

**KNOWLEDGE TOWARDS HOMOSEXUALITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON SOCIAL
ADJUSTMENT AMONG UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS, AT A PRIVATE UNIVERSITY IN
OGUN STATE, NIGERIA**

AZORONDU ABIGAIL AGBON

Department of Social Work, Babcock University, Ogun State, Nigeria
azorondua@babcock.edu.ng

FAMUYIDE OREOLUWA TITILAYO

Department of Social Work, Babcock University, Ogun State, Nigeria

AJIKE JAMES OBINNA

Department of Social Work, Babcock University, Ogun State, Nigeria
jamesobinnaajike@gmail.com

BINUYO BIODUN ADESOYE

Department of Social Work, Babcock University, Ogun State, Nigeria
binuyobi@babcock.edu.ng

ABSTRACT

Homosexuality means feeling physical attraction for the identical biological sex. There is high level of societal rejection of non-normative sexual identities in Africa, with very low tolerance for homosexuality and other non-normative or alternative sexual behaviors. The study intends to wake up limelight, the perspectives/knowledge of undergraduate students in a private university in Ogun state, Nigeria on homosexuality.

Quantitative research method was used. Three hypotheses were tested: There is no negative level of attitude of undergraduate students towards homosexuality, Undergraduate students has no negative perception towards homosexuality, there is no significant level of knowledge of undergraduate students on homosexuality, there is no significant level of knowledge of undergraduate students on homosexuality, Simple random sampling as the technique and a sample size of 400 participants. Research design was descriptive survey. A questionnaire was used as the research instrument. The study findings revealed that most of the University students had a negative perception of homosexuality. Findings also indicate that there is significant level of knowledge of undergraduate students on homosexuality. Result showed that the respondents agree that there was adequate knowledge of LGBT person(s) among students.

Knowledge of undergraduate students towards homosexuality and its implication on social adjustment had been examined. It is concluded that there was a negative level of knowledge of undergraduate students towards homosexuality. It is recommended based on the findings that institutions or schools with restricted lifestyle and movement should be freed and students should be allowed a reasonable freedom of movement, restricted movement and lifestyle should be relaxed to an extent.

Introduction

To quote Silverstein's Research, (2019) Homosexuality means feeling physical attraction for the identical biological sex. Kim, (2013) suggest that consistent with the American Psychiatric Association (APA), sexual orientation is defined not as a choice of individual will, but as a matter of birth, sexual orientation or difference in lifestyle. Consistent with Kim & Ha, (2018) within the past, negative attitudes towards

homosexuality are gradually becoming acceptable attitudes, and in our society, instead of being protected and revered by one right, we acknowledge them as a status quo instead of a controversy. Sexual minorities experience social discrimination, abuse and fear due to their sexual orientation.

Jang, (2017) suggests that the psychological maladjustment of homosexuals is said to face social prejudice and negative attitudes of the many heterosexuals.

To quote Lee, Kwon & Lee's research, (2016) in Korea's various youth counseling cases, 11-17 years looked after adolescents are agonizing over their homosexual experiences, and homosexual-related issues are no longer difficult to be overlooked by some. Additionally, homosexuality is reported to be above non-religious groups (Heo, 2014). He further stipulated that the more outgoing religious people are, the less negative they are towards homosexuals and therefore the more religious they are, the more negative they become.

There is high level of societal rejection of non-normative sexual identities in Africa, with very low tolerance for homosexuality and other non-normative or alternative sexual behaviors. In keeping with Bruce-Jones and Paoli (2017), homosexual acts are deemed illegal in about 37 countries in Africa. While the likes of Burkina Faso, Cape-Verde, Guinea-Bissau, among others, don't have any written or explicitly stated laws criminalizing homosexuality, countries like Nigeria, Benin, Burundi, and Cameroon have criminalized homosexuality and make the act punishable by law (Global Legal Research, 2014).

Undermining this trend of Africa's attitude towards homosexuality, and other alternative sexual orientations, to date, African nation remains the sole country on the continent to legalize duet. Nevertheless, Africa is mostly characterized by public outburst and outrage against alternative sexual orientations in varieties of protests, persecutions and even killings (Allotey, 2015). For example, the Ugandan gay activist, David Koto, was murdered for his activist stance and pursuit of gays' right. Despite the legalized state of homosexuality in Republic of South Africa, Thapelo Makhutle, a Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Intersex (LGBTI) activist was killed in 2012 (Defenders, 2016). It's on this premise that this study seeks to unravel the knowledge and general attitude of scholars towards homosexuality and its implication on social adjustment.

