	21	23	20	20
Years in the arrangement (cohabitation)	2 years		2 years		5 years		4 years	

The age range of the participants fitted the age range of being young adults; according to the study by Bonnie (2015) and Higley (2019), ages 18-26 are considered to be young adults in which they are viewed to start self-exploration, build romantic relationships, and identity formation. The cohabiting duration of the participants varies from 2 to 5 years, which suggests that they have a profound connection. As according to Applebury (2020) and Roy (2020), most people view one year and above relationships as a long-term relationship to have a constructive relationship. Increased tolerance when it comes to nonmarital sex and cohabitation is generally portrayed among young adults as a norm when it comes to union transition (Arnett, 2012; Lamidi & Manning, 2016).

**Table 2**

*Codes, Sub-themes, and Theme Cluster*

Codes	Sub-themes	Themes
Taking responsibility	Accountability	Acceptance
Commitment to obligation		
Responsibility		
Priority Conflict	Value Change	
Children as inspiration		
Standing for children		
Prioritizing children		
Children’s vulnerability		
Having children as practical	Social Support	
Social support		
Family connection		
Family acceptance		
Family support	Perseverance and Faith	
Working hard (for the future)		
Trying hard		
Sacrificing		
Faith in God		
Growth (becoming mature)		

Maturity	Psycho-emotional Change	Struggle
Mixed emotion		
Tiresome		
Change endearment		
Divided Time	Social Limitation	
Time Controlled		
Contented at the moment		
Change Activities		
Activity limitation		
Left with no choice		
Cohabitated due to childbearing	Acceptance Problem	
Acceptance Problem		
Family acceptance problem	Troubled Life	
Difficult situation		
Difficult journey		
Struggle		
Life challenges		
Life adjustment struggle		
Financially unstable	Financial Limitation	
Financial constraints		
Financial problem		

The responses of the four couple participants resulted in nine sub-themes and then finally grouped into three final themes. The final themes were: (1) Acceptance, (2) Sacrifice, and (3) Struggle. The table above shows the meaningful units or codes, sub-themes, and final themes.

***Theme Cluster: Acceptance***

In this study, the first theme that emerged from the participants' experiences is acceptance, which was used as a themed cluster to refer to the new roles and responsibilities that participants experienced during the early months of the arrangement. This is expressed in the following sub-themes: (1) Accountability, (2) Value Change, and (3) Social Support. The data collected from the interview depicts that the participants experienced acceptance in the early months as a cohabiting couple to take responsibility for their actions and embrace the changes that came with it. These are expressed in the following sub-themes below:

**Accountability.** The first common experience of all the participants that motivated them to cohabit was taking responsibility for the children. The participants considered their commitment to their obligation to their children’s welfare as a push factor for them to enter into cohabitation. This is expressed in Sammy's statement, in which she talks about the motivation behind their cohabitation.

“Our child was one of the reasons why we cohabitated because we have an obligation to take care of the child aside from our love for each other.” When asked about the reason for engaging in cohabitation, Matthew also expressed:



“We need to face (consequences), for the blessing that God gave us and I am the one who stands strong just so the child could survive... the future that I could give for her life to be better and successful”.

This was also supported by Aria's statement about their experience. She said: “We entered into cohabitation as a response to our actions. We take responsibility for the child that’s why we cohabitated because we want to fulfill our obligations to the child with the help of each other.”

Their experiences depicted that the reason for their engagement in cohabitation was their obligation to the children. The participants were held accountable for their actions; hence, they decided to cohabit for the sake of their children. This means that the main reason the participants entered into cohabitation at a young age was due to the children and their responsibility and not just the love they have for each other; this indicates that if not due for the children, the participants would not engage with this type of arrangement. This depicted that childbearing was mostly the reason for cohabitation. This is supported by Kuang (2018), who expressed that cohabitation is mostly a preferred option in nonmarital pregnancy than marriage. Also, according to Sarenas and Rivera (2014), individuals who cohabit want to raise their children and view marriage as costly, so they would rather spend money on their children.

