

THE DIALECTICS OF THE DISCOURSE ON HOMOSEXUALITY IN NIGERIA

¹Dr. Chinonye Faith Chinedu-Okeke, ²Dr. Ijeoma Obi

¹(for Correspondence), Department of Mass Communication Nnamdi Azikiwe University, Nigeria

²Department of Mass Communication Chukwuemeka Odumegwu Ojukwu University, Anambra State, Nigeria

Abstract: Homosexuality is a relationship that allows any two consenting individuals of the same biological sex to form an intimate relationship. The issue of homosexuality is a controversial discourse in all the countries of the world including Nigeria. Thus, this study aims at ascertaining the debates of the discourses on homosexuality in Nigeria. The study was anchored on Richard Troiden's Ideal-typical model of gay/homosexual identity acquisition. The model was adopted to explain and describe the development of homosexual identity formation as taking place against the backdrop of a stigma, which heavily influences identity development and personal adjustment. A systematic review method was adopted for this study. This method was considered the most appropriate research approach in gathering information about scholars' line of arguments on this controversial issue of homosexuality in Nigeria. The study unveiled that homosexual is to a greater extent not culturally, politically, legally, religiously and socially acceptable in Nigeria because Nigerians perceived the act to be a taboo, animalistic, inhumane, sin and illegal. The study also discovered that many homosexuals are still in the closets due to the strong cultural aversion towards the practice, although some are gradually coming out of their closet to assert what they perceive to be their constitutional rights. Based on the research findings, this study therefore recommends full enforcement in criminalizing homosexuality in Nigeria.

Keywords: Dialectic, Discourse, Homosexuality, Heterosexuality, Nigeria.

1. INTRODUCTION

The homosexuality debate is a controversial issue that has attracted the concern of various countries all over the world (Okey, Eyoboka & Ojeme, 2014; Obidinma & Obidinma, 2013). As a sexual orientation, homosexuality is "an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic, and/or sexual attractions to people of the same sex" (Lamanna, Riedmann, & Stewart, 2014). In the last decade, several Western countries have greatly enhanced the rights of sexual minorities in their societies. Same-sex relationship/marriage is now legal in most states in the United States, while about twenty three countries in Europe presently allow same-sex marriage or some form of civil partnership. However, Africa on the other hand is witnessing a rise in the number of countries further criminalizing sexual minorities and homophobia is rising across the continent. Thus, 38 countries out of 76 countries in the world that sees homosexuality as illegal are in Africa and in 4 out of these 38 countries, homosexuality is punishable by death including Nigeria (Obasola, 2013; Pflanz, 2014).

However, despite the protest raised against the practice, homosexuality has gradually become a reality, acceptably within the legal framework of many countries including Nigeria. What can be said of Nigeria or Africa where traditional religion still holds sway? How does a typical Nigerian view homosexuality? Amidst this debate of the morality of homosexuality, what should be the response of a typical Nigerian? Consequently, the thrust of this study is to investigate the debates of the discourse on homosexuality in Nigeria.

Significance of the Study

There is no doubt that the issue of homosexuality has elicited deep and often extreme reactions in

Nigeria. Many see the phenomenon as un-Nigerian and against Nigerian social and religious heritage. This controversy has attracted the attention of various scholars (Onuche, 2013; Umukoro, 2009; Igwe, 2009; Mensah, 2010; Cassandra,

2011; Marshall, 2014; Kalahari Media, 2014; Gagnon, 2004; Okey, Eyoboka & Ojeme, 2014; Igbodo, 2012; Molefe, 2014).

This study that seeks to ascertain public discourses of homosexuality practice in Nigeria is important to educators, students, youth workers, religious experts, social planners as well as Nigerian society at large.

The study would be a relevant and significant contribution to the body of knowledge in homosexuality, in the sense that it will fill a probable knowledge gap in homosexuality literature, and opens up what might be a new argument in homosexuality research.

In addition, this study will help Nigerian society realize the implications of homosexuality practice in Nigeria. More so, results of this research might engender new strategies on how the negative influence of homosexuality practice could be eradicated in Nigeria.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study was anchored on Richard Troiden's Ideal-typical model of gay/homosexual identity acquisition. The model was used to explain and describe the development of homosexual identity formation as taking place against the backdrop of a stigma, which heavily influences identity development and personal adjustment.

