

## The Church and Homosexuality: An Assessment of the Understanding and Perceptions of Selected Christians in Lagos Metropolis

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**Abstract :** This study examined the readiness of the Christian Church in Lagos to engage with the emerging LGBT community. Employing a descriptive survey design, it assessed awareness levels of LGBT issues, biblical perspectives on homosexuality, and effective approaches for ministering to LGBT individuals. The questionnaire, administered online via Google Forms, garnered 255 responses. Lagos Metropolis was categorized into Evangelical and Non-Evangelical churches, with 208 (81.6%) respondents from Evangelical and 47 (18.4%) from Non-Evangelical congregations. Denominations included Baptist, Redeemed Christian Church of God, The African Church, Catholic, and others across nine of twenty Local Government Areas. The study highlighted a high awareness of homosexuality within the church community, despite tendencies to deny its existence. It emphasized the incongruence between affirming homosexual behaviors and adhering to biblical principles, considering such orientations contrary to societal norms. Furthermore, it underscored the belief that homosexual orientations are seen as curable and sinful, requiring repentance and conversion to heterosexual orientations for full inclusion in church life and ministry. Recommendations proposed promoting Christian values through avenues like sports evangelism, musical outreach, welfare programs, and other ministries to uphold heterosexuality over LGBT culture within Lagos churches.

**Keywords:** Christian Response, LGBT Practices, Identity Integration, Culture Diversity, Lagos Metropolis.

## Introduction

Homosexuality is one of the most pressing global controversies. Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, and Transgenders (LGBT) are commonly believed to be some of the homosexual behaviours and attractions. The moral rightness of their activities is a subject of fervent debates across the spheres of religions, cultures and politics. This ongoing contemporary debate on LGBT is premised upon what the concerned people accept as their sexual identity or orientation. Some, who argue in favour, hold that LGBT people were born with these sexual orientations<sup>1</sup>. They claim that they are normal and must be integrated into the society without prejudice or discrimination. The above is not the only view on LGBT. A flip few posits that heterosexual orientation is innate in every human being but be that as it may, the view upholds that those who manifest LGBT have dysfunctional and pervasive challenges<sup>2</sup>. By this, those who hold this view claim homosexual behaviours and attractions are disorderly, and as such, these LGBT persons should rather be encouraged to correct such lifestyle.

Sexuality is normal attribute of humans. Traditionally, the Church had believed that every person's sexual orientation is fixed as heterosexual. This fundamental view of the Church frowns at and have zero tolerance at any other form of sexual behaviour apart from heterosexuality. But as time goes on, modern scholars, the likes of Kinsey<sup>3</sup>, Klein<sup>4</sup> and Carroll<sup>5</sup>, came up with possibilities of ranges of sexual orientations of which LGBT are members. With the advent of LGBT, the Church is divided between the existing two positions. Groups at each side of the divide are developing theological stances suitable for their view. The arguments of LGBT persons are strong and focused. LGBT has gained power and political dominance in Europe and America, and is gaining momentums to overrun the African nations. That the contemporary church is divided is the first disadvantage position that exists for the Christian community. The evangelical consensus is that you cannot affirm homosexuality and Christian faith while non-evangelicals portend biblical and historical explanations why affirming such is possible<sup>6</sup>. Since the Bible, the highest Christian authority, is ever the inerrant Word of God, it is important that Christian response be in consonance with the scriptures, rightly interpreted, without prejudice to the scientific views on sexuality. As regards the Nigerian nation, it is clear that homosexuality is illegal, though the presence of

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<sup>1</sup> John Boswell. *Christianity, social tolerance, and homosexuality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1980, 149-56; Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*. New York: Convergent Books, 2014, 50-51.