**Value Change.** Life being a parent is never easy; when you have children, priorities change. The values of one's life change throughout one's daily experiences. The participants experienced changes in their values due to the children regarding their life priorities. This was expressed in the statement of David, “It’s confusing what to do first, whether to find a way to earn money or go to school.” His partner Lisa also said: “The child is now the priority, when we go to the mall we always put the necessities of the child first rather than buy like soaps for ourselves, the child comes first.” Sammy also stated that, “In our relationship where we already have a child, it inspires us to not separate because of the child.” Thalia also expressed that, “Our relationship is okay, we just want to think that in our situation right now, when we argue there should be no breaking up because the child would be one to suffer.”

Their statements demonstrated that having children changes the way they live their lives. For instance, their priorities in life have changed upon having children. The children were now the center of the relationship. Hence, they put more effort into improving their relationship for the sake of the children. Their values had transformed to adapt to the new roles and responsibilities of the children. This means that having children changed their perspectives in many ways. According to Ambert (1992, as cited by Knafo-Noam & Galansky, 2008), many parents described changes in what they deemed as a priority due to life changes associated with the transition to being parents, it is evident that as early as during pregnancy, parent's perception and values start changing (Michaels & Goldberg, 1988; Pancer et al., 2000, as cited by Knafo-Noam & Galansky, 2008). In addition, an adult changes from having oneself as a priority to having the child as a priority one year after the child is born (Høgholt et al., 2022). These studies suggested that after becoming parents, the participants experienced values changes and now focus on the sake of their child rather than their own.



**Social Support.** The support from family, friends, and relatives greatly affects how relationships work. Social connection has a big influence on the relationship between the couple. The participants expressed that social support was a great help to them, especially during rough times. This was expressed in the statement of Matthew: “We are thankful for their support, for the help... our brothers and sisters who supported us and said that we could ask them for help not just the people around us but also in the family”. He added: “Both of our families have a connection.” Paulo also said, “It’s okay, they understand each other.” David also expressed that, “It’s okay, they support us.”

This depicted that the participants value the social support they get from their friends and family. Therefore, guidance and help from their families were necessary in their situation, especially when they needed someone to approach for help, guidance, and support. If young adults enter cohabitation, they really need a family connection, support, help and guidance to cope with the decisions they entered. According to Rosenfeld and Roesler (2019, as cited by McGhee et al., 2021), cohabiting relationships are often less stable despite it being a normative relationship, stress and negative environmental factors can be reduced by the support from those close to the relationship as such from friends and family and help boost relational well-being (Mert, 2018, as cited by McGhee et al., 2021). It means that having social support greatly helps those cohabiting relationships as they experience more social disapproval from their friends and family than others (Huang et al., 2011, as cited by McGhee et al., 2021).

### ***Theme Cluster: Sacrifice***

The second theme that emerged from the participant's response was sacrifice, which refers to their actions and efforts for their children and becoming bold in their new lives. It was expressed under the following sub-themes: (1) Perseverance and Faith and (2) Psycho-emotional Changes. The data collected from the interview shows that participants experienced sacrifice during their arrangement for the sake of the children. These are expressed in the following sub-themes below.

**Perseverance and Faith.** The participants expressed that sacrifices were made to improve their new life by having children. They described sacrifice as working hard for the children's future while having faith in God. It was conveyed in their statements when asked about how they could describe their situation. Sammy said:

“We should work hard even if it’s just one of us because we already have a child we need to take care of, we already have our own family that’s why we need to work hard for us to have something to eat so that it won't be hard for us.”

Lisa added: “Both of us were still studying when the pandemic came so there was no job available, he stopped going to school (pertaining to her partner) for 1 year just to look for a job”. Matthew also said: “We just need to trust, trust that whatever happens, we need to have faith and trust God.”

