

Stirring the Hornet's Nest: A Study of Student's Awareness, Perception and Tolerance of Homosexuality in a Ghanaian University

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Abstract

Homosexuality has been and continues to be a contentious subject in many quarters across many disciplines. It has generated many debates around political, religious, socio-cultural as well as medical domains. This study sought to contribute to debates on the issue by examining the views of students in a Ghanaian public University. The main objectives of the study were to ascertain student's level of awareness of homosexuality, analyze their perceptions and gauge their degree of tolerance of the practice. An exploratory design was employed for the study. A sample of 200 undergraduate students of the University for Development studies were selected with a multistage sample procedure. Data was collected with the aid of a structured questionnaire. The main findings of the study were that the levels of awareness among students were very high, their perceptions largely negative; so was their level of tolerance. Generally students found the practice abominable, illegal and intolerable. The study concluded that students' perceptions go a long way in shaping public discourse and influence the general attitude of the larger population toward homosexuality. As such, great care should be taken to ensure that homophobic tendencies do not result into a national security crisis. Key recommendations are that state authorities must ensure that the law criminalizing homosexuality must be clearly articulated. Also, a national dialogue should be embarked upon with the view to taking a common, humane and culturally acceptable position on the practice of homosexuality, mindful of cultural, religious as well as human rights considerations.

Key Words: *Homosexuality, Students, Awareness, Perception, Tolerance, Culture, University*

1.0 Introduction

1.1 Homosexuality: Opening a Can of Worms

Homosexuality is defined as one's desire for sexual contact with a person of his/her own sex. Homosexuality means, the sexual orientation and fantasies, with or without overt sexual

behavior with same sex partner (Ahmed, 2006). Homosexuality is one social phenomenon that over the years has gained currency and generated a lot of controversies and intense debate among stakeholders throughout the world (both international and local), and the discourse cut across political, social, economic, cultural, religious and ethnic among other spheres of human endeavour. Homosexuality is one of the most difficult subjects to discuss because of societal taboos and the fact that most religious traditions vehemently damn such practices.

The origins of sexual-orientation have been the subject of much conjecture, research, and debate in recent years (Kelly, 2004). In the past however, several attempts were made in trying to disclose the origin of the act of homosexuality. According to Hanza (2007), two major but contrasting factors gained prominence; while the “nature” (biological) perspective laid claims to the fact that homosexuality is essentially dictated by genetic factors, the “nurture” perspective stresses on social psychological influence. He added that, all findings on the origin of homosexuality were refuted based on empirical evidence, sometimes after the study has been replicated (Hanza, 2007).

Findings from both the biological (genetic) and behaviorists perspectives could not stand the test of time in order to establish an authoritative view capable of resolving this debate. However, what seemed to be undisputable in this whole controversy has to do with the influence of culture. This was buttressed by Lepowsky’s statement in 1993 that, biological difference may be influenced or motivated by our culture and how it prescribed masculine and feminine behavior. He concluded that, it is possible for behavior to influence biology, just as biology influence behavior (cited in Ferris & Stein, 2008).

The debate on homosexuality is not limited to only its origins or cause, but also on whether it should be legalized or criminalized. Internationally, there has been a divided front on the raging debate on the most popular question or topic of legalization of homosexual practices. This is visible in the posture assumed by world leaders with conflicting views arising between pro-homosexual Europe and America on one hand and anti-homosexual Africa and other developing countries on the other hand. Those against the act, view it from the angle of morale, religious and cultural ethos; while pro-homosexual activists base their view points on legal issues and rights of homosexuals (Kretz, 2013; Owusu, Anarfi & Tenkorang, 2013).

Africa in recent times has taken the centre stage of this unfolding debate of legalization of homosexuality championed by human rights activist on the continent, coupled with the influence of powerful leaders of Europe, America, Gay and Lesbian movements across the continent. This generated mixed reactions based on country specific positions. While the South African state has responded favorably to Lesbian and Gay social movement organizations’ (SMOs) efforts to protect and extend sexual and gender minority rights, other African countries like Namibia, Zimbabwe, Uganda and Gambia however, have verbally attacked Lesbians and Gays by organizing and threatening to arrest sexual and gender minorities (Ashley, 2007).

