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KNOWLEDGE AND ATTITUDE OF UNDERGRADUATE STUDENTS TOWARDS HOMOSEXUALITY AND ITS IMPLICATIONS ON SOCIAL ADJUSTMENT

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Abstract

The seeming spread of homosexuality in the Nigerian universities is alarming. This, therefore, aimed at examining the knowledge and attitude of undergraduate students towards homosexuality and its implications on social adjustment with a particular focus on Ebonyi state University, Abakaliki. The study is anchored on social learning theory. The study employed descriptive survey design and sample size for the study was 296 correspondents. The instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire and data collected were presented and analyzed using simple percentage and frequency tables. Findings showed that the homosexuality is being practiced among students of Ebonyi State University, especially in their hostels, that homosexuals suffer psycho-social trauma, social isolation and society regards them as social deviants, that students are lured into homosexuality out of ignorant and some induced incentives. Based on the findings, the study recommends, among others, that seminars should be organized to education students on the harmful implications of indulging in homosexuality.

Keywords: *Homosexuality; Implications, Attitude, Undergraduate Students, Ebonyi State University.*

Introduction

Students' attitudes toward homosexuality will change as a result of value reorientation. This might help them to have better sense of judgment to choose between right and wrong (Brown, 2015). Campus life provides a platform for interaction where undergraduate students have the opportunity to interact with variety of people from different cultural backgrounds and social economic status for intimacy and friendship (McLeod, 2013). In Nigeria, homosexuality seems to be a deviant behaviour based on African cultural value system.

Homosexuality is a romantic or sexual intercourse or behaviour between members of the same sex (Beth, 2012). As a sexual orientation, homosexuality refers to an enduring pattern of or disposition to experience sexual affection or romantic attractions primarily and exclusively to people of the same sex (Redmond, 2019). Homosexuality has attracted much scholarly interest but attitudes towards such preference of having sex with one of the same gender have varied in different epochs and cultural groups (Greg Reeder 2019).

In the late 19th century, ambivalent attitude has prevailed, that is, opposing feelings about homosexuality such that some people feel homosexuality is normal and they tend to fight for their freedom. In some advanced societies, homosexual activities are considered normal and socially acceptable. For instance, in Arunta of Central Australia, homosexuality is a common practice (Frank, 2011). Some nations such as Great Britain, United States and West Germany among others have recently legalized homosexual relations between consenting adults.

In the United States, in the 1940s, homosexuality was classified as felony with punishment up to life imprisonment in all states (Frank, 2011). But in early 2010s, at least, ten states had

legalized such acts between consenting adults. One third of the societies studied by Ford and Beach, including many industrialized countries, gave little or no sanction to homosexuals.

Some years ago in the United States, some organizations such as the Gay Activities Alliance and the Daughters of Bilitis have attempted to influence public opinion and legislation toward greater tolerance of homosexuals. Their efforts and other world's associations and conferences such as the 2014 Berkshire Conference, the 2013 meeting of the Association of homosexual activists and other various meetings along with Gay advocacy books, have created awareness on homosexual activities the world (Redmond, 2019). In Nigeria, homosexuality appears to be spreading despite the existing law against the act (Tolu, 2018).

While some researches have been carried out on other aspects of students' attitudes, there seems to be insufficient study in the area of the attitude of students towards homosexuality. It is this backdrop, therefore, that this study sought to unravel the knowledge and general attitude of students towards homosexuality and its implications on social adjustment in Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki.

Statement of the Problem

The challenges faced by homosexuals in university communities have raised a lot of concern in Nigeria. Babatunde (2015) found evidence of prejudice and discrimination against homosexuals on South Western university campuses in Nigeria. Evans and Augelli (2016) found the campus environment to be hostile towards homosexuals. Several studies have shown that verbal and behavioural hostility are directed towards homosexuals (Griffin, 2018; Lance, 2012).

Though the act of homosexuality exists in closed and private settings in Ebonyi State University, this act is becoming so obvious that the moral ethics of the university's mission is threatened. Homosexuals seem to suffer psycho-social trauma, social isolation and are regarded as deviants. The attitude of people towards the acts causes those involved to betray social and psychological adjustment within the society. The questions that arise, therefore, are: what are Ebonyi State University students' attitudes towards homosexuality? How do Ebonyi State University students regard homosexuality and those involved in it?

Research Questions

The following research questions were posed for the study:

1. To what extent do the Ebonyi State University students have the knowledge of homosexuality?
2. What is the attitude formation towards homosexuality among students of Ebonyi state University Abakaliki?
3. What are the social adjustment implications of the students' knowledge and attitude towards homosexuality?
4. What are the intervention strategies that can curb the menace of homosexuality in Ebonyi State University Abakaliki?