It means that the participants have the determination to work hard for their family to sustain their aims of living and provide the necessities for their children and their own. They tend to work hard for the future that they want for their family. The participants now put more value and effort into the relationship due to the baby and not just their relationship. This means that having a baby was difficult for cohabiting couples, which is

the reason why most of them practiced perseverance and faith in God. It was supported by the study of Manning (2015, as cited by O'Reilly Treter, Rhoades, Scott, Markman & Stanley, 2020), where he stated that having a baby in a cohabiting relationship may be more vulnerable to difficulties than married couples. In fact, according to the study of Litcher, Michelmore, Turner, and Sassler (2016, as cited by O'Reilly Treter et al., 2020) 13% of cohabiting couples tend to break up within the first year after their baby is born, while only 4% of married couples break up within the same time frame (Stykes, 2015, as cited by O'Reilly Treter et al., 2020).

**Psycho-emotional Changes.** The participants described that they experienced psycho-emotional changes as part of their relationship. They conveyed that their situation made them grow as people and mature. It was seen in Aria when asked about their situation before and after cohabiting. She stated:

“There were many changes, it’s like it added more difficulties the both of us grow as a person unlike before where we could do things like hangouts.. argue about small things we really need to build ourselves in order to fix our relationship because our situation now is not like before”.

David also stated, “The good part is it makes you think mature.” His partner Lisa added, “Uhm... right now it’s like... tiring”. Sammy said that, “It’s okay, it’s what... happy, sometimes it's sad when there's argument... still it’s okay”. She also added, “When it comes to (our relationship)... we were sweet before but now we're not”.

The participants' statements represented that their lives had never been the same since they were in the situation and had children. They conveyed that their relationship has changed, promoting maturity and growth as well as experiencing psycho-emotional drawbacks. The experience of being a parent can be stressful; however, according to Minnes (1988, as cited by Hayes & Watson, 2013), studies suggest that families respond well and generally adjust to maintain stability and manage their life challenges. It was in accordance with the participants' experiences, who stated that despite such changes, they managed to adjust and work hard for their families.

### ***Theme Cluster: Struggle***

The third theme that emerged from the participants was struggle, which refers to their life transition process challenges. It was expressed through the following sub-themes: (1) Social Limitation, (2) Acceptance Problem, (3) Troubled Life, and (4) Financial Limitation. The data collected from the interview showed that the participants experienced limitations regarding social activities and finances. This was expressed in the following sub-themes below.

**Social Limitation.** The participants expressed that they encounter limitations regarding their social life due to their situation and much more due to the children. It was seen in the statement of Matthew, when asked about their situation in the arrangement, said, “Uhm, there is a difference, there is a far difference between being single and having your own family, your time is controlled... your time would be spent with your partner and the child”. Kenzo also expressed, “Ah what I can add more to say right now is that it's not the same anymore back when you were still single you could go out everywhere, right now



there is a limitation when it comes to all your actions you need to think right for the future... that you both entered for the both of you". Lisa added:

"There is a big difference... because for me as a girl it's like nice to feel that you're just simply dating because before I could just ask him out or he asks me out... it's different when you don't have anything to worry about and just be relaxed... like when you're done with assignments you can go out. We still have friends right now but it's different than before, now whenever they invite us we decline due to the child."

It depicted that being in the situation and having children greatly affected their lives. The participants' responses indicated that they experienced changes in their activities before and after engaging in a cohabitation arrangement. This means that having to care for children impacts how they live their lives as cohabiting couples. Their life before cohabitation was not the same anymore as they now have responsibilities that limit their social life. Taking care of children may have restrictions when it comes to freedom, change one's routine, contribute to sleep deprivation, and increase financial and housework strains (Cowan & Cowan, 2000; Petch & Halford, 2008, as cited by O'Reilly Treter et al., 2020).