The Ghanaian context is not very different from the general African situation. The issues of culture, morality, religion and Pan-Africanism take centre stage of the various commentaries in

the media. The recent reports on homosexuality by the media had centered on the rights of homosexuals and whether the act should be legalized or not. This attracted divergent opinions from the various interest groups and personalities including Gays and Lesbians Association of Ghana (GALAG) members.

2.0 Perceptions of Homosexuality

Apart from the debate on its origin, legality and otherwise, various attempts have been made to examine its perception from both homosexuals and heterosexuals at large. The perceptions range from positive, nonchalant to very negative or homophobic. Four main sources of perceptions can be gleaned from the literature. These are religious, legal, medical and socio-cultural.

2.1 Religious perception

The various discussions or viewpoints underpinning religious perceptions are based on the popular story of Sodom and Gomorrah in both Bible and Quran where God pronounces curse on homosexual practices. It is indicated in the Bible in Leviticus 18:22 and 20:13 that marriage is instituted between man and woman. The Holy Quran also expressed in seven different verses concerning homosexuality and the actions of the people of Lut (Ahmed, 2006; Nicole, 2007).

However, there have been strong contestations of the biblical views on homosexuality by many researchers including American authors including evangelist (Wink, 1999; Helminiak, 1994). Their take is that the Bible verses used to bash homosexuality are often misplaced and has been grossly misinterpreted.

2.2 Legal & human rights perception

Homosexuality is not legally acceptable in most African countries with the exception of South Africa. According to Zastrow and Kirst-Ashman (2004) in Zimbabwe, male homosexuality is illegitimate and is punishable by prison sentence, it is also detested by politicians and religious leaders; it is regarded as unnatural, un-African, immoral, unethical and a nefarious sin.

2.3 Medical perception

Homosexuality has almost always been discussed in relation to sexually transmitted infections. However, negative perceptions towards homosexuality are not restricted to less developed nations as similar sentiments have been present in America, Western Europe, and other developed nations (Onuche, 2013). According to Lehrman, (2005), these medical beliefs greatly influence how its morbidity, mortality, and social impact are seen, often causing us to overlook how the gay lifestyle significantly increases the incidence of infectious disease and shortens life expectancy by about 20 years.

2.4 Socio - cultural perceptions

Socially, the society survived base on the functioning of its institutions or structures. The

family or marriage institution is undoubtedly fundamental for proper functioning and sustenance of society. According to Miligan (1973), the practices of homosexuality however, cannot be drawn into the net formed by marriage to encompass love and sex in monogamous unions and hence marriage is primarily a means of legitimizing and rearing of children.

The views on cultural perceptions across the world had to do with the dichotomy in the conception of homosexuality. The African cultural view sees homosexuality as European conception that is alien to Africa and hence a tool for exerting European cultural dominance on Africans and must be resisted.

3.0 Awareness and Tolerance of Homosexual Practices

Globally, approval of homosexuality has increased over the past five decades, with increasing legalization of gay practices mostly in Europe and North America (Smith, 2011). Compared to other regions, Africa has the lowest levels of awareness and communication with regards to male-to-male sex and the most repressive laws against it (Capo-Chichi & Kassegne, 2007). However, in Africa, quite the opposite is the case. Only South Africa has banned discrimination of persons based on their sexual orientation and have even gone further to enshrine homosexual rights in their post-apartheid constitution (Krezt, 2013).

According to Essien and Aderinto (2009), provocative statements made by African statesmen during the 1990s boosted global awareness of the African story of homosexuality and repression, created solidarity among gays and lesbians worldwide, and introduced into African politics a debate that North American and European countries had contested for decades, if not centuries. Importantly, the involvement of well-known public figures intensified and popularized the debate, thus creating more avenues for tension between the State, religions institutions, and custodians of African cultural values and heritage on the one hand, and those who see repression of same-sex relationships as human rights abuse on the other (Essien & Aderinto, 2009).

