
**PERCEPTION AND ATTITUDE OF UNIVERSITY OF CAPE COAST STUDENTS ON
HOMOSEXUALITY**

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ABSTRACT: *Homosexuality has received a great deal of attention in public and current scholarly research especially after the United States of America has unanimously legalized in the the whole country. In view of this, the research purported to find out the perception and attitude of University of Cape Coast students on homosexuality. A survey research design was used with structured questionnaire as the instrument for data collection. The research was conducted at the University of Cape Coast; participants were randomly sampled. Four hundred students from Level 300 in the College of Education Studies were used. The findings of the research revealed that University of Cape Coast students frown on homosexuality. Students do not want homosexuals to be their leaders or hold positions in the university. In their opinion homosexuals should not be taken as role models; they rather had sympathy and care for the homosexuals about negative treatment meted out to them. Students have the attitude of giving help to the homosexuals when the need arises but they are disgusted about homosexuality. Students would feel uncomfortable if their roommates were to be homosexuals and would not want homosexuals to be allowed to adopt children. It was also discovered that there was no gender difference in the perception and attitude of the students on homosexuality. In the light of these findings, these recommendations were made; that University of Cape Coast should be clear on rules and regulations regarding homosexuality as the students' handbook which serves as a guide to students is silent about it. That there should be public education on homosexuality. That the Counselling Centre should be on the alert to assist homosexuals and those who might be traumatized because of the activities of the homosexuals.*

KEYWORDS: Homosexual, Heterosexual, Perception, Attitude, Gay, Lesbian, Behaviour and Practice.

BACKGROUND

Societal attitude towards same sex relationship has varied over time and place, from expecting all males to engage in sex relationship, to casual integration through acceptance, to seeing the practice as minor sin, repressing it through law enforcement and judicial mechanisms and to prescribing it under penalty of death (Olson & Defrain, 1999). The term homosexuality was coined by German psychologist, Karoly Maria Benkert in the late 19th century, (google_ajwalkleyblog.wordpress.com/2013).

While some view the various sexual orientations, homosexuality, heterosexuality and bisexuality as socially constructed, others view it as purely driven by biological forces. There is no consensus among scientists on the exact basis on which individuals develop their sexual orientations. Although, much research have examined the possible genetic, hormonal,

developmental, social and cultural influence on orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor.

Inabilities of society, to understand the clear cause of the various sexual orientations have led to a globally misperceptions and attitude about the practice of homosexuality. Gay and lesbian couples are denied legal and social liberty given to heterosexual couples. Their families are denied common legal protection that heterosexual families take for granted such as adoption, custody, guardianship, social security and inheritance (Lambda legal, 2003a).

Homosexuality has received a great deal of attention in public discourse recently after it was announced that all the states in America have totally legalized homosexuality in the country. Similarly, attitude towards homosexuality vary across cultures, nations, institutions and continents. Despite variations in attitudes toward homosexuality, investigators believe that at least four generalizations can be made; Homosexuality is universal, occurring in all societies; Homosexuality is more common among males than among females.

Homosexuality is never a predominant form of sexual behaviour for adults. Only 5% or less of the population of any culture tends to practice homosexuality (Whitam, 1983). Although homosexuality had existed in many societies, it has usually been attached with negative labels, abnormal, sinful and inappropriate. Homosexual men, women and their families are subject to social inequality through practice of discrimination and prejudice, many of them surprisingly institutionalised in formal laws. Although the laws may be applied to homosexuals and heterosexuals but they are more vigorously applied against same sex partners.

In 1994, a finding from perhaps the most extensive research in sexual behaviour in the United States was reported. The research was based on face-to-face interview with 3432 American women and men between the ages of 18 and 59. The research among many things tried to find how women's and men's sexual lives and attitudes are different and similar and reported that only 2.7% of men and 1.3% of women reported to interviews that they had same sex sexual experience over the past 12 months (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael & Kolata, 1995).

Different studies report different and sometimes contradictory about lesbians and gay men. There are several reasons for these inconsistencies; one is the issue of definition and identity: Are you a gay if you have sexual interactions with same sex? Are you a gay if only you identify yourself as a gay? (Olson & Defrein 1999). The issue of stigmatization is another factor against homosexuality in our culture. Homosexuals are the targets of prejudice and sometimes violence. They have sometimes experienced discrimination on employment and housing in most communities, they have little political power. Physical forces are often used against homosexuals. Gangs of teenagers and young adults have terrorized homosexuals and stories of brutality against homosexuals by the military and the police is not uncommon (Olson & Defrain, 1999).