Richard Troiden's Ideal-typical model of gay/homosexual identity acquisition

This study is also anchored on Richard Troiden's Ideal-typical model of gay/homosexual identity acquisition which was propounded in 1989 for the formation of homosexual identity (Troiden, 1989). Troiden uses an age specific four-stage model for developing a homosexual identity. His model uses sociological theory, which represents a synthesis and elaboration on previous research.

Stage 1. Sensitization: This stage occurs before puberty, and is generally not seen in a sexual context. Rather, heterosexuality is accepted as the norm. So there is no homosexual/heterosexual labeling to one's feelings or behaviours. What is noted is gender conformity or nonconformity to activities. Though there are generalized feelings of marginality and perceptions of being different from their same-sex peers, these perceptions are seen primarily in childhood social experiences. It is the subsequent meanings and labeling of childhood experiences, rather than the experiences themselves, which are significant in the sensitization stage.

Stage 2. Identity Confusion: In this stage there is a confusion of identities. As specific things become personalized and sexualized during adolescence an individual may begin reflecting on the idea that their feelings and behaviors could be regarded as homosexual. As a result, there is inner turmoil and uncertainty around their ambiguous sexual status. No longer is a heterosexual identity seen as a given, and as of yet there is no developed perceptions of having a homosexual identity. There are several factors responsible for this identity confusion. One is an altered perception of self. There is now along with gender experiences, genital and emotional experiences that set them apart from same-sex peers. Added confusion is seen when responding to both heterosexual and homosexual feelings and experiences. A third factor is the stigma surrounding homosexuality. An additional factor is ignorance and inaccurate knowledge about a social category for these behaviours and feelings.

Stage 3. Identity Assumption: A homosexual/gay identity becomes both a self-identity and a presented identity. Now that this homosexual/gay identity is tolerated, there is association with other homosexuals, exploration of a homosexual subculture, and sexual experimentation. Although a homosexual identity is assumed during this stage, it is first tolerated, and it is accepted later.

Stage 4. Commitment: An individual adopts homosexuality as a way of life. There is a self-acceptance and a comfort with a homosexual/gay identity. More emphasis is placed on this identity being a "way of life," "state of being," and an "essential" identity than a set of behaviours or sexual orientation.

This model was used to facilitate the understanding of the different stages in the formation and practice of homosexuality in Nigeria. The model also facilitated the understanding of how and why homosexuality spreads all over Nigeria to the extent of homosexuals protesting publicly for their rights.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A systematic review method was adopted for this study. A systematic review is a literature-based research methodology. According to Center of Reviews and Dissemination (CRD) Report (2001, p.4), systematic review is a scientific tool which can be used to summarize, appraise and communicate the results and implications of otherwise unmanageable quantities of research.

According to Gough, Oliver and Thomas (2012), a systematic review is a research method that is undertaken to review research literature, using systematic and rigorous methods. Systematic reviews are often referred to as 'original empirical research' because they review primary data, which can be either quantitative or qualitative (Avevard & Sharp, 2011). Systematic reviews can be considered as the 'gold standard' for reviewing the relevant literature on a specific topic as it synthesises the findings of previous research investigating the same or similar questions (Boland, Cherry, & Dickson, 2008).

Considering the aim of this study that seeks to examine the dialectics/debates of the discourses on homosexuality in Nigeria, a Systematic Review was considered the most appropriate research approach in gathering information about researchers' or scholars' line of arguments on this controversial issue of homosexuality in Nigeria.

Homosexuality: An Overview

The word homosexuality may be etymologically traced to the Greek and Latin hybrid with *homos* deriving from the Greek word for "same"; thus connoting sexual acts and affections between members of the same sex, including lesbianism (Obasola, 2013). The term homosexuality was coined in the late 19th century by a German psychologist, Karoly Maria Benkert (Pickett, 2011).

According to Beth (1992, p. 2), homosexuality is romantic or sexual intercourse or behaviour between members of the same sex. As a sexual orientation, homosexuality refers to an enduring pattern of or disposition to experience sexual, affectionate or romantic attractions primarily and exclusively to people of the same sex (Redman, 2007). Homosexuality is a romantic and erotic or sexual attraction or behaviour between members or people of the same sex or gender (McAnulty & Burnette, 2003). According to Kinsey's six -point scale, the term 'homosexuality' is viewed as one of the three main categories of sexual orientation with the heterosexual –homosexual continuum (Rice, 1999 as cited in Ofori, 2014, p.117).