In Ghana, the public awareness of homosexuality first surfaced when on August 31, 2006, Prince Kwaku McDonald, the President of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Ghana (GALAG) went on Joy FM to remind Ghanaians about the rights of gays and lesbians (Ennin, 2006). He also announced that a proposed international conference was to be held in Accra, the nation's capital on September 23 and other locations, such as Koforidua in the Eastern region (Quaye, 2006). There began a public outrage and a media frenzy ensued. Generally as happened elsewhere, two shades of opinion emerged. One group supporting the acceptance of homosexuals and the other side vehemently opposed to it.

The hue and cry that emerged indicated that the large majority of Ghanaians were against all homosexual practices (at least on the basis of the media outcry alone). Condemnations came from all quarters, religious leaders, medical professionals, traditional authorities, politicians and some people on the street (Ofori, 2014). However, some support for homosexuals came from academicians, college students and human right lawyers (Owusu, et al, 2013).

Since 2006, the debate on homosexuality in the country keeps re-surfacing from time to time. There has been sustained pressure from western governments for the country to take a clear stance on the issue. The renewed interest in the matter came as a result of countries such as Zimbabwe, Kenya and Uganda, passing explicit legislations criminalizing homosexuality and movements in support of it.

This turn of events was viewed by Western leaders as a bad example, retrogression and hence put pressure on their ‘partners’ not to emulate these examples. External and internal pressure forced the late president Atta Mills to make a statement to the effect that Ghana was not going to allow itself to be cowed into legalizing homosexuality. This statement again attracted mix reaction from home and abroad, with proponents of gay rights seeing it as step in the wrong direction; while opponents of homosexuality cheered loudly and commended the president for his bold step.

Such has been the story of public awareness and reaction to homosexuality in the country over the past decade. This paper seeks to throw more light on the issue of homosexuality in the country. The main objective is to ascertain the level of awareness of the practice among University students. This study does not seek to establish the cause(s) of homosexuality, neither does it seek to make pronouncement on its appropriateness or otherwise. It seeks to examine the perceptions of and tolerance levels of students concerning homosexuality and its practice in the country and on campus. It also attempted to find out how attitudes and perceptions influence tolerance of the practice. The main significance of this enterprise is that it adds to the very few empirical studies that have been done on the subject matter in the country. Its findings aim at throwing more light on the subject of homosexuality which for most part is still considered a taboo topic.

4.0 Methods

4.1 Study Site

The study was carried out at one of the campuses of a public University in Ghana. The University for Development Studies (UDS) is a multi-campus public university that is located in the northern part of the country, with campuses in the Northern, Upper East and Upper West Regions.

The study was undertaken at the Wa Campus of the University which is home to the Faculty of Planning and Land Management, Faculty of Business and Law as well as the Faculty of Integrated Development Studies. Respondents were drawn from these three faculties. The use of ‘University Students’ as respondents was as a result of the assumption that traditional college students are very likely to be exposed to alternative social norms and unfamiliar subcultures that promote a rapid (re)socialization of core beliefs (Gurin, 2005). Attitudes toward race, gender, politics and religion are some of the most prevalent ideologies that are explored, expanded, and often altered in the college years (Milem, Umbach & Liang, 2004).

The college years are marked by transitions that may serve to resocialize students away from mainstream attitudes and parental influences, even prompting them to become actively engaged in promoting social change (Renn, 2007).

4.2 Study Design

The exploratory survey design was used to carry out the study. This design was preferred to other designs because it allow for a good blend of qualitative and selected quantitative measures. Exploratory research was used because it is a valuable means of finding out “what is happening; to seek questions and to assess phenomena in a new light” (Robson, 1993 as cited in Saunders, Lewis & Thornhill, 1997. p 78). It is a useful approach for gaining background information on a particular topic, it is flexible and can address research questions of all types (what, why, how) (Ofori, 2014).