Because of the stigma and danger attached to homosexuality, many homosexuals choose not to reveal their families, friends or co-workers and certainly not to strangers taking survey (Olson & Defrain, 1999). Despite the prevalence of discrimination, stigmatization and social stereotyping

of homosexuals, many authorities still assert that homosexual relationships are like heterosexual relationships. Generally, homosexuals have an increased move towards developing and maintaining on-going relationship towards one another. Because they have to struggle in coming out and often experience considerable rejection by their families, homosexuals, like other groups develop skills and strengths that are valuable in a relationship.

These include ability to connect emotionally with other partners, flexible role relationship and ability to adapt to other partners, ability to negotiate and share decision-making power, and effective communication in their relationships. Many gay men and lesbians build satisfying relationships (Peplau, Cochran & Mays, 1997). One study compared the relationship between gay men, lesbians and heterosexuals and found no significant difference. All the groups rated their relationship highly satisfactory (Peplau, Cochran & Mays, 1997).

The Authorities who see homosexuality just like heterosexuality, day and day out call for legal protection and legislation for homosexuals; that is to grant homosexuals the right to go about the practice without any form of discrimination or stigmatization. This right legislation, popularly known as “gay rights legislation” has been passed in all the states in America as stated in 2015. In addition, the gay right ordinance has also been passed by many cities in Europe where same sex marriage is allowed. In November, 2011, United Kingdom’s Prime Minister, Mr. David Cameron issued a statement threatening a cut of United Kingdom’s aid to African countries who refused to legalize homosexuality (Google-BBC news; “Ghana refused to grant gay right despite aid threat”).

Sexual orientations differ, and many people and cultures have diverse opinion about homosexuality and heterosexuality. For some authorities, there is no significant difference between the various sexual orientations, while other authorities view homosexuality as abnormal, sinful and inappropriate. With this mix-opinion about homosexuality, this study therefore sought to explore the perception and attitude of University of Cape Coast students on homosexuality.

As future leaders of Ghana, the University of Cape coast students also have their sentiment on the practice of homosexuality. The student’s handbook which serves as a guide to student’s life on campus is implicit on the practice of homosexuality and this intensify the debate as to whether the practice of homosexuality on campus is legal or illegal. For this reason the study finds it necessary to explore the attitude and perception of university of cape coast students on homosexuality and that can help the university to make rules, laws and regulations regarding homosexuality.

Research Questions

The following research questions were formulated to guide the study:

1. How do students of University of Cape Coast perceive homosexuality?
2. What are the attitudes of University of Cape Coast students towards homosexuality?
3. Is there any gender difference on the perception and attitude of students of University of Cape Coast on homosexuality?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Concept of Homosexuality

Homosexuality is a sexual preference for a person of the same sex. A homosexual is a person whose sexual orientation is toward members of his/her own gender. According to Hyde and Delamater (2000), the word homosexual is derived from Greek root homo, meaning “same”. The term homosexual can be applied in a general way to homosexual of both genders that is gays (males) and lesbians (females).

The Alfred C. Kinsey institute for sex research estimated that 5 to 6 percent of the adult population is predominantly homosexuals. However, since there are so many graders in sexual behaviour and preferences, many sociologists take the view that there are heterosexual or homosexual practices but not heterosexual or homosexual individuals (Bell, Weinberg and Hammer-Smith, 1981).

Few people within the history of our society have been more scorned, feared and stigmatized than homosexuals (James, 1990). A person’s gender identity and sex preference are distinct. Most gay men and lesbian women have no confusion about their gender identity; they simply prefer sexual partners of same sex (James, 1990).

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Whether individuals choose to be gay or are gay by disposition is essential in debate concerning their right to marry. The crux of the argument is the controllability of homosexuality and if responsibility for the orientation can be attributed to the individual. Attribution theory was first proposed by Heider (1944, 1958) and later furthered by Weiner (1979, 1985). The theory holds that individuals work to predict and control their environment by attributing others’ behaviours as the result of internal or external factors. Herek (2002) provide further supports for the importance of an individual’s attribution of course in predicting general effects towards homosexuals.