Objectives of the Study

The broad objective of this study is to examine the knowledge and attitude of undergraduate students' towards homosexuality and its implications on social adjustment using Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki as a particular reference point. Specifically, this sought to:

1. Determine the extent Ebonyi State University students have the knowledge of homosexuality;
2. Ascertain the bases for attitude formation towards homosexuality among Ebonyi State University Students;
3. Find out the social adjustment implications of the students' knowledge and attitude towards homosexuality;
4. Suggest measures that can curb the menace of homosexuality in Ebonyi State University

Significance of the Study

It has become a tradition in any academic research to evaluate its relevance by weighing their theoretical and practical value. Theoretically, this study will contribute a great deal to the scant research work done on homosexuality in Nigeria. It would serve as a reference material to students, researchers and other academics in this field or related field of study.

Review of Related Literature

Homosexuality has been defined as the romantic or sexual intercourse or behaviour between members of the same sex. (Beth 2012:2). Homosexuality in different societies has provoked several attitudes such as acceptance, ban and punishment. The act of homosexuality has attracted the attention of many scholars regarding how it all began – the cause(s) and genesis of the act. Fuller and Thompson (2013) opined that homosexuality is developed through genetic means. Hormonal theorists share the view that abnormal levels of some pre-natal hormones can lead to an increased chance of homosexuality in an individual (Dorner *et al.*, 2013). Blutenger (2017) adduced that people become homosexuals as a result of same-sex environment with no opposite sex to share their sexual desire with. Week (2016) argued that homosexuality develops through the process of social interaction

However, opinion is divided on the causal factors of homosexuality. Attitudes also are varied attitudes toward the act in different societies. Among other factors tend to cause homosexuality are fear of opposite sex and molestation (Jennifer Mcgrath2017).

In the late 1800s, a man named Kraft Ebing was the leading theorist on sexual deviance. He did a lot of research on the causes of homosexuality and how people get involved in the act and attempted some convictions. The question is: is homosexuality a choice or a genetic issue? Ebing concluded that it is both, in his work “Psychopatiasexualis”. He opined that people are born homosexuals and others become homosexuals. He posited that humans have a basic need for sexuality and intimacy (Blutenger, 2017). This, however, means that some people get involved in homosexual act as a result of single-sex schooling, private boarding schools (Mcgrath, 2017). It is also believed that homosexuality is a learned behaviour which is influenced by a number of factors – a disrupted family life in early years, a lack of unconditional love on the part of either parents. These problems can result in a search for love and acceptance, envy of the same or opposite sex, a life controlled by various fears and feelings of isolation. One thing that seems clear is that homosexuality is brought about by a multitude of root causes, including fear of opposite sex, incest and molestation (Berger, 2015).

Manning (2015) examined the attitudes towards Gays and lesbians among male and female undergraduate students and graduate students of Bowling Green State University, Ohio. The subject pool included 99 students between the ages of 18 and 38. The sample included 47 males 52 females, 60 undergraduate students 39 graduate students. A questionnaire measuring attitudes towards gays and lesbians was administered to the subjects. Two ways analysis of variance was used to determined significance relationships between the independent variable,

gender, level of education and the combination of the two factors and the dependent variable, the homophobic scale (Manning, 2015). Although a significant relationship between the level of education and combination of gender and the level of education failed to be found, gender did seem to affect the final score on the homophobic scale. Specifically males tend to hold more negative attitudes towards gays and lesbianism than females. Though the results suggest that gender plays a role in attitudes towards homosexuals, the study did not find the reasons behind this result.

Gather (2011) also examined attitudes towards gay and lesbians, as part of new students' orientation, at a Rural Marth Eastern State College. Incoming students which were 150 in number were surveyed in 2019 regarding their knowledge and attitudes towards homosexuality, 140 students were also surveyed again in April 2011 after four semesters of educational intervention. The result indicated that new students are uncomfortable with and lacked knowledge about homosexual matters, with less than half expressing comfort with homosexual matters and increased knowledge were reported at the time of the second survey. One-third or more of the students were informed and could adapt with homosexuals but still has negative thought about the act and those involved. However, it is shown that not all students have the knowledge about homosexuality and those who get to gain the knowledge tend to express uncomfortable attitude towards the act.