<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey S. Siker (ed.), *Homosexuality and religion: an encyclopedia*. Westport, Connecticut, Greenwood Press, 2007, 205-08; R. Albert Jr. Mohler, (ed). *God and the Gay Christian? A Response to Matthew Vines*. Louisville, Kentucky: SBTS Press, 2014, 25-33

<sup>3</sup>A. Kinsey, W. B. Pomeroy, & C. E. Martin. *Sexual behavior in the human male*. Philadelphia: Saunders, 1948.

<sup>4</sup> F. Klein, B. Sepekoff, & T. Wolf. *Sexual orientation: A multi-variable dynamic process*. Journal of Homosexuality, 1985, 11(1-2), 35-49.

<sup>5</sup> Janell L. Carroll. *Sexuality Now: Embracing Diversity*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, Inc., 2019.

<sup>6</sup> Dan O. Via & Robert A. J. Gagnon. *Homosexuality and the Bible: Two Views*. Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2003, 48; Alan Wilson. *More Perfect Union? Understanding same-sex marriage*, London: Darton, Longman and Todd, 2014, 141.

LGBT people cannot be denied, particularly in major cities<sup>7</sup>. There are ongoing activisms in many nations which aimed at the recognition of same-gender marriage, and abolition of the penal code and law against homosexuals, amongst others in support of same-sex relationships. The Nigeria church is not left out in this discourse. There has been the need for some of the Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion) to come up with clear position on homosexuals' involvement in the church ministry in recent times<sup>8</sup>. Since Lagos is a metropolis, there is no doubt that the body of Christ in Lagos must get ready to respond to pressure from the LGBT activism, in line with the mind of Christ. These observations provoked the researchers' desire to work on the chosen topic.

**Statement of the Problem:** The quest of LGBT people for full inclusion in the society has challenged Church membership, ministry and marriage of the church. In Europe and America, researchers have shown that over 2,000 years of Bible teaching on life-long heterosexual monogamous relationship is being challenged by proponents of same-sex marriage. Also, such long standing Church tradition regarding homosexuality is being threatened with demands for revitalization by scholars, who affirm homosexual orientation and claim to the Bible as the highest authority<sup>9</sup>. Attempts of some gays and lesbians, who are positive about their religion and sexuality, to continue in the community of Christian faith with their families, friends and loved ones was met with lots of controversy and opposition<sup>10</sup>. Contemporary scholars have argued that life-long, homosexual monogamous commitments or love relationships should enjoy equality with their heterosexual counterparts<sup>11</sup>. In Nigeria, few individuals have come out to make their sexual orientation public. For instance, Bisi Alimi was the first to identify on Nigerian TV as a gay in 2004<sup>12</sup>, he revealed that there are many others who are yet to come out. The same-gender activism is on the increase in Nigeria, though they lack legal backing for their activities<sup>13</sup>. Some researchers have also shown that homosexual activities are common in some cities in

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<sup>7</sup> Stephen O. Murray & Will Roscoe (eds). *Boy-wives and female husbands: studies of African homosexualities*. New York: Palgrave Publishers. 1998, 102; Lindsey Green-Simms. *The Emergent Queer: Homosexuality and Nigerian Fiction in the 21st Century*. Research in African Literatures, Vol. 47, No. 2, Queer Valences in African Literatures and Film, 139-161. Indiana University Press, 2016. Available on [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org).

<sup>8</sup> Andrew Brown (2009). "The Latest hate speech from the church of Nigeria". [www.theguardian.com](http://www.theguardian.com).

<sup>9</sup> Willard M. Swartley. *Homosexuality: biblical interpretation and moral discernment*. Waterloo, Ontario: Herald Press. 2003, 144; R. Albert Jr. Mohler, (ed). *God and the Gay Christian? A Response to Matthew Vines*. Louisville, Kentucky: SBTS Press. 2014, 12; Abbie E. Goldberg (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of LGBTQ Studies*. California: SAGE Publications. 2016, 226.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew Vines, *God and the Gay Christian*. New York: Convergent Books, 2014, 19.