Studies have taken a perspective or African approach to homosexuality and other alternative sexual orientations (Bruce-Jones & Paoli, 2017; Cardoso & Werner, 2018; McAnulty & Burnette, 2018; Rice, 2017). Several studies exist on homosexuality and also the attitudes and perceptions of individuals towards the practice and people who derive pleasure and practice in Nigeria (Atoi & Ojedokun, 2013; Mapayi et al., 2013; Onuche, 2013). The controversy that the difficulty of homosexuality continues to get in Nigeria, its frequency among the young population (undergraduate students) and their attitude and knowledge towards it and implication on social adjustment, the scanty enquiry on the subject are factors that stimulate a powerful interest for the study.

Homosexuality

Homosexuality has been defined as the romantic or sexual intercourse or behavior between members of the same sex (Beth 1992). Homosexuality in different societies has provoked several attitudes such as acceptance, banned and punishment. The act of homosexuality has attracted the attention of many scholars regarding how it all began, in other words, the cause and genesis of the act. Freud, in his view believed that all humans were born bi-sexual in nature and due to restriction in one direction or the other, both heterosexuality and homosexuality developed (Freud 1953). Early psychologist believed that homosexuality was due to mental illness. Wahlen Bize Wang, Merglen, Ambresin (2020) opined that homosexuality is developed through genetic means. Other view as the Hormonal theorists believe that abnormal levels of some pre-natal hormones can lead to an increased chance of homosexuality in an individual. (Omodara and Idowu (2020) believed that people become homosexuals as a result of same-sex environment with no opposite sex to share their sexual desire with.

Undergraduate Knowledge of Homosexuality

Students have been an integral part of the health system and have a role in generating positive impact at community level and as agents of change directly and indirectly. Homosexuals are rejected by the community as they are regarded as sinful, amoral, and abnormal. This negative attitude deters homosexuals from access to health care. This in turn leads homosexuals to commit high risk sexual behaviors such as unprotected men who have sex with men (MSM) and men who have sex with men and woman (MSMW) (Omondi, Kiptiony and Chemwei, 2016). High-risk sexual behavior in homosexuals increases the risk of sexually transmitted diseases and human immunodeficiency virus (HIV) in this population. Recently, even in Nigeria and among undergraduate students, homosexuality is beginning to spread and open up and even though there has been a law against the act, still it is in existence in the country and also in various institutions of higher learning in the country. While a lot of research has been carried out in other aspects of students' attitude very little or nothing has been done in the area of research on the attitude of students towards homosexuality. It is on this premise that this study seeks to unravel the knowledge and general attitude of students towards homosexuality (Omondi, Kiptiony and Chemwei, 2016).

Undergraduates Attitudes towards Adoption of Homosexuality

Attitudes can influence people's behavior directly when people act consciously on the basis of their attitudes, and indirectly when attitudes unconsciously shape how people view and define a situation (Anaso, 2015). Negative attitudes towards lesbians and gay men, therefore, do not always predict specific behaviors, but in general, negative attitudes towards these minorities are likely to elicit more negative and discriminatory behaviors than in those who have little or no sexual prejudice (Osmanaga, 2015). People have different opinions about adoption in general. Wahlen et al., (2020) reported female undergraduates in general have a more positive attitude about adoption than men. Lehman and Thornwall (2020) reports 90% of Americans have a positive view of adoption, although half say that adopting is "not as good as having one's own child". Other research has shown similar results with beliefs that adopting is "second best" to having one's own children. Male students typically believe this more than women.

Factors that Influence Students' Knowledge towards Homosexuality School

The influence of social context may also be observed in the school environment. These are settings that are often infused with heterosexism, homophobia, and generally overt gender rules, divergence from which is judged and frowned upon (Gaa, 2010). School environments are expected to be safe, positive, and nurturing, supporting the growth and development of all youth. Despite this common expectation, sexual minority youth may frequently experience stigmatization and victimization. This may include a substantial number of stressors, such as physical or verbal homophobic bullying and rejection by both teachers and peers, as well as cyberbullying and discrimination. A study by Johnson and Greeley (2019) found that due to bullying 80% of participants showed declining performance in school, 40% reported absence, 30% dropped out, and 40% lost friends. Similarly, Barry (2014) concluded that 88% of heterosexual males in high school reported finding gay relationships repulsive, and only 12% felt they could be friends with a gay male, which, in sexual minorities, may lead to feelings of rejection and lowered self-esteem. As a significant and negative outcome of heterosexism in the school environment, bullying often becomes a central issue to the existence of sexual minority youth. In general, actual or perceived bullying may lead to peer rejection, isolation, and a sharp decrease in self-esteem (Joe-Akunne et al., 2020). More relevantly to sexual minority youth, homophobic bullying has also been shown to be a significant factor in declines in self-esteem.