Due to the support attribution theory received when predicting general attitudes towards homosexuals, it is no surprise that attitudes concerning gay rights and same sex unions are significantly associated with attributions as well. Research conducted Wilcox and Wolpert (2000) reveals attribution’s impact on attitudes concerning the political issues homosexuals face. Tygart (2000) found a strong correlation between attribution and the willingness to grant homosexuals the right to marry or obtain civil unions. Attribution maintained significance in multivariate models as well. Wood and Bartkowski (2004) provided further evidence concerning the importance of attribution. Moreover, a number of scientists have speculated that homosexuality might be caused by biological factors. The likeliest candidates for these biological causes are genetic factors, prenatal factors, differences in brain structures and endocrine imbalance.

Genetic Factors

A carefully done studies on genetic factors on homosexuality recruited gay and bisexual men who had twin brothers or adopted brothers (Bailey & Pillard, 1991). Among the 56 gay men who had an identical twin brothers, 52 percent of the co-twins were themselves gay. Among the 54 gay men who had non identical twin brothers, 22 percent of the co-twin brothers were themselves gay. Of the adoptive brothers, 11 percent were gay. Two years later, a same research team repeated the study this time with lesbians, (Bailey, Pillard, Neale & Agyei, 1993). Among the 71 lesbians who had an identical twin sisters, 48 percent of the co-twin sisters were lesbians. Among the 37 lesbians who had a no identical twin sisters, 16 percent of the co-twin sisters were lesbians whereas for the adoptive sisters, 6 percent were lesbians. The statistics for men were therefore quite similar to those of the women.

A research group claims that they have discovered a gene, located on the X Chromosome, for homosexuality, this research is highly controversial, (Marshall, 1995).

Prenatal Factors

An exposure to inappropriate hormones during fetal developmental can lead to a genetic female to have male genitals. It has been suggested that a similar process may account for homosexuality (Blanchard & Bogart, 1996). There is a critical time from the middle of the second month to the middle of the fifth month of the fetal development, during which the hypothalamus differentiates and sexual orientation is determined (Ellis & Ames, 1987). Any of several biological variations within this period will produce homosexuality.

One line of research supports this theory that severe stress on a pregnant mother can produce homosexual offspring. For example, exposing pregnant female rats to stress produces male offspring that assume the female mating posture, although their ejaculatory behavior would be normal (Ward & Stehm, 1991), Another study taken by Blanchard & Bogart (1996), on the birth order of gay men as compared with heterosexual men, gay men are more likely to have late birth order and to have older brothers and not older sisters.

Brain Factors

Another line of theorizing has been that, there are anatomical differences between the brains of gays and straight men which produces the differences in sexual orientation. There has been a number of studies deriving from this point of view, all looking at somewhat different regions of the brain (Swaab, Gooren & Hofman, 1995). LeVay (1991) found significant differences between gay men and straight men in certain cells in the anterior portion of the hypothalamus. Anatomically, the hypothalamus cells of the gay semen were more similar to those of women than to those of straight men.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK ON ATTITUDE FORMATION

Family Ecology Theory

This theory assumes that individuals are affected by the different environmental settings by which they live and how these environments interact and affect one another. Environment under this theory include the microsystem, mesosystem, exosystem and macrosystem. This theory predicts that there will be multiple influences that attribute to the development of college

student's attitude towards homosexuality. Researchers expect the different aspects (family, peers, religion, media and gender) to influence a college student's microsystem and mesosystem.

Role Theory

According to Bidle's (1979) role theory, there are specific expectations that people need to satisfy their roles. These expectations are learned from parents, siblings and peers and can be thought through social institutions such as schools and churches (Eagly, 1987). (people who follow the expected behaviours anticipate being rewarded, while those who violate them anticipate punishment).

Contact Theory

Allport (1954)'s contact theory posits that prejudice of the majority group towards a minority group is reduced through interaction with members of the minority group. In order for contact theory to work effectively, four conditions must be satisfied. First, the contact needs must occur between groups with equal status. Second, group members have to work on trying to reach the same goal. Third, cooperation is necessary. Fourth, institutional support can increase the effect of contact.

Empirical Studies On Attitudes And Perception On Homosexuality

There has been extensive research on perceptions and attitudes towards homosexuality. According to some studies, men tend to be more concerned with associating with gay males while females are more anxious about associating with lesbians (Gentry, 1993). Wells (1992), however, found that both males and females as university students expressed concerns over being labeled as a homosexual. While the empirical research on the impact of gender may be mixed (Schope & Eliason, 2000), the bulk of studies have found men to be more homophobic than women. Also in an experiment, Shaw, Borough, and Fink (1994) observed that helping behaviours were lower when male callers asked for help in finding their gay boyfriends. Similarly, Gray, Russell, and Blockley (1991) found that there was less willingness to give change to individuals wearing T-shirts with pro-gay messages than for those individuals wearing plain shirts. There has been limited research on Africans' attitudes toward gay males. Alson (1994) reported that blacks were more likely than whites to disapprove of extramarital and homosexual relations.