4.3 Population and Sampling

Respondents were drawn from third and final year students who happened to be on campus during the period of data collection. The two year groups were chosen because at least they had been in the school for more than two academic years and hence were well on their way into ‘university life’.

The study sampled 200 students from the three faculties. The sampling was multi stage involving quota, convenient and accidental sampling methods. Firstly, a quota was devised to ensure that the respondents were proportional to the total populations of the three faculties. The faculty with the largest total number of students was given the largest quota. After this, students from the various faculties were approached and recruited. Students were approached at or near their faculties, lecture halls and residences.

4.4 Instruments, Data collection and Data Analysis

Selected students after giving their consent were given questionnaires to fill out, and questionnaires were collected after completion. Most questionnaires were completed within 20 minutes. Researchers were at hand to clarify questions that were not clear to respondents. A few of the respondents were however interviewed; thus the questionnaire was administered as a structured interview guide to participants who so desired.

The instruments had questions pertaining to some demographic data of the students, level of awareness, perception of homosexuality and tolerance. Data analysis involved reviewing questionnaires for themes that were molded along the lines of the study objectives. Each theme was then analyzed with the help of descriptive tables. Data was presented in tables, charts and graphs.

5.0 Results

The results of the study are presented according to the main themes, beginning with some demographic characteristics of the respondents.

5.1 Demographic Characteristics of Respondents

Three main demographic characteristics of the respondents were sought. These were age, gender and religion. The data is presented in table one.

Table 1: Distribution of Respondents across Age, Gender & Religion

Age	Frequency	Percentage
10-19	3	1.5
20-29	149	74.5
30-39	41	20.5
40-49	5	2.5
50+	2	1
total	200	100
Gender	Frequency	Percentage
Male	128	64
Female	72	36
Total	200	100
Religion	Frequency	Percentage
Islam	89	44.5
Christianity	107	53.5
Traditional	4	2.0
Total	200	100

Source; field survey, 2013

From the table above, out of the 200 respondents surveyed, 64% of the respondents were male and 36% were female. This is a reflection of male dominance against females on campus as it pertains to most universities in Ghana. In terms of age, 74.5% of respondents fall between the ages of 20-29, 20.5% between the ages of 30-39, 2.5% between the ages of 40-49, 1.5% between the ages of 10-19, and the remaining 1% respondents were 50 years and older.

Religious affiliation was also taken into consideration. Out of the 200 respondents, 53.5% identified themselves as Christians, 44.5% identified themselves as Moslems whiles the remaining 2% identified themselves with the African Traditional Religion. Though an option was provided for less popular religious affiliations, none was identified.

The demographic features of the respondents indicate a youthful population, dominated by males and Christians. The gender and religious affiliation of the respondents may prove

instructive to the opinions on homosexuality.

5.2 Awareness of Homosexuality

One of the main objectives of this study was to ascertain the level of awareness of students on homosexuality. To achieve this, students' definition of homosexuality was solicited, this was followed by their own views on their level of awareness, and finally, the source of knowledge on homosexuality was sought. The results are presented below.

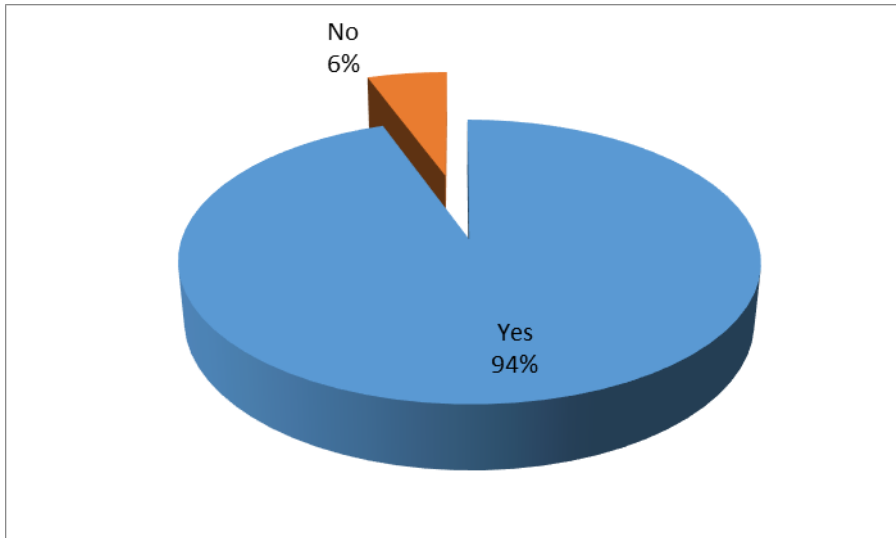
Table 2: Students' definition of homosexuality