Gay generally refers to male homosexuals, but is sometimes used in broader sense to refer to all homosexuals. In the context of sexuality, lesbianism or sodomy denotes female homosexuals.

Contrary to popular opinion, the word "homosexuality" was coined not by psychiatrists or scientist, but by a person who was fighting for the homosexual rights. It was first seen in public print in 1869 when it appeared in two anonymous pamphlets. Those pamphlets were published as a method of fighting against the criminalization of homosexual sex in the newly formed Federation of the Northern German States. Journalists in the first part of the twentieth century readily adopted the term and made it available for use in everyday while psychiatry circles continued to use the term "sexual perversion" (Obasola, 2013).

One needs to point out that while the term "homosexual" was not created until the end of the nineteenth century; same sex love has been practiced since the beginning of civilization. Until the end of the 19th century, it was generally believed that people were either heterosexual or homosexual. In ancient Greece and Rome, the pairing of same sex partners during the act of love-making was not considered out of the ordinary. The disapproving connotations attached to homosexuality began to enter into the thought patterns of Roman society just prior to the emergence of Christianity. But as Christianity flourished, the expression of sexuality for any reason other than procreation was considered very sinful, hence the initial persecution of homosexuals. During the Middle Ages, the term "sodomy" first came into use to describe homosexual love and according to Marmor (1980, p.6), it is an ancient phenomenon. It originated from Medieval Latin around 1180 as a designation for "crime against nature".

There were three methods by which this crime could be committed: first, by obtaining venereal pleasure with a member of the opposite sex; but "in a wrong manner"; second, by having sex with an individual of the same sex; and third, by having sex with an animal. From Medieval Latin it passed into the languages of Western and Central Europe as the technical expression for a crime which was punishable by death until the second half of the eighteenth century. Thus, the terms

“sodomy and “sodomite” embrace more than just homosexual sex, although most of the prosecutors were for either male homosexuality or bestiality. According to Ahmadu (2001, p. 167), “the growth of sodomy has been so phenomenal that in the West today, about ten percent of the population is involved in gay and lesbianism”. Furthermore, he surmised that:

By the 1970s, the gay and lesbian culture had developed in America and Europe to the point that members could no longer hide their identities. So, militant was their demand for acknowledgement that certain rights and privileges had to be conceded to them. Their self assertion was so aggressive and clamorous that the larger population came to doubt whether they were not after all the ones in the wrong regarding sexual matters.

Casual Factors of Homosexuality Practice

There has been different views regarding the causal factors of homosexuality as well as varied attitudes toward the act in different societies of the world. 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 created a convincing answer. Among other factors which causes homosexuality is fear of opposite sex, incest or molestation (Mcgrath, 2011). 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 (Berger, 2001).

The question is “is homosexuality a choice or a genetic issue? Ebing concluded that it is both, in his most well-known work “psychopatia sexualis”. He opines that some people are born homosexual and others become homosexual. He points to same schooling as one of the ways people become and get involve in homosexual act. He posited that humans have a basic need for sexuality and intimacy and do not lose this need because the socially accepted partners in this intimacy are unavailable. If a young heterosexual boy is placed in a place where there are no women around to get his need for sexual relationship satisfied, he will turn to those around him, that is, other boys in the same predicament (Blutenger, 2007; Nwoko, 2012).

This however means some people get involved in homosexual act as a result of single-sex schooling, private boarding schools, etc (Mcgrath, 2011). 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 parent. Freud (1953) 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. Early psychologist believed that homosexuality was due to mental illness. Fuller and Thompson (1973) 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. (Dorner et al, 1983). Blutenger (2007) believed that people become homosexuals as a result of same-sex environment with no opposite sex to share their sexual desire with. Week (1986) argued that homosexuality develops through the process of social interaction and that sexuality is defined as a matter of power.

Manning (1995) 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 and 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. 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 (1991) also examined attitudes towards gay and lesbians, as part of a new students’ orientation, at a Rural Marth Eastern State College, incoming students which were 150 in number were surveyed in 1989 regarding their knowledge and attitudes towards homosexuality, 140 students were also surveyed again in April 1991 after four semester of educational intervention. Results 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 tends to express uncomfortable attitude towards the act.