**Acceptance Problem.** The participants expressed that their families initially had problems accepting their situation. Social approval was a common problem that cohabiting couples experienced during the early stages of their relationship. When asked about what the family of his partner thinks about their arrangement, Matthew said:

"Yes, the side of her family had trouble accepting as her parents wanted her to finish her studies... but I promised her mom that once the baby could be taken care of by other persons (nanny or family), she will continue her studies".

Aria, when asked about how her family had reacted to her situation said, "At first there is displeasure but then it already happened so they eventually will accept it and they accepted it as time goes by". This means that the participants experienced struggles regarding their families and friends' acceptance of their situation. The acceptance problem was evident in the statements of the participants. This means that cohabitation was mostly not acceptable by society. Hence, many still view cohabitation with stigma despite its prevalence, especially when you have children. This was true according to the statement of Williams, Ogena, and Kabamalan (2007) that Filipino women were 70% less likely to approve of cohabitation than Filipino men, and although cohabitation may be acceptable to men, most women are motivated to be in a formal legal marriage despite cohabitation being a marriage trial. In addition, Scroope (2017) states that marriage is considered a milestone in life in the Philippines, and in some cases, couples get married due to pregnancy because children out of wedlock are generally stigmatized. However, most Americans find cohabitation acceptable as they view married and cohabiting couples as having equal opportunities to raise children (Horowitz et al., 2019). Moreover, cohabiting couples tend to experience social disapproval from their friends and family than others (Huang et al., 2011, as cited by McGhee et al., 2021).

**Troubled Life.** The participants expressed their struggles being in the situation. They conveyed that their journey was not easy and henceforth experienced challenges and struggles throughout the relationship. Matthew described their situation as, "Our situation is not easy, when you have to provide for your family... arguments are inevitable, you can't

avoid having fights". Lisa added, "We did not anticipate how hard the journey is, the one who suffers most is the father, and the parents, especially if there is no source of income." Aria also expressed, "From the start of our relationship, back when we're still in a boyfriend and girlfriend relationship to this arrangement right now it's difficult, we thought that it's easy but hardships are still evident and we really faced difficulties like when we don't know what to do, it's not like before anymore as we have an obligation now, so before entering into this kind of arrangement the both of you should be ready to face all the consequences". Sammy also said that, "In our situation we had many struggles, challenging happenings, like right now we're cohabiting. We have many challenges, we don't have a choice but to keep on fighting, we will fight all the problems that we will encounter."

The participants' responses indicated that their life in the situation was not easy but rather a difficult journey in which they exerted much effort to make work for their family. They conveyed that being in the situation was a struggle, especially in the adjustment process. Their statements indicated that they had conflictual issues regarding their relationships. This means that cohabitating presents challenges as these participants navigate the complexities of shared responsibilities and different expectations. According to a study, cohabiting couples are most likely to report lower relationship quality compared to married couples, such as conflict, less commitment, higher rates of negative communication, and lower rates of relationship satisfaction and happiness (Stafford et al., 2004; Stanley et al., 2004, as cited by O'Reilly Treter, 2020).

**Financial Limitation.** The participants expressed having financial issues in their relationships. Financial constraints were evident from the participant's responses when asked about their current situation. They conveyed that sustaining their family was quite a struggle as they did not have stable jobs. Matthew, when asked about their situation, expressed having financial problems when it comes to their needs. He said, "Actually in financial as I don't really have a high salary, our budget would be inadequate for us, for the house, bills, payment, we are actually not that quite stable when it comes to our needs". His partner Thalia also stated that, "For me, it's very hard for me... we lack...for me it's inadequate because when we need something we should be able to buy it". Lisa also expressed that, "Ahh... now that the both of us are studying it's very hard, it depends if both parents have a job then it's quite okay but right now, we need support".