Meaning of homosexuality	Frequency	Percentage
Sexual attraction between man & woman	11	5.5
Sexual attraction between men only	51	25.5
Sexual attraction between women only	14	7.0
Sexual attraction between men & between women	124	62.0
Total	200	100

Source; field survey, 2013

The results from table implies that about 62% of the respondents defined homosexuality correctly as sexual attraction between men and between women, which shows that majority of the students actually understand the meaning of homosexuality. The respondents' definition corroborates the definitions in the literature. For example the World Book Encyclopedia (2001), defined Homosexuality "as a sexual attraction chiefly to individuals of the same sex". The operational definition in this study has also defined homosexuality as the act of expressing erotic behavior towards a person of the same sex. The remaining respondents apply the term to only gays (25.5%), lesbians (7%) and heterosexuals (5.5%).

Figure 1: Have you heard of Homosexuality?



Source: Field Data, 2013

From the figure it is overwhelmingly clear that the majority of respondents reported that they had heard about homosexuality. This prompted the researcher to delve into the source of this awareness. To this end, respondents were asked to indicate their main source of knowledge for homosexuality.

Table 3: Principal Sources of information on Homosexuality

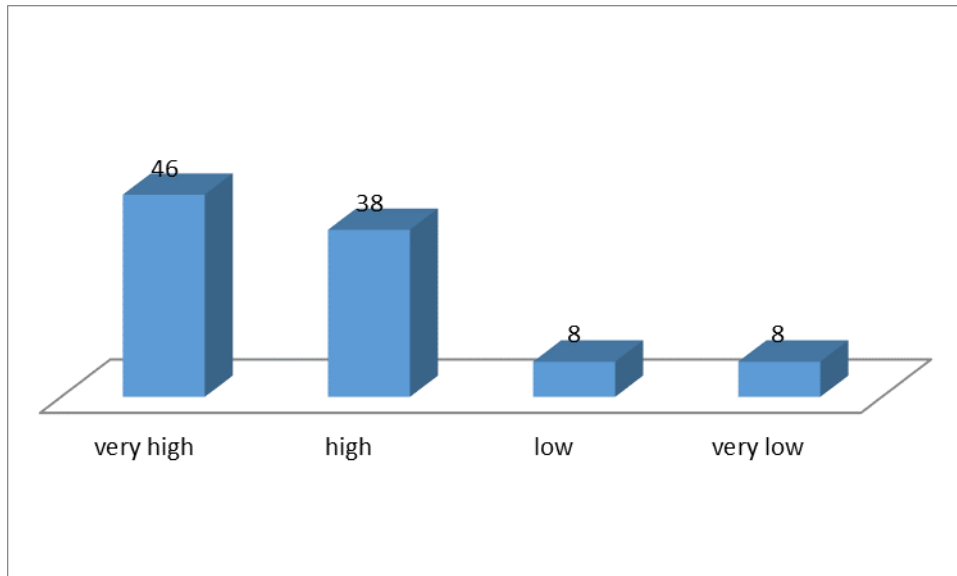
Source	Frequency	Percentage
Peers, through informal discussion and social media	29	14.5
Lectures or formal academic/ class discussions	18	9
Print media (News papers, magazines, books, etc)	33	16.5
Electronic media (Television, Radio, Films, etc)	48	24
Internet	72	36
Total	200	100

Source: Field Data, 2013

The results on the source of knowledge indicate that the internet emerged as the largest single source of information (36%) followed by electronic media (24%). The remaining are the print media (16.5%), friends (14.5%) and through academic sources (9%).