The Religious, Political and Socio-Cultural Controversies of Homosexuality in Nigeria

Societal attitudes toward homosexuality vary greatly in different cultures and different historical periods, as do attitudes toward sexual desire, activity and relationships in general. All cultures have their own values regarding appropriate and inappropriate sexuality; some sanction same-sex love and sexuality, while others may disapprove of such activities in part (Murray, 2000; Ezekiel-Hart, 2014). As with heterosexual behaviour, different sets of prescriptions and proscriptions may be given to individuals according to their gender, age, social status or social class.

Many of the world's cultures have, in the past, considered procreative sex within a recognized relationship to be a sexual norm — sometimes exclusively so, and sometimes alongside norms of same-sex love, whether passionate, intimate or sexual. Some sects within some religions, especially those influenced by the Abrahamic tradition, have censured homosexual acts and relationships at various times, in some cases implementing severe punishments (Crompton, 2003; Obidinma & Obidinma, 2013). Many countries have also seen rising support for LGBT rights in modern times (including the legal recognition of same-sex marriage, anti-discrimination laws, and other such rights).

Also in primitive time, negative attitude is found in different cultures, even in Africa, there has been serious condemnation of homosexuality such that anyone involved in act will be put to death. Recently, even in Nigeria, 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 institution of higher learning in the country (Adeyanju, 2012, p.11).

Historically, homosexuality has attracted much interest and attention but attitudes towards such preference of having sex with one of the same gender have varied in different epochs and cultural groups ranging from acceptance as among the ancient Greeks, to measured tolerance in the Roman times and outright condemnations (Reeder, 1999 as cited in Adeyanju, 2012, p. 9). In other words, homosexuality practice is a controversial issue and people are entrenched in the position they espouse which they consider objective and humane.

Religious Debates on Homosexuality in Nigeria

The place of religion in the recent public controversies about homosexuality in various African countries is widely acknowledged. As with social attitudes in general, religious attitudes towards homosexuality vary between and among religions and their adherents. This act of homosexuality has been condemned by various traditions, religions and cultures even though, it is an act which still pervade various societies today (Onuorah, 2011; Obasola, 2013). According to Onuorah (2012), traditionalists among the world's major religions generally disapprove of homosexuality, and prominent opponents of social acceptance of homosexuality often cite religious arguments to support their views.

Among Indic religions, including Buddhism, Hinduism, Sikhism and Jainism, teachings regarding homosexuality are less clear. Unlike in western religions, homosexuality is rarely discussed. However, most contemporary religious authorities in the various Indic traditions view homosexuality negatively, and when it is discussed, it is discouraged or actively forbidden (Malik, 2004). Ancient religious often refer to people of a third gender, who are neither female nor male as the Vedas. Some see this third gender as an ancient parallel to modern western lesbian, gay, transgender and intersex identities. However, this third sex according to Gyatso (2003) is usually negatively valued as a pariah class in ancient texts. Ancient Hindu law books, from the first century onward, categorize non-vaginal sex (*ayoni*) as impure (Human Rights Campaign, 2013). Same-sex sexuality and gender transformations are common among the Hindu pantheon of deities.

On the other hand, Christianity, Judaism and Islam, traditionally forbid sexual relations between people of the same sex and teach that such behaviour is sinful. Religious authorities point to passages in the Qur'an, the Old Testament and the New Testament for scriptural justification of these beliefs. According to the Old Testament (Leviticus 16:8-22, 20:13), sex between men is an abomination and anyone involved will be put to death. Other parts of the Bible makes it known that homosexuality is a sin and anyone involved in it faces strong penalty. Such books of the Bible like the book of Romans 1:18-31, Corinthians 6:9 which says that homosexuals are unrighteous and will not inherit the kingdom of God. This however has affected the Judeo-Christian attitude towards homosexuality for centuries.

It has been widely documented that some scholars totally reject the homosexual lifestyle and consider it sinful (Obasola, 2013, p. 81). Advocates of this view consider the homosexual behaviour as depraved – a form of sexual deviation that is contrary to nature and societal values. The non-acceptance debaters of Christian extraction hold that homosexuality is a post-fall distortion of human sexuality. They often use the popular argument that “if God intended homosexuality to be a legitimate expression of human sexuality, He would have created Adam and Steve and not Adam and Eve (Koranteng-Pipin, 2001, p. 48 as cited in Obasola, 2013, p. 81).