<sup>11</sup> Mark Vasey-Saunders. *The scandal of evangelicals and homosexuality: English evangelical texts, 1960–2010*. England, Surrey: Ashgate Publishing Limited. 2015,70; Jerrold S. Greenberg, Clint E. Bruess, & Sara B. Oswalt. *Exploring the Dimensions of Human Sexuality*. Burlington, Maryland: Jones & Bartlett Learning. 2017, 648.

<sup>12</sup> Taylor Adam. *Meet the first man to come out as gay on Nigerian television*, *The Washington Post*, 2014. [www.washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com).

<sup>13</sup> *ibid.* 102.

Nigeria such as Kano, Port Harcourt and Lagos<sup>14</sup>. The Church in Nigeria is being accused of homophobia, marginalization, discrimination, hate, oppression, and prejudice against LGBT people who are positive about the Christian faith and their sexual orientation<sup>15</sup>. The contemporary church in Nigeria has to provide biblical intellectual response to these allusions.

### Research Questions

The Paper answered the following research Questions:

1. What is the level of awareness of homosexuality amongst Christians in Lagos metropolis?
2. To what extent do Lagos Christians agree that homosexuals affirm the Bible as their highest authority for praxis?
3. Do Christians in Lagos metropolis think homosexual orientations are sane or sick?
4. What should be the biblical response of the church in Lagos metropolis to homosexuality?
5. What are the recommendations to the church on the inclusion of homosexuals?

### Theoretical Framework

**Behavioral Theory:** Behaviorists believe that behavior must be measured to understand it. They hold that unconcealed behavior can be measured, observed, and controlled; but human psychological states and feelings are not measurable. According to behavioral theory, humans learn most sexual behaviors (as well as other behaviors), through reinforcement and punishment<sup>16, 17</sup>.

**Feminist Theory:** Feminist theory argues that society has a strong influence on our ideas about sexuality than any biological logicity. It redefined sexual functioning and remove the medical and biological aspects, which it claimed has permeated the contemporary understanding of sexuality. Feminist theorists hold that social construction of sexuality is male-dominated and based on power. The male-domination, MacKinnon<sup>18</sup> argued represses female sexuality for male's satisfaction. Collins<sup>19</sup> observed that because the power has been primarily in the hands of men for

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<sup>14</sup> Stephen O. Murray & Will Roscoe. (Eds), *Boy-wives and female husbands: studies of African homosexualities*. New York: Palgrave Publishers. 1998, 102-03; Lindsey Green-Simms. *The Emergent Queer: Homosexuality and Nigerian Fiction in the 21st Century*. Research in African Literatures, Vol. 47, No. 2, Queer Valences in African Literatures and Film., 139-161. Indiana University Press, 2016. Available on [www.jstor.org](http://www.jstor.org).

<sup>15</sup> House of Rainbow (2009). *House of Rainbow MCC Nigeria To Mark Three Years of Inclusive Mission*. [houseofrainbowmcc.blogspot.com](http://houseofrainbowmcc.blogspot.com)

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 30.

<sup>17</sup> Janell L. Carroll. *Sexuality Now: Embracing Diversity*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, Inc. 2019, 30.

<sup>18</sup> C. A. MacKinnon. *Pornography: Reality, not fantasy*. The Village Voice, 1985.

<sup>19</sup> P. H. Collins. The tie that binds: Race, gender and U.S. violence. *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 21(5), 917-939, 1998.

centuries, there is sexual gender inequality. Men therefore tends to maintain women's submission and subordination through acts of sexual aggression<sup>20</sup>.

### Operational Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined operationally as used in the context of this work.

(i). *LGBT people (person)*: variety of sexual orientation and behaviours which encompasses Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals, Transgenders, Queers, Asexual, Intersex and so on. They are also referred to as LGBT community in this work.

(ii) *Straight*: A label that describes someone with heterosexual orientation.