Finally on the awareness, the respondents were asked to indicate their overall level of awareness of homosexuality relative to their level of information, their definitions and experience or exposure to the practice.

Figure 2: Level of awareness of Homosexuality



The results indicate that 46% of the respondents rated their level of awareness of homosexuality as very high, while 38% rated their knowledge as high. Eight percent each rated their knowledge as low and very low. This implies that about 86% of respondents believed their level of awareness was high.

5.3 Perception of Homosexuality

The next major theme was an examination of students' perceptions on homosexuality. a number of benchmarks were employed to carry this out. Respondents were asked to state their views on a number of variables ranging from views on origins, to medical as well as socio-cultural and legal views on the subject. These were then codified and summarized in the table 3.

Table 4: Perception of Homosexuality

Question	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Total
Homosexuality is un African	85	55	12	24	24	200
Homosexuality illegal in Ghana	106	74	5	7	8	200
Homosexuality is practiced by only deviants and criminals	59	38	21	24	58	200
Homosexuality is practiced by the morally corrupt	53	59	24	26	38	200
Homosexuality is practiced by the mentally challenged	9	19	20	61	91	200
Homosexuality is practiced for economic gains	23	57	43	27	50	200
Homosexuality is imposed by the west	64	57	13	30	36	200
Homosexuality is forced on people by peers	27	56	32	27	58	200

Source; Field Data, 2013

From the table, a number of respondents agreed that homosexuality was not African, illegal in Ghana, a western imposition and practiced by immoral people. One main issue received disagreement; this was on the issue of homosexuality being practiced by people who were mentality challenged. On the issues of homosexuality being forced on people by their peer,

the results were rather mixed, 83 respondents strongly agreed or agreed with that assertion while 85 of them disagreed and strongly disagreed with it. A similar result was found for homosexuality occurring for economic gains.

5.4 Tolerance of Homosexuality

Another research objective of the study sought to identify the level of students' tolerance to homosexual practices. Again a number of questions were asked to ascertain the tolerance level of students to homosexuals and their practices. The issues include; the acceptance of homosexual practice in Ghana, integration of homosexuals into society, isolating homosexuals and giving them some form of treatment, to force homosexuals to change their sexual preference, willing to live with homosexuals as roommates, criminalization of homosexual practice and homosexuality should be generally tolerated.

Table 5: Respondents evaluation of issues on tolerance

Issues		Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Total
Find it acceptable		5	8	10	23	154	200
Willing to allow integration		4	18	12	32	134	200
Must be isolated for treatment		46	50	26	50	28	200
Forced to change		47	63	28	40	22	200
Living with homosexuals as roommate		5	21	22	46	106	200
Must be Criminalized		76	51	21	41	11	200
Finds it generally Tolerable		9	13	7	42	129	200

Source; field survey, 2013

The options were coded in a particular order as strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree and strongly disagree. The various codes explain whether respondents tolerate the practice or not. The neutral represent lack of preference, strongly agree and agree show the respondents preference or support towards the acceptance of homosexuality while the disagree and strongly disagree represent their level of intolerance. The preference of respondents on the issues has been summarized in the table 4.

From the table, it is obvious that respondents generally disagreed with accepting homosexuality, integration of homosexuals into society and living with them as roommates. There were strong support for criminalization, and quite appreciable levels of support for forcing homosexuals to change their 'errant ways'.

6.0 Discussion

The results as presented above shows a number of interesting patterns worth discussing. The demographic characteristics of the respondents revealed that there were more males than female and all respondents identified strongly with the three main 'official religions' of the country. Although this may appear trivial, findings in the literature have shown that there is a strong connection between gender and tolerance to homosexual practices. With women being more tolerant than males (Pew Research Centre, 2013). There is also a clear relationship between religious affiliation and perceptions on homosexuality (Pew Research Centre, 2013).