The Catholic Archbishop of Abuja Diocese, John Cardinal Onaiyekan in July 2015, said “even if people don’t like us for it, our church has always said homosexuality is unnatural and marriage is between a man and a woman... there is no question of the Catholic Church changing its positions on this matter.”

Pastor Ayo Oritsejafor, President of the Christian Association of Nigeria on 19 January 2014 stated: “We call on all those talking about human rights and international conventions to remember that there is always a limit to certain rights and that those who go out of their ways to overstep the limits now know the consequences of their actions. ... Human rights without limit are recipes for the destruction of any society. The culture and morality of a people must be taken into cognizance because it is important to remember that culture and morality are intricately linked with each other. By the beliefs of most Nigerians, same sex marriage is offensive to us as a people.”

Bishop Nicolas Okoh, Nigeria's most senior Anglican cleric, and outspoken opponent of homosexuals and homosexual rights on the 26 July 2010, stated that Nigeria is at risk of an ‘invading army of homosexuality, lesbianism and bisexual lifestyle’ and later ‘same sex marriage, paedophilia and all sexual pervasions [sic] should be roundly condemned by all who accept the authority of scripture over human life.’ The Anglican Bishop of Oyu, Isaac Orama in September 2007, declared that homosexuals are ‘inhuman, insane, satanic and not fit to live’

Thus, scholars who hold the non-acceptance view in the homosexual debate argue that like all other morally corrupt tendencies, homosexual orientation or disposition does not excuse the sin of homosexuality (Obasola, 2013, p. 82). To them, homosexual lifestyle is unnatural and socially unacceptable. According to Blake (1992, p.11) as cited in Obasola (2013, p. 82), since homosexuality is not God’s ideal plan for people, it should be removed wherever possible. The phrase “wherever possible” implies that not all homosexual conditions are amenable to remedy. Again, some scholars who argue from the non-acceptance point of view maintain that the homosexual condition is not sin but a condition of sinfulness (Ahmadu, 2001). Thus, Lake (1992, p. 7) stated that being a homosexual is not a sin, but lustful and inappropriate homosexual activity is sin and therefore, must be avoided. This position holds that homosexual condition is not sin and thus, homosexuals should not be condemned. Even though, the homosexual condition is not a sin, homosexuals are not free to express their homosexual drives.

Larson writes, “Christians therefore, have reason to encourage homosexuals who are honestly convinced that they should neither attempt to perform heterosexually or remain celibate...” To the advocate of full-acceptance view of homosexuality, there is nothing wrong with the homosexual lifestyle; it is all a matter of preference. The debates over these viewpoints may not abate in the near future. Contenders of these differing positions feel that they have legitimate point to make. Thus, liberal currents also exist within most religions, and modern lesbian and gay scholars of religion sometimes point to a place for homosexuality among historical traditions and scriptures, and emphasize religious teachings of compassion and love.

Political Discourses on Homosexuality in Nigeria

Because gay activities are illegal in Nigeria, Gay persons in Nigeria face very serious legal and social challenges. According to Pew Research Center (2013), 97 percent of Nigerian residents condemned homosexuality as a way of life that must not be tolerated by society. Out of the 45 countries surveyed, Nigeria was second on the list of homophobic nations. In states (Nigeria comprises thirty-six states) where Sharia law operates, the “offence” can attract as much as a death penalty.

Homosexual activity in Nigeria has been legally prohibited, with sanctions of up to 14 years imprisonment. According to Section 214 of the Penal Code (Third Edition, 1967), “any person who has carnal knowledge of any person against the order of nature or permits a male person to have carnal knowledge of him or her against the order of nature is guilty of a felony and liable to imprisonment for 14 years”. Under Section 215 “Any person who attempts to commit any of the offences defined in the last preceding section is guilty of a felony and liable to imprisonment for 7 years. Under Section

217, "Any male person who, whether in public or private, commits any act of gross indecency with another male person, or procures another male person to commit any act of gross indecency with him or attempts to procure the commission of any such act by any male person, whether in public or private, is guilty of a felony and is liable to imprisonment for three years." Maximum penalties for nonconsensual acts are the same as for consensual acts. As a result, under Section 352 of the Penal Code, assault with intent to have "carnal knowledge with a man (or woman) against the order of nature" also carries a maximum penalty of 14 years' imprisonment, while unlawful and indecent assaults on a male person can be punished with up to three years' imprisonment (Criminal Code Act, Chapter 77, 1990).