Estela (2012) studied homosexual existence and the attitude towards them in the university. The 20 interviews with lesbian and gay faculty revealed that the University renders the lesbians and gays community invisible and that the university's manifest disinterest creates an oppressive situation for homosexuals. These faculty not known to most of their straight colleagues lives in secret fears. In the result of two institutions studied, one for faculty/staff, and the other for students, demonstrated that these secret fears are not unwanted. The faculty/staff survey was administered to a random sample of 4,500 and had a return of 44%. A textual analysis of the survey respondents revealed that more than half of the comments were oppositional or hostile towards homosexuals while only 27% were supportive. Also it is revealed that 52% among heterosexual students believe homosexual behaviour is immoral.

Similarly, Augelli (2012) in a sample of 121 homosexual undergraduate students, founded that 77 percent of the respondents had experienced verbal abuse and 27 percent had been threatened with violence, and it is also shown that few victims reported incidents to authorities due to fear of harassment. Hersh Berger (1951) studied 165 lesbians, gays and bisexual youth, 15 to 21 years, to determine the impact of verbal abuse, threats of attacks, and assault on their mental health, found a direct effect of victimization on mental health. However, homosexuals tend to suffer discrimination and verbal abuse from the heterosexual students who knows about their sexual orientation on campus which afterward causes negative effect on them.

Theoretical framework

Social Learning Theory was adopted as the theoretical frame for this study because its correlation with the dialectics of this study. Bandura (2017) holds that sexuality is society-dependent and added that people learn some part of their sexual behaviours from the society. Therefore, through such learning – observation, imitation, and modeling – one gets to develop social behaviour. However, homosexuality is linked to early qualitative learning and development of one's gender identity and gender role. People learn behaviours from parents, peers, media which could develop homosexuality in one's behaviour (Vanwyk & Geist 2018).

Thus, the genesis of homosexuality in Ebonyi State University could be said to have evolved from a construct – students who have learned the act of heterosexual behaviour at home and are allowed to practice that on campus – find a means of satisfying the urge with same sex and subsequently teach the act to other students. Therefore, students learn from each other within Ebonyi State University environment which is in tandem with the tenets of social learning theory.

Methodology

The research design for the study is descriptive survey design. This design is adequate for this study due to its field investigative manner of obtaining and analyzing primary data using scientific procedures that are free from the researcher’s bias and possible manipulations. This research was carried out at the Ebonyi state University, Abakaliki. This study focused on the knowledge and attitude of undergraduate students towards homosexuality and its implications on social adjustment. The population of the study is the entire undergraduate student of Ebonyi State University. There is no credible statistical evidence as to the number, especially after this prolonged strike and pandemic, there was massive withdrawals and even death (Registry Unit EBSU, 2021). Therefore, the population of this study is unknown. However, the sample size of the study was 296 participants that were determined with Topmans index (Kothari, 2018).

Below is the formular:

$$n = \frac{z^2 p.q}{e^2}$$

Therefore, $n = \frac{p.q (z)^2}{e}$

where n* is the sample size, P is probability of success (0.74), q is probability of failure (0.26), z is the standard normal variable (1.96), E is the error margin (0.05)

$$n = \frac{1.962(0.74)(0.26)}{0.0025}$$

$$\frac{0.7391}{0.0025}$$

$$= 296$$

The students were drawn from various faculties and departments of Ebonyi State University, Abakaliki and the instrument used for data collection was structured questionnaire. 296 copies of questionnaire were distributed to the respondents but 270 was duly filled and returned and 26 were wrongly filled, hence discarded. Therefore, 270 copies were used for the analysis. The data were presented and analyzed using simple percentage and frequency table.

Result

Data were obtained on respondents' sex, age, education qualification, religious affiliation and marital status.

Table 1: Sex Distribution of the Respondents

Sex	Total	Percentages (%)
Male	186	68.8%
Female	94	31.2%
Total	270	100

Source: field survey, 2021.

The information above shows that 68.8% of the respondents were males while 31.2% of the respondents were females. The majority of the respondents are males.

Table 2: Age Distribution of the Respondents

Age	Total	Percentages (%)
Below 20yrs	11	4.1%
20 - 25yrs	165	61.1%
Above 25yrs	94	34.8%
Total	270	100

Source: field survey, 2021.

Data in table 2 above show that 4.1% are below 20 years while 95.9% of the respondents are above 20 years. This shows high evidence of sense of maturity of the respondents.

Table 3: Religious Affiliation of the Respondents

Religion	Total	Percentages %
Christianity	262	97%
Islamic	5	1.9%
Other	3	1.1%
Total	270	100%

Source: field survey, 2021.

Table 3 above reveals that majority of the respondents which constitute 97% while other religions were insignificant (3%).