On the level of awareness of homosexuality, the data revealed that the majority of respondents could define accurately what homosexuality meant. As such it could be concluded that knowledge about it was quite high. In addition to definition, it was determined that most of the students, third and final years for that matter had at least heard about it, even experience it or know someone who has. As culturally diverse as the university is, it was expected that a large majority of the students would have heard about it and this was the case, since about 94% of them admitted to that fact.

Source of information is also as equally important. To this end, it can be concluded that several avenues serve as the source of information for knowing about homosexuality. The media, both print and electronic, friends, and social media- thus Facebook, Twitter, etc featured prominently as information sources. However, the dominant single source of information on homosexual practices appeared to be the internet. Students reported that many of the things they knew about homosexuality, they read or watched on the internet. Ironically, learning about homosexuality as part of their formal academic discourse did not serve as the main source of information about homosexuality.

Finally on the first object, the overall awareness level of students on homosexuality indicates that a large number were highly aware of it. This corroborates the assertion by some that cases of homosexual practices now exist throughout the country and particularly on some university campuses (Ahmed, 2006). However, some may object to this assertion since none

of the respondents admitted to being homosexual. Thus high awareness may not necessarily mean high prevalence. But another argument could also be advanced that that due to the level of stigma attached to homosexuality in the country, students who may be homosexuals might refuse to reveal their identity for fear of victimization. Overall however, the finding on the level of awareness further confirms the assertion that, university students are expected to be adequately armed with information not only on homosexuality but other contemporary issues in the country (Renn, 2007).

On the issue of perceptions, the findings are consistent with views held by many researchers on the subject. The data from this study indicates that perceptions on homosexuality come in the direction of socio-cultural ideals, legal or human rights, religious doctrine and medical ideology. These could further be interpreted as positive perception, negative perceptions or neutral. The findings of this study indicate clearly that the respondents had negative perceptions on the topic.

Socio-culturally, 70% of respondents either agreed or strongly agreed that it was not African. This clearly indicates how homosexuality is seen not to be part of African values and viewed as European conception that is alien to Africa and hence a tool for exerting European cultural dominance on Africans which must be resisted. This view of the respondents likely contributed negatively to their tolerance of homosexuality among students since acceptance of a phenomenon sometimes largely depended on the perception people have towards the phenomenon.

About 61% believe it is an imposition from the west. Additionally, about 40% of respondents think it is done for economic reasons. On the medical front, 76% of respondents disagreed and strongly disagreed with the assertion that homosexuality is a mental problem. This is consistent with the widely held view that homosexuality is not a psychiatric problem. The American Psychological Association has since 1973 scrapped it of their mental disorders list.

On the legality or human rights question of the practice, the majority of respondents submitted that the practice was illegal in Ghana. This is an accurate picture because at least in part because under Ghanaian criminal law, same-sex sexual activity among males is illegal (Owusu, et al, 2013). It is uncertain whether same-sex sexual activity among females is illegal. Under the chapter 6 of the Criminal Code, 1960, as amended by The Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, 2003, homosexuality is punishable by law (Ofori, 2014). Despite the numerous calls made by lawyers and other human rights activities including the current minister of Women, Children and Social Protection, to promote the rights of all persons irrespective of their sexual orientation, little or nothing have been done by the state to legalize the practice in Ghana.

Also, there have been contentious debates about the meaning of unnatural canal knowledge which the act prohibiting homosexuality is based on. While arguments have been made to the effect that the law is too ambiguous (because it could apply to anal sex between married

heterosexual couples) and that it may not apply to sexual orientation or identity, others insist that its interpretation include sexual activity between members of the same sex and thus homosexuality.

On the issue of tolerance of the practice, the various benchmarks used to gauge this yielded, unsurprisingly, that the practice was highly intolerable. On the integration of known homosexuals into mainstream society (which is what Gay rights movements seek), 166 respondents representing 83% disagreed and strongly with it. Only 24 (12%) were favourable to that idea.