(iii) *Homophobia*: From Greek origin; *homos*, same + *phobos*, fear or fright. It describes a condition in which those who are sexually attracted to same-sex are dreaded or feared by those who are heterosexuals<sup>21</sup>. Homosexuals sometimes use this to describe heterosexuals' negative attitude towards them.

(iv). *Affirming Christians*: Christians who uphold committed, monogamous same-sex relationships as biblical.

(v). *Non-affirming Christians*: Christians who hold the traditional interpretation of the Bible on homosexuality, those who believe the Bible forbids all same-sex sexual behavior.

(vi) *Lagos Metropolis*: The Lagos metropolis is a densely populated low-lying coastal area in the southwestern part of Nigeria, West Africa. The city is located within geographical coordinates of 3.1 to 3.4° E longitude and 6.5 to 6.8° N latitude and covers a land area of approximately 1100 km<sup>2</sup> or 425 sq. miles.<sup>22</sup>

(vii) *Evangelicals*: For ease of categorization, all churches in Lagos metropolis that fall within the circle of Protestants, Pentecostals, Evangelicals, African Indigenous Churches (AICS) and all non-orthodox churches are referred to as *Evangelicals* in this work. Examples include Nigeria Baptist Convention, Redeemed Christian Church of God (RCCG), Evangelical Church Winning All (ECWA), Living Faith Church Worldwide, Deeper Christian Life Ministry, Christ Apostolic Church (CAC) and Cherubim and Seraphim Church (C & S).

(viii) *Non-evangelicals*: Some of the orthodox or mainline and African Independent churches are so categorized in this study. Examples of such present in Lagos mega-city include Roman Catholic Church, Church of Nigeria (Anglican Communion), Presbyterian Church, The African Church and Methodist Church Nigeria.

(ix) *Church community*: This refers to Evangelical, Non-Evangelical church groups, denominations and Christian organizations in the Lagos metropolis.

<sup>20</sup> Janell L. Carroll. *Sexuality Now: Embracing Diversity*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, Inc. 2019, 32-33.

<sup>21</sup> G.F Pranzarone, 'Homophobia', *Dictionary of Sexuality*.....

<sup>22</sup> Lagos Metropolis of Nigeria, [www.researchgate.net](http://www.researchgate.net)

Nigeria\_fig1\_292995370#:~:text=The%20Lagos%20metropolis%20is%20a,km%20%20(or%20425%20sq. Accessed 17/06/2020, 2:20pm

## Literature Review

### Sexual Perversion and Sexual Sin

Early scholars believe that sexual orientation refers to a person's distinct preferences consistently made after puberty in the presence of clear alternatives<sup>23</sup>. This is occasional sexual behaviour that cannot be described as one's sexual orientation. Carroll<sup>24</sup> affirmed Ellis & Ames<sup>25</sup> who observed and described sexuality in three categories namely; those who consistently prefer sexual relations with same sex, (homosexuality, i.e., gays/lesbians), opposite sex (heterosexuality) or both sexes (bisexuality). Various cultures and nations have used different identity labels (or none at all) to describe people who express these sexual attractions<sup>26</sup>. Goldberg further stated that a person's sexual orientation is different in nature from his/her gender identity (who a person is) and expression<sup>27</sup>. According to APA, sexual orientation "refers to an enduring pattern of emotional, romantic and/or sexual attractions to men, women or both sexes"<sup>28</sup>. Sexual orientation is beyond sexual biological role and identity. Orientation means perspective, it is the relationship between the perceiver and the thing being perceived<sup>29</sup>. He noted that a person's sexual orientation is defined by the focus of his or her sexual interest. If sexual orientation is reflected by objects of sexual interest of the person, There are many than the common three focused by earlier researchers. Quoting the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fourth Edition, he identified about 30 sexual orientations<sup>30</sup>.