Table 4: Opinion on the Respondents' awareness on Same Sex Intercourse

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	228	82.2%
Disagree	42	17.8%
Total	270	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Table 4 above shows that there is a high level of awareness on same sex intercourse by students of Ebonyi State University which constitutes 82% while 17.8% were ignorant of same sex intercourse.

Table 5: Respondents' opinion on whether homosexuals are social deviants

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	201	73.7%
Disagree	71	26.3%
Total	270	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021.

The information in the above table shows that majority (73.7%) of the respondents sees homosexuals as social deviants.

Table 6: Respondents' opinion on the illegality of homosexuality among Ebonyi State University

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	225	83.3%
Disagree	45	16.7%
Total	270	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021.

The information provided in the above table proves Illegality of the act in Nigeria as a base for attitude formation towards homosexuality among Ebonyi State University students, hence 83.3% agreed to this submission and 16.7% disagreed.

Table 7: Respondents' opinion on personal morals as attitudinal formation towards homosexuality.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	229	84.8%
Disagree	41	15.2%
Total	270	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Personal morals is one of the bases for attitude formation towards homosexuality among EBSU students was the opinion of majority of the respondent in table 10 above; 84.8% agreed while 15.2% disagreed.

Table 8: Respondents’ opinion on whether socio-cultural bias is one of the bases for attitude formation towards homosexuality among Ebonyi State University students.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	201	74.4%
Disagree	69	25.6%
Total	270	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Information in the above table proves that Socio-cultural bias is one of the bases for attitude formation towards homosexuality among Ebonyi State University students; since, 74.4% which is the majority of the respondents agreed.

Item 9:Social isolation and depression

Table 9: Responses on social isolation and depression as social adjustment implication for students’ attitude towards homosexuality.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	227	84.1%
Disagree	43	15.9%
Total	270	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Information in table 9 proves social isolation and depression as social adjustment implication for students’ attitude towards homosexuality; hence 84.1% of the respondents agreed to this and 15.9% disagreed.

Table 10: Responses on social stigmatization and shame as social adjustment implication for students’ attitude towards homosexuality.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	202	74.8%
Disagree	68	25.2%
Total	270	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Information in table 13 proves Social stigmatization and shame as social adjustment implication for students' attitude towards homosexuality; hence, 74.8% of the respondents agreed to this and 25.2% disagreed.

Table 11: Responses on social discrimination and indignation as social adjustment implication for student's attitude towards homosexuality

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	226	83.7%
Disagree	44	16.3%
Total	270	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Information in table 11 proves that social discrimination and indignation as social adjustment implication for students' attitude towards homosexuality; hence, majority (83.7%) of the respondents agreed to this and 16.3% disagreed.

Table 12: Responses on whether to organized seminar for students as a strategy to curb homosexuality in the university

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	225	83.3%
Disagree	45	16.7%
Total	270	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021.

The above table proves that seminars should be organized to lecture students on homosexuality and its implication because some students seemed to lack the basic knowledge of homosexual matters, hence 83.3% agreed to this submission and 16.7% disagreed.

Table 13: Responses on the need to establish effective rehabilitation center for homosexuals.

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	201	74.4%
Disagree	69	25.6%
Total	270	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021.

Information in table 13 above suggests that government should establish effective rehabilitation center for homosexuals in order to assist them recover from their deviant behaviour as agreed by 74.4% which is the majority of the respondents.

Table 14: Responses on the need to establish a law that guides against homosexuality among students of Nigerian universities

Option	Frequency	Percentage
Agree	227	84.1%
Disagree	43	15.9%
Total	270	100%

Source: Field survey, 2021.

University governing council should come up with a law that guides against homosexuality among students of Nigerian universities of which 84.1% of the respondents strongly agreed with that view while and 15.9% of the respondents disagreed.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Homosexuals face condemnation in some societies, while they are accepted in other societies. Nigeria happens to be one of the countries that frowns at it, because it is believed to have a negative effect on the general behaviour and it is strongly against the moral principle of Nigerian societies in general and Ebonyi State University in particular.

The findings show that homosexuals suffer psycho-social trauma, social isolation and the society regards them as social deviants. This position was empirically determined through a valid and reliable instruments and statistical parameters.

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

- a) Seminars should be organized to lecture student on homosexuality and its implication because some students are ignorant of homosexual matters;
- b) In order to stop this social ill in our educational environment, policy makers, stakeholders and government should stop gender exclusive secondary schools;
- c) Government should also establish effective rehabilitation centres for homosexuals in order to assist them recover from their deviant behaviour;
- d) Government, Non-Government and people should invest in the social adjustment policy and programme to curtail the consequence inherent in the indulgence in homosexuality university undergraduate students.

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