METHODOLOGY

The study was conducted using a qualitative approach; a survey research design was used to explore their views of participants. The information gathered in qualitative study "reflects feeling or judgments of individuals taking part in the investigation of a research problem. (Vermma & Mallick, 1999, p. 27). Undergraduate students in the College of Education Studies of University of Cape Coast were the target population of the study, and the accessible population was taken from four departments. These are Level 400 students of B.Sc. Psychology of Department of Educational Foundations, Food and Nutrition in VOTEC Department, Basic Education students and Social Science students from the Department of Arts and Social Science Education.

Level 400 students were used purposively as they are those who have stayed in the school for not less than three years and would have encountered many of their peers. Students were stratified into male and female to get the needed figures. In all, 240 males and 160 females were selected for the study. Simple random sampling was applied to select the four departments from the number of departments in the college. A simple random sampling was used to select hundred respondents from each department. A sample size of 400 undergraduate students was used. The instrument used to elicit response from the target group was questionnaire. The data from the survey was analyzed with the help of the statistical Product and Service solution (SPSS).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Characteristics of respondents.

Four hundred respondents were sampled for their study. Among them, 56.0 percent were males, 44.0 percent declined to indicate their gender. The study was averagely represented by the two (2) sexes. The age categories as shown in Table 1, are as follows; 16 to 20 represented 47.0 percent, 21 to 25 was 40.0 percent, 26 to 30 represented 27.0 percent and 31 years upwards was 5.0 percent. This shows that most of the respondents were in the age bracket of 26 to 25 which are strong adolescent ages. That is the time that they would want to experiment a lot in life.

Table 1: Age Distribution of Respondents

Age Range	Frequency	Percentage
16-20	132	33.0
21-25	160	40.0
26-30	88	22.0
31 Upwards	20	5.0
Total	400	100.0

Main Analysis and Discussion

I. Perception of students of university of Cape Coast on homosexuality.

a. **Homosexuality is a negative practice:** Table 2 shows the responses from the respondents whether homosexuality is a negative practice or not.

Table 2: Homosexuality is a Negative Practice

Extent of Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	335	83.75
Agree	44	11.0
Strongly Disagree	15	3.75
Disagree	6	1.50
Total	400	100.0

Among the respondents in Table 2, a total of 94.75 percent agreed that homosexuality is a negative practice whereas 5.25 percent said it was not. In confirmation a study conducted by Yang (1997) showed that 56 percent of the respondents felt that homosexuality was unacceptable in the society. A same figure of 94.75 percent showed that students of the University of Cape Coast frowned upon the practice of homosexuality and that it needed not to be practiced there.

b. **Laws should be made to protect the rights of homosexuals.** Table 3 gives the responses from the respondents whether they agree that laws should be made to give protection to the rights of the homosexuals.

Table 3. Protection of Rights of Homosexuals

Extent of Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	44	11.0
Agree	23	5.75
Strongly Disagree	253	63.25
Disagree	80	20.0
Total	400	100.0

In Table 3, when respondents were asked about laws being made to protect the rights of homosexuals, 16.75 percent felt that laws should be made to protect the rights of homosexuals and 83.25 percent disagreed. This is in conformity with Wills and Crawford (2000) statements that many people in society feel that gays and lesbians should have fewer rights than heterosexuals.

c. **People choose to be homosexuals:** Student were asked to comment about homosexuality if it by choice or hereditary. Table 4 reports their responses.

Table 4: Homosexuality is a Choice by People

Extent of Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	298	74.5
Agree	46	11.5
Strongly Disagree	14	3.5
Disagree	42	10.5
Total	400	100.0

On the question as to whether people choose to be homosexuals as shown in Table 4, 86 percent of the respondents showed that people chose to be homosexuals whilst 14.0 percent disagreed that people choose to be homosexuals. This supports the study of Oklahoma City residents who believed homosexuality was the result of a choice by those who wanted to practice it and

that they mostly did not agree that homosexuality was from a biological cause (Wilcox & Norrander, 2002).

II. Attitudes of university of cape coast students towards homosexuality

a. Disgusted by homosexuality: Table 5 gives the responses that were received from the respondents when they were asked whether they were disgusted about the practice of homosexuality among the students on campus.

b.