Also, some European Union countries have offered asylum based on gender identity to homosexual individuals. Nigeria does not provide for homosexual rights in her constitution but there are various provisions guaranteeing all citizens equal rights (Section 17(2) (a). As a signatory to international laws and treaties that are against the violation of both the right to privacy and right to equality before the law without any discrimination, Nigeria does not seem to be upholding these tenets as they affect the homosexual people. United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC) confirmed that laws criminalizing consensual same sex activity violate these rights. The council affirms this position by urging countries to repeal laws that criminalize consensual same sex activity. Harassment and murder of homosexuals are by definition violation of their rights. Nigeria's position therefore is in defiance of established international human rights law.

One of the five main national goals of Nigeria which was endorsed as a necessary foundation for the National Policy on the education FPN (2004) is: "a just and egalitarian society". It therefore means that Nigeria accepts that all humans are equal in fundamental worth or social status so all people should have the same political, economic, social and civil rights (Ezekiel-Hart, 2014).

According to Hassan (2013), the then Senate President, David Mark in January 2013 insisted that the 2013 Same Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act (SSMP) was "irrevocable" and "we will not compromise on this". Instead, Nigeria has to 'prove to the rest of the world, who are advocates of this unnatural way that we Nigerians promote and respect sanity, morality and humanity.'

Socio-cultural Discourses on Homosexuality in Nigeria

In the discourse surrounding sex in Nigerian local cultures, heterosexuality is celebrated as the natural order. The failure of men and women to fit into this expectation exposes them to mocking and name calling (Olanrewaju, Chigozie, & Olanrewaju, 2015). This mocking and name calling, as part of cultural narratives are directed at males/females that deviate from 'standard' roles. Such men in Nigeria are called 'women', 'weaklings', 'incapacitated', 'effeminate', 'girls'. These men are not respected. In local cultural imaginaries, they lack fit. Such women are called 'men', 'masculine', 'wicked', 'stubborn', and 'tigers'. They are stigmatized. This is because our cultures view taking the role of the other (i.e. male taking the role of women or vice versa) as the ultimate humiliation, an unfortunate crisis, and a transgression. The labels and names applied to these 'unfits' aim at denying them proper humanity. This intensely discursive process (of negatively labeling people who transgress culturally-accepted codes of sexual identity and codes) according to Izugbara (2004) is the objective condition for homophobia in indigenous Nigerian cultures.

Currently, same-sex sexual relations have been reported among young Nigerians. But the practice tends to be more prevalent among adults. Francour, Esiet and Esiet (2000) argue that despite the acknowledgement of the existence of homosexuality in many Nigerian cultures, the practice appears to be unpopular. Nigerians tend to view homosexuals as sick, subnormal, and dangerous people. Homosexuals dwell at the very margins of respectability in the larger Nigerian public imaginary. Homosexuality is also frequently associated with witchcraft, magic, and the possession of diabolical powers (Izugbara, 2004).

Despite the moral bankruptcy that has generally characterized leadership in Africa, it is interesting to note that most African leaders have denounced homosexuality as evil, unnatural and incongruent to African culture and psyche. A brief survey of some of their views is revealing: President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe compared homosexuality to bestiality and has ordered the Police to raid the offices of Gays and Lesbians (Boykin, 2001). In fact, Mugabe claimed that homosexuals were "worse than pigs and dogs" (BBC Africa Live, 2002). Namibian President, San Nujoma, was more antagonistic and vitriolic in his attack of the homosexuals. He declared that "the Republic of Namibia does not allow homosexuality or lesbianism here. Police are ordered to arrest you, deport you and imprison you" (Boykin, 2001).

Nujoma sees homosexuality as against God's will and act that shows that the devil is at work. Indeed, Namibia's Home Affairs Minister, Jerry Ekandjo urged the Police officers to eliminate gays and lesbians from the face of Namibia. There are others beside those in the leadership cadre who feel that homosexuality is totally un-African and that it negates all the cherished values of a typical African. Thus the reactions of Africans may take the following forms: That homosexuality should not be accepted, it is not the plan of God...it is completely bad and it does not originate from Africa, it is satanic and controlled by the evil spirits. John Ernest is of the view that homosexuals should be disenfranchised in Africa; they have no rights to be respected. Ernest opined that "homosexuality is a curse and that God should punish those who are engaged in the act, just as God reacted to the people of Sodom and Gomorrah" (BBC Africa Live, 2002).