Family and friends

In early research in studies on the influence of the family environment on sexual minorities, Savin-Williams (1989) examined a sample of 317 youth using self-report measures and found that for girls a more satisfying relationship with their mother predicted higher self-esteem. In addition, for boys, a satisfying relationship with both parents predicted higher self-esteem. To further explore this idea, in their study of 72 lesbian, gay, and bisexual youth, Floyd et al. (1999) found that the more positive parents' attitudes were to their child sexual orientation, the higher youth scored on self-esteem measures. Similarly, Legate et al. (2012) found that sexual minority participants who were out to most family and friends presented higher self-esteem, which was further augmented by the amount of perceived social support. Evidence from Jackson and Mohr (2016) is in line with the body of these findings, suggesting that there is a significant association between concealing one's sexual orientation and higher levels of self-stigma, lower life satisfaction, as well as lower levels of identity strength.

Community

Reports on these issues were supported by evidence from Lyu, Shen and Hesketh (2020) who found self-esteem to have a moderate to strong correlation with supportiveness in a sample of gay men. This was further evidenced by Hossain and Ferreira (2019) when examining a sample of gay and lesbian youth, showing that a negative social context, such as a homophobic culture of verbal abuse, threats, and physical harm, had a negative correlation with internalized homophobia and self-esteem.

Religiosity

As part of the social context, a religious context may act as an origin of self-conflict for gay and lesbian youth. In one of the earliest studies in this field, Clingman and Fowler (1976) examined a sample of gay men at the Gay Metropolitan Church and found that church attendees who experienced belonging and positive religious experiences also reported higher self-esteem, as opposed to those gay men who did not attend this church. In a study of 66 gay, lesbian, and bisexual adults, Shuck and Liddle (2001) found that over 66% of participants reported a friction between their sexual and religious identities. Continuing to research the religious experiences of sexual minorities, Sherkat (2002) reported that of the 2500 religious' movements in the United States, almost all disapprove of non-heterosexual orientations, which leads to a frustrating, judgmental, and conflicting social context for sexual minorities. Following their footsteps, in a recent research, Dahl and Galliher (2010) examined 106 sexual minority youth looking for correlations between religiosity and self-esteem. Like previous studies, their findings also suggested that religious experiences initiating positive affect (such as kind and forgiving God) are associated with increased self-esteem, whereas negative religious experiences (such as fear of God, fear of judgment) were associated with low self-evaluation, low self-worth, and decreased self-esteem.

Homosexual Parenting

There are a number of ways gay men and lesbian women may become parents. It may be by bringing children into same-gendered relationships or by having children within same-gendered relationships. Thus, gay men and lesbian women may become parents by raising children from previous heterosexual unions in a new homosexual relationship, or through adoption or foster care. Options for lesbian women to become parents include anonymous artificial insemination by donor (AID) through a clinic; anonymous donor, self-insemination (SI); known donor self-insemination; or heterosexual intercourse. Options for gay men to become parents include being a known donor for lesbian couples and entering into a partnership as a parent with lesbian or heterosexual women friends (Hargaden & Llewellyn, 1996). All lesbian women and gay men have thoughts and feelings about children, parenting and childlessness

and many may have, or want to have children of their own (Hargaden & Llewelin, 1996; Hicks & McDermott, 1999).

The acceptance of homosexual couples as viable partnerships has considerably progressed as a result of gay liberation and, to some extent, the women's movement according to Crawford & Solliday (1996) and Lehmann (2001). This, however, has not been a universal experience. For example, in the United Kingdom adoption law has only recently been amended to allow adoption by homosexuals, but only after much debate and several failed attempts (Hicks & McDermott, 1999) chart the story of the attempts to amend the UK legislation. Unfortunately, the acceptance of homosexual couples as viable partnerships become controversial when homosexual couples seek to create alternative family units (Crawford & Solliday, 1996).

In terms of homosexual parenting, one of the questions that is constantly posed is: how are children raised by homosexual parents affected? There have been a range of studies conducted into this question which have been assessed in a number of review articles such as Allen & Burrell (1996), Patterson (1997), Parks (1997), Fitzgerald (1999), Stacey & Biblarz (2001) and most recently by Anderssen et al. (2002). All of these review articles and the studies they contain conclude that there are no differences in developmental outcomes between children raised by homosexual parents and those raised by heterosexual parents.