A more remarkable statistic was the fact that nearly 89% of respondents found homosexuality repugnant and hence unacceptable. Additionally, approximately 64% of respondents agreed and strongly agreed on the continuous criminalization of the practice. Only 13% of respondents were comfortable with having homosexuals as roommates on campus, while 76% of them detested that prospect.

On how to deal with homosexuals, the two benchmarks used to gauge level of tolerability was student's views in whether forcing homosexuals to change their status and isolating them for medical treatment was agreeable to them or not. As shown in table five, 55% of the respondents found the idea of forcing them to change as agreeable, while only 31% didn't agree to that. The remaining 14% were gave neutral responses.

The overall assessment of student's level of tolerance using the various indices shows that approximately 86% of respondents found it intolerable, 11% found it tolerable and 3% shared neutral views. The finding on tolerance of homosexuality is reflective of the general attitude of the large majority of the Ghanaian society. This finding affirms the view by several researchers that Ghana is one of the countries in world and Africa where homosexuality is still found unacceptable (Owusu, et al, 2013, Ofori, 2014, Essien and Aderinto, 2009).

The findings of the study are consistent with those on level of acceptance which states that, publics in Africa and in predominantly Muslim countries remain among the least accepting of homosexuality. In sub-Saharan Africa, at least nine-in-ten in Nigeria (98%), Senegal (96%), Ghana (96%), Uganda (96%) and Kenya (90%) believe homosexuality should not be accepted by society. Even in South Africa where, unlike in many other African countries, homosexual acts are legal and discrimination based on sexual orientation is unconstitutional, 61% say homosexuality should not be accepted by society, while just 32% say it should be accepted (Pew Center, 2013).

The finding on tolerance ties in fittingly with that of the perceptions and goes a long way to affirm the view that a person's perception of something strongly influences his or her attitude towards it. it is therefore safe to assert that student's negative perception of homosexuality has a negative impact on the tolerance of it.

7.0 Conclusion

Homosexuality has been noted since antiquity. It is recorded in Greek and Roman history and it is described as a sinful act in all Abrahamic religious books: Torah, Bible and Qur'an. Homosexuality appears to be uniformly distributed in all the human beings, irrespective of ethnicity, religiosity and nationalities. However the visibility of homosexual behavior varies considerably by nation, culture and ethnicity (Ahmed, 2006). The Ghanaian context is not very different from its counterparts in the Sub-Saharan Region.

The findings of the study have depicted that students have a relatively high level of awareness of homosexuality, hold generally negative perceptions of it and find it largely intolerable. The high level of awareness is derived mainly from the frequent exposure to media and the internet. The negative perceptions are rooted in socio cultural ethos and religious philosophy, coupled with some medical motives.

The strong sense of rejection of homosexuality as unearthed by this study, has several implications for human security and discrimination in the country. With such open hostility towards homosexuality, thing does not bode well in terms of changing homophobic tendencies within the general population.

8.0 Recommendations

The findings of this study make the following recommendations imperative.

A comprehensive and unbiased study into the actual practice of homosexuality on campuses and other places nationwide should be undertaken. This will allow for enough evidence of the extent of the practice to be known and better appreciated. This will go a long way to inform a lot of the discourse on the issue, avoid misinformation, uninformed generalizations and wrong assumptions about it. It will also deepen our understanding of homosexual behaviour.

Another recommendation is that as a matter of urgency a national dialogue on the issue of homosexuality should be initiated so that a better understanding of the practice could be delivered. Policy makers, academicians, media, politicians, human rights activists, religious leaders, homosexuals and other stakeholders are called upon to take active interests in a public discourse to shape the public policy on homosexuality and other sexual identity issues in the country. The overall aim of this is to ensure that a national position on homosexuality could be articulated and accepted by all, taking cognizance of religious, cultural, and human rights implications.

Finally, I recommend that the country's judiciary should undertake to explain the legal status of homosexuality in the country. The term "unnatural carnal knowledge" upon which the whole criminalization of homosexuality is based continues to remain vague and ambiguous.

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