

## ABSTRACT

The study of "Nonmarital Cohabitation : A case of university students" is aiming at understanding the meaning of living together from the actor's point of view and analyzing the basic process of becoming "nonmarital cohabitant". Symbolic interactionism perspective is utilized as a basic frame of analysis. Analytic ethnography method was employed and in-depth interview was used as basic means for data collection. Seventeen students (9 males and 8 females) were selected as key informants.

For the meaning of living together there is difference between male and female cohabitants. While males give 3 meanings ; "sex", "economy and comfort" and "true love" females give only one : "true love (but no expectation of subsequent marriage)". These meanings have no implication for any aspect of marriage and the family as evident in the American society or in some European societies. It is suggested this form of cohabitation seen to be an "alternative lifestyle" for college students' life.

The process of becoming cohabitant has three stages. The first ; the "beginning" stage when they become "fiance". The "occasional" stage was reached when the couple had regular sexual activity and stayed overnight together occasionally. Need for companionship and saving and in some case yielding to women's demand for the case of males and needs for males commitment and sympathy and social pressure for the case of females are basic conditions leading to the last, the "regular" stage. However, in order to maintain their "life style", the cohabitants have to manage or "neutralize" negative reaction from "social audience" especially their significant others. Various form of account and concealment were used among males and females cohabitants.