James Hallowanger lends credence to the views expressed by Ernest when he asserts that "Africa has no right to respect gays according to African tradition and even the Bible. In fact, the act of gay is immoral and should be condemned by all civilized nations of the world" (BBC Africa Live, 2002). Yet there are those who feel that Africa would be throwing away its culture and ethics to the Western culture and principles and thus playing the fool if it should respect the right of the homosexuals. That is why there has been a strong reaction to the gay activist group's effort to stall a bill seeking to ban same sex marriages in Nigeria. Kamor (2009) is obviously far from condoning the practice. He surmised that: "the sensationalist act of these individuals (the human right activists) and their supporters show that the face of Nigerian culture is changing – but only for the worse. The singular impact of the shame was to demonstrate that homosexuality is bold and here, that it is normal sexual orientation that is "neither a defect, a disturbance, a sickness, nor a malfunction of any sort, but the truth is that homosexuality is an illness and can be anything but normal. As such, he is of the opinion that homosexuality is more dangerous to the moral well-being of the nation than a standing army and that this global cancer should not be allowed to infect Nigeria.

Estela (1992) 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 faculties are not known to most of their straight colleagues lives full of secret fears. The result of two institutions studied, one for faculty/staff and the other for students demonstrate 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 percent. A textual analysis of the survey respondents revealed that more than half of the comments were oppositional or hostile towards homosexuals while only 27 percent were supportive. Also it is revealed that 52 percent among heterosexual students believe homosexual behaviour is immoral.

Similarly, Augelli (1992) as cited in Adeyanju (2012) in a sample of 121 homosexual undergraduate students, formed that 77 percent of the respondent had experienced verbal abuse and 27 percent had been threatened with violence, and it is also shown that few victims reports incidents to authorities due to fear of harassment. Berger (1995) as cited in Adeyanju (2012) studied 165 lesbians, gays and bisexual youths, 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, the study found that 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.

According to Obasola (2013), it has been discovered that some researchers' views assert that homosexuality is fully compatible with nature and societal norms. Proponents of this argument see homosexuality as part of the pre – fall natural order. They maintain that homosexuality is neither a distortion of human sexuality nor an aberration. Rather, homosexuality is an immutable sexual orientation given or created by God as a gift to some people just as heterosexuality. These advocates nevertheless concede that it is an eccentricity or a mark of one's individual identity, just like possessing a particular colour of skin, eye or hair. Pierson (1990, p.257) proposes that, "Homosexuality and heterosexuality are two aspects of sexuality, neither being the counterfeit or the other, both being right or wrong depending on the context of their expression..." (as cited in Obasola, 2013, p.82). It is the abuse of homosexuality for example promiscuity, rape or prostitution that is wrong, but not its legitimate expression in the form of loving, consensual, monogamous, homosexual relationship. That means homosexuals should be affirmed in their same – sex relationship and be allowed to "marry" or to form "close-couple homosexual unions" (Larson, 1984, p. 16 as cited in Obasola, 2013, p. 82).

Though there has been a few dissenting voices, the general consensus in the African milieu is that homosexuality should not be allowed to take root in Africa. Thus, its manifestation should be treated as an aberration rather than a socially acceptable behavioural pattern.

4. CONCLUSION

Homosexuality is a relationship that allows any two consenting individuals of the same biological sex to form an intimate relationship. The issue of homosexuality is a controversial discourse all over the world. The various dimensions of the discourses on the subject of homosexuality show a paradigm shift in the concept of relationship/marriage from the traditional heterosexual (consensual relationship) to homosexual (the coming together of any two individuals of the same sex). However, the culture of homosexuality has become a canker worm eating into every fabric of society and leaving in its trail tales of woes as it has negatively impacted the lives of not only those involved in the act, but has brought about a negative image of the Country. In Nigeria, it has been discovered that many homosexuals are still in the closets, perhaps because of the strong cultural aversion towards the practice, although some are gradually coming out of their closet to assert what they perceive to be their constitutional rights. The study shows that homosexual is not culturally, politically, legally, religiously and socially not acceptable in Nigeria as Nigerians perceive it to be a taboo, animalistic, inhumane, sin and illegal.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the research findings, the following recommendations were made

1. Full enforcement in criminalizing homosexuality in Nigeria.
2. To organize seminars or workshops, sensitizing the negative impact of homosexuality in Nigeria.

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