The most recent of these reviewed articles by Anderssen et al. (2002) is typical example of these reviews. They reviewed 23 empirical studies published between 1978 and 2000 (one Belgian/Dutch, one Danish, three British and 18 North American) on nonclinical children raised by lesbian mothers or gay fathers with 20 studies reported on the offspring of lesbian mothers and three on the offspring of gay fathers. The studies encompassed a total of 615 offspring (age range from 1.5 to 44 years) and 387 controls that were assessed by psychological tests, questionnaires or interviews. Seven types of outcomes were found to be typical: emotional functioning, sexual preference, stigmatization, gender role behaviour, behavioural adjustment, gender identity, and cognitive functioning. It was concluded that children raised by lesbian mothers or gay fathers did not systematically differ from other children on any of these outcomes. Another key question is: are children of homosexual parents likely to grow up to be homosexuals? As well as the findings referred to above on sexual identity, there is specific evidence on this question from a study by Golombok & Tasker (1996). This longitudinal study of the sexual orientation of adults who were raised as children in lesbian families found that, although they were more likely to explore same-sex relationships, the large majority of the sample identified as heterosexual.

Religion and Homosexuality

Religion is often a very important influence in some people's lives in both mental, physical, social and spiritual. Its belief system imparts heavily on one's opinions about certain issues. Many people rely on religion to help understand certain human behaviors. When religions take a stand on an issue such as homosexuality, their followers accept these opinions often without questioning. Personal beliefs and knowledge of church members are formed by church policy towards homosexuality and same-sex couples raising children. Some religions are against same-sex couples raising children. Wilson (2008) discussed a case when Catholic Charities of Massachusetts closed their adoption agency that had been running for 103 years when legislation prohibited discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. This was a private charity that held the state contract for placing children in homes for adoption. They refused to place children in homes of same-sex couples; therefore, not abiding by the laws of Massachusetts. When they were told the sexuality of a couple should not be taken into consideration when placing children, they closed their doors rather than conforming to the law.

Catholic Charities of Massachusetts is still operating today but only to offer post-adoption services of counseling the adoptive families. Catholic priests sermonize about how homosexuality is immoral and a sin. The Vatican states (September 2, 2009): portrayals of homosexuality in the media promotes "inimical

to marriage and the family” and is detrimental to society. This information may play a major role in the formation of people’s attitudes towards same-sex couples adopting. The Southern Baptist religious beliefs are similar to that of the Catholic beliefs. They also believe that living a “homosexual lifestyle” is a sin and one can make the decision to change their ways. The Southern Baptist Convention (SBC) states that homosexuality is not caused by hormonal imbalance but by an unhealthy relationship with their parents. They go on to explain that homosexuals can lead moral lives but they must become celibate to do so. Most importantly, the SBC (Southern Baptist Convention) states that discrimination against homosexuality is proper in the areas of protecting the family. This information can influence a person’s decision on gay parenting or placing a child in a same-sex couples’ home. While these religions are opposed to homosexuality there are some religions that openly support gay rights. The United Methodist Church and the Evangelical Lutheran Church support equal rights for homosexuals (Gaa, 2010). Homosexual individuals and couples are allowed within their congregation and are viewed as equals.

Social Adjustment on Homosexuality

On January 7, 2014, Nigeria’s former president, Goodluck Jonathan, signed the Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Bill (SSMPA) into law. The notional purpose of the SSMPA is to prohibit marriage between persons of the same sex. In reality, its scope is much wider. The law forbids any cohabitation between same-sex sexual partners and bans any “public show of same sex amorous relationship.” The SSMPA imposes a 10-year prison sentence on anyone who “registers, operates or participates in gay clubs, societies and organization” or “supports” the activities of such organizations. Punishments are severe, ranging from 10 to 14 years in prison. Such provisions build on existing legislation in Nigeria, but go much further: while the colonial-era criminal and penal codes outlawed sexual acts between members of the same sex, the SSMPA effectively criminalizes lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons based on sexual orientation and gender identity (Isaiah, 2012).

Human Rights Watch research indicates that since January 2014, there have been rising incidents of mob violence, with groups of people gathering together and acting with a common intent of committing acts of violence against persons, based on their real or perceived sexual orientation or gender identity. For instance, in February 2014 in Gishiri village, Abuja, a group of approximately 50 people armed with machetes, clubs, whips, and metal wires dragged people from their homes and severely beat at least 14 men whom they suspected of being gay. Three victims told Human Rights Watch that their attackers chanted: “We are doing [President Goodluck] Jonathan’s work: cleansing the community of gays.” Another victim said that the attackers also shouted: “Jungle justice! No more gays!”