The participant's responses indicated that financial problems were one of their struggles. They expressed that they do not have stable jobs or a high salary, and some are still studying. Hence, they do not have jobs and need support from their family, such as from their parents. This means that these participants needed to be financially stable to sustain their children's and their own needs. Young adults who cohabit are most likely associated with disadvantages and socioeconomic instability, such as lack of paid employment and low education (Kabamalan, 2004; Williams et al., 2007, as cited by Kuang, 2018). Childbearing and pregnancy in cohabitation were more common among less advantaged women who lacked the resources and stability (Edin & Kefalas, 2005; Perelli-Harris and Gerber, 201, as cited by Kuang, 2018). Additionally, Muriungi (2019) and Horowitz et al. (2019) indicate that financial issues were a major factor in cohabitation and why they are not in marital union.

### ***Description of the Phenomenon***

First and foremost, the participants expressed how accepting their new roles and responsibilities caused issues in their current circumstances. They expressed that being in the phenomenon causes conflicts within their priorities and impacts their social lives, including their relationships with family and friends. Having to commit to their obligations changed the way they lived their lives prior to entering into the arrangement.

In addition, the participants described that being in the arrangement means sacrificing things for the relationship to work. Perseverance was one crucial aspect that made their situation work through their hardships. The participants also described that it promotes maturity and growth in their relationships; they claimed that it made them grow as a person, improving how they handle their issues throughout the situation.

Moreover, the participants described their experience as a struggle for them. The transition from just dating to cohabiting was greatly an adjustment for them. Adjusting specifically when it comes to their social life, such as their friends and families having a hard time accepting their life transition, finances, social time, and activities, was indeed hard for them. The social limitations of the participants affected how they lived their usual routine or lifestyle. They indicated that financial constraints were one of the major issues in their situation, as most did not have stable jobs.

In summary, the participant's description of the phenomenon of cohabitation implied that their lived experiences in the situation were a struggle. Most of the participants stated that the major reasons for their cohabitation were the children and their love for each other. The situation brought troubles to their relationship; nonetheless, it encouraged them to work hard and be resilient for their families. This showed that cohabitation positively and negatively impacted their lives despite the predominance of the issues that emerged from their situation.

### **Conclusions**

In general, cohabitation arrangements revealed three key themes: acceptance, sacrifice, and struggle for the couples in Poblacion Barangay Dapitan City. It revealed that being in the situation was difficult, affecting their everyday lives. The situation made them experience changes along the course. Moreover, the socioeconomic struggle of the participants played a crucial role in their relationships. Given the lack of stable jobs, they could not sustain the needs of their families, especially the needs of the children. The participants' responses showed that being in the arrangement without enough money for sustenance, they relied on the help of their parents during hard times. In some instances, the participants revealed that having to study while making a living affected their priorities in life; hence, they chose to stop their education and focused on sustaining their aims of living. Some of the responses from the participants revealed that it made their relationships mature and had emotional drawbacks; however, apart from the issues, it also brought happiness and contentment to them, especially from the children. It was having children that motivated them to enter into the arrangement of cohabitation. It pushed them to work hard and sacrifice things to take responsibility for their actions, challenged them to adjust to their life transition, and impacted a huge part of their life, especially in their socio-economic life. Based on the themes that emerged in this study, the lived experiences of

young adult couples revealed that cohabitation was an enormous challenge to their everyday lives.

Based on the findings revealed in this study, determine areas that need to be addressed; some recommendations include:

1. It is recommended that the Department of Health impose a more comprehensive program acknowledging the issues of contraceptives and family planning among young adults and applying it through educational institutions.
2. It is recommended that the Local Government Unit address the rising cohabitation cases among young adults by implementing an intensified program that acknowledges the issues that come with it.
3. It is recommended that the School strengthen its teachings on family planning by having a course relevant to cohabitation in the curriculum.
4. Future researchers may explore this arrangement at the national level and relevant issues connected with it, as studies about this arrangement in the Philippines are lacking, especially in the context of young adults.

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