Table 5:

Extent of Response	Frequency	Percentage
Strongly Agree	210	52.50
Agree	133	33.25
Strongly Disagree	26	6.50
Disagree	31	7.75
Total	400	100.0

When respondents were asked about the extent of being disgusted by homosexuality, 82.2 percent respondents agreed they were disgusted by homosexuality and 14.5 percent respondent said they were not disgusted by homosexuality.

c. Having a homosexual as a roommate: Table 6 has the comments from the respondent if they were to take homosexuals as roommates.

Table 6: Homosexual as a Room Mate

Extent of Response	Frequency	Percentage
Yes	3	0.75
No	397	99.25
Total	400	100.0

In all 99.25 percent said they would not want to have homosexuals as their roommates if they were to choose who becomes their roommates. They claimed they would not know what the person was capable of doing. They are not ready to risk.

d. Homosexuals should be allowed to adopt children: Respondents were supposed to give their comments, whether they would want to see homosexuals adopting children to stay with as their own children. Table 6 presents that.

Table 6: Adoption of children

Extent of Responses	Frequency	Percentages
Strongly Agree	16	4.0
Agree	23	5.75
Strongly Disagree	253	63.25
Disagree	108	27.0
Total	400	100.0

On whether homosexuals should be allowed to adopt children, 17.8 percent respondents agreed homosexuals should be allowed to adopt children and 82.3 percent respondents disagreed homosexuals should be allowed to adopt children. This can be compared to Crawford and Solliday (1996), a survey of 97 undergraduate students, where gay couples were seen as less desirable parents in terms of emotional stability and providing a loving home for adoption of a five-year-old male child than were heterosexual parents.

III. Gender differences

Table 7: Gender differences in homosexuality

	YES	PERCENTAGE	NO
PERCENTAGE			
Male	240	60.0	0.0
Female	158	39.5	0.5
TOTAL	398	99.5	2
0.5			

On the differences between males and females responses on perception on homosexuality, the researcher observed that there were no significant differences on the respondents' responses that were designed to elicit perception on homosexuality. For instance, on the question to find out on respondents perception as to whether homosexuality is a bad sexual practice, 60.0 percent male respondents agreed whilst 39.5 percent female respondents also agreed that homosexuality is bad. Comparatively, 0.5 percent more of the females disagreed with that notion. Therefore, relatively, there was no difference between male and female responses on whether homosexuality is a bad sexual practice. This was also the same for responses for attitude toward homosexuality.

KEY FINDINGS

1. University of cape coast students had bad perception about homosexuality, this conclusion is drawn from the fact that 85 (94.4%) agreed that homosexuality is bad.
2. It came out from the study that students perceive homosexuality as a chosen sexual orientation by homosexuals.
3. The study indicated that students are disgusted by homosexuality with 82.2 percent students in agreement to being disgusted by homosexuality.

4. With regard to gender difference on the perception and attitude of students on homosexuality, the findings revealed that no gender difference exist on the perception and attitude of university of cape coast students on homosexuality.

CONCLUSION

The purpose of this study was to find out the perception and attitude of University of Cape Coast students on homosexuality. This was important because the findings can help the university authority to know more about students' view on homosexuality, hence make rules and regulations regarding students' sexual affection on campus. Students expressed bad perception and negative attitude towards homosexuality. The study shed light on students' perception, attitude as well as differences in male and female students' views regarding homosexuality; hence, the study provided a comprehensive understanding on the n the issue of homosexuality on the University of Cape Coast campus.

Counselling Implications

- That counsellors make the effort to identify homosexuals and assist them have a voluntary attitudinal change.
- That programmes are organized to educate the general university populace the dangers in homosexuality.
- That students do not take the laws into their own hands when they come into contact or identify students who could be homosexuals.

Recommendation for policy makers

1. The researcher suggests that the university authority should make rules and regulations on students' homosexual life on campus since the student' hand book, which serves as a guide on students' life on campus, is implicit on homosexuality.
2. The researcher also recommends that hall administrators of the various halls on the University of Cape Coast campus should frequently take information from roommates regarding their colleagues' sexual orientation and take the necessary action since; most students will feel uncomfortable staying with homosexual roommates.
3. Laws on homosexuality should be made irrespective of the gender since the study found no difference on the perception and attitude of students on homosexuality.
4. Further research work can take specific variables such as; religion, age, education to determine how they influence students' perception and attitude on homosexuality.

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