The study intends to wake up limelight, the perspectives/knowledge of undergraduate students in Babcock University (BU), Ilishan-Remo, Ogun state, Nigeria on homosexuality, thereby contributing to the continued debates and knowledge on homosexuality in Nigeria. The following Hypotheses would be tested to achieve the stated objective of this study. H₀: There is no negative level of attitude of undergraduate students towards homosexuality; H₀: Undergraduate students has no negative perception towards homosexuality; H₀: There is no significant level of knowledge of undergraduate students on homosexuality.

Methodology

To achieve the objectives of this research project, the quantitative research approach/design were employed. the research has been stream lined to the undergraduate students in Babcock University in Ilishan – Remo, Ogun state, Nigeria. Probability sampling was used and a sample size of four hundred (400) participants (undergraduates) were selected from various departments and faculties in Babcock University in Ilishan – Remo, Ogun state, Nigeria. The sample size was derived using the Yamani (1967) sample size determination formula. The sampling technique used was the simple random sampling technique which the researcher randomly selected a sample size of 400 respondents from the study sample.

Findings

Testing of hypothesis

Hypothesis one

H₀: There is no negative level of attitude of undergraduate students towards homosexuality

Chi-Square Tests

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	21.341	5	0.000
Likelihood Ratio	17.261	5	0.004
Linear-by-Linear Association	2.424	1	0.003
N of Valid Cases	400		

a. 6 cells (50.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is .18.

Decision Rule: Since the P-value of 0.000 associated with the chi-square value of 21.341 is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H₀) and conclude that there is a negative level of attitude of undergraduate students towards homosexuality at 5-degree levels of freedom.

Hypothesis two

H₀: Undergraduate students has no negative perception towards homosexuality

Chi Square

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	182.762 ^a	5	.000
Likelihood Ratio	126.743	5	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	82.546	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	400		

a. 1 cells (5.8%) have expected count less than 4. The minimum expected count is 3.25.

Decision Rule: Since the P-value which is 0.000 associated with the Chi-Square value of 182.762 is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H₀) and conclude that undergraduate students have negative perception towards homosexuality.

Hypothesis three

H₀: There is no significant level of knowledge of undergraduate students on homosexuality

	Value	Df	Asymp. Sig. (2-sided)
Pearson Chi-Square	172.941 ^a	5	.000
Likelihood Ratio	138.826	5	.000
Linear-by-Linear Association	92.634	1	.000
N of Valid Cases	400		

a. 1 cells (6.3%) have expected count less than 4. The minimum expected count is 4.25.

Decision Rule: Since the P-value which is 0.000 associated with the Chi-Square value of 172.941 is less than 0.05, we reject the null hypothesis (H₀) and conclude that there is significant level of knowledge of undergraduate students on homosexuality.

Conclusion and Recommendation

Knowledge of undergraduate students towards homosexuality and its implication on social adjustment had been examined. It is concluded that there was a negative level of knowledge of undergraduate students towards homosexuality. The non-existence of a positive knowledge of the students towards homosexuality was as a result of their heterosexual nature in sexual orientation and this may not be surprising because of the magnitude of the association between their orientation and the type of social settings they found themselves. The strength of this association highlights the importance of their view on homosexuals which they considered that are more likely to commit deviant sexual acts, such as child molestation, rape, and voyeurism (Peeping Toms) than are heterosexuals. Moreover, certain ideological beliefs seem to be linked with hostility toward gay men and lesbians. The study also showed that undergraduate students have negative perception towards homosexuality. This was manifested in their thoughts that Children raised by gay or lesbian parents will likely be homosexual themselves. It is also proved in the study that there was significant level of knowledge of undergraduate students on homosexuality. This is proved by their responses on the fact that students in the institution understands heterosexual, homosexuality and bisexuality. This act, by way of peer interaction is being taught to other students who needs to satisfy their sexual urge.

Recommendations

Base on the findings of this study, the following recommendations were made:

- ❖ In order to stop this social ill in our environment, educational policy makers, stakeholders and government should stop gender exclusive schools and probably change them into mixed schools.
- ❖ Also, institutions or schools with restricted life style and movement should be freed and students should be allowed a reasonable freedom of movement, restricted movement and life style should be relaxed to a good extent.
- ❖ Government should also establish effective rehabilitation center for homosexuals in order to assist them recover from their deviant behavior

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