Goldberg clarified three distinct domains of human sexuality, namely; attraction, behavior, and sexual identity<sup>31</sup>. Sexual attraction is the intrapersonal, psychological dimension of sexuality, and which pertains to a person's patterns of romantic or sexual feelings toward others. He with Mohler said that sexual attraction and orientation are the basis to understand sexual behavior and identity of a person<sup>32</sup>. In addition,

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<sup>23</sup> A. C. Kinsey. *Homosexuality*. Clinical Endocrinology, 1941, 1, 424-428; W. J. Gadpaille. *Research into the physiology of maleness and femaleness: Its contributions to the etiology and understanding of homosexuality*. Archives of General Psychiatry, 1972, 26, 193-206; C. S. Chilman. *The development of adolescent sexuality*. Journal of Research and Development in Education, 1983, 16, 16-26.

<sup>24</sup> Janell L. Carroll. *Sexuality Now: Embracing Diversity*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, Inc. 2019, 266.

<sup>25</sup> Lee Ellis & Ashley M. Ames. "Neurohormonal Functioning and Sexual Orientation: A Theory of Homosexuality-Heterosexuality", *Psychological Bulletin*, American Psychological Association, 1987, Vol. 101, No. 2, 233.

<sup>26</sup> American Psychological Association (APA). *Sexual Orientation & Homosexuality*. <https://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation>. Created 2008. Accessed 10am, May 12, 2020.

<sup>27</sup> Abbie E. Goldberg (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of LGBTQ Studies*. California: SAGE Publications. 2016, 1068.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Scott Lively. *Redeeming the Rainbow: A Christian Response to the "Gay" Agenda*. Springfield, MA: Veritas Aeterna Press. 2009, 4.

<sup>30</sup> Scott Lively. *Redeeming the Rainbow: A Christian Response to the "Gay" Agenda*. Springfield, MA: Veritas Aeterna Press. 2009, 213-214.

<sup>31</sup> Abbie E. Goldberg (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of LGBTQ Studies*. California: SAGE Publications, 2016.

<sup>32</sup> R. Albert Jr. Mohler, (ed). *God and the Gay Christian? A Response to Matthew Vines*. Louisville, Kentucky: SBTS Press. 2014, 47.



Mohler<sup>33</sup> quoting Grenz<sup>34</sup> and Jenell<sup>35</sup>, asserts that sexual attraction is synonymous to desire. Goldberg noted that sexual behavior refers to a person's sexual activity (both alone and with others), while sexual identity encompasses both a personal identity and a societal identity<sup>36</sup>.

Goldberg see personal identity as one's self-concept based on sexual and romantic attractions and behaviors. Societal identity refers to a felt affiliation with or membership in a social group based on sexual orientation. Common labels for sexual identity include homosexual (lesbian, gay), bisexual, or heterosexual. Others are queer, pansexual, same-gender loving, or two-spirit, among others<sup>37</sup>. Some other sexual orientation identified by scholars include androsexual, asexual, gynosexual, and skoliosexual<sup>38</sup>.

J. M. Bailey, in his article "What is Sexual Orientation and Do Women Have One?", describes sexual orientation as a mechanism that directs human sexuality. In Bailey's view, a person's sexual orientation reflects in the sexual arousal pattern, much more than in the sexual desire, fantasy, and attraction<sup>39</sup>. Researching into sexual behaviour pattern, Bailey posited that one's private sexual identity (how one conceives of oneself) might differ from the public identity (how one wishes to be considered by others) and sexual preference (the ultimate choice that one would make, on whatever grounds, regarding the sex of an erotic partner)<sup>40</sup>. Affirming Hope,<sup>41</sup> Carroll<sup>42</sup> observe that a variety of sexual behavior, sexual fantasies, emotional attachments, and sexual self-concept contributes to each person's sexual orientation.

Most explanations of sexual orientation before the 21<sup>st</sup> century defied scientific verification. Ellis & Ames<sup>43</sup> upheld Allen<sup>44</sup> and Greenberg & Bystry<sup>45</sup> that heterosexuality was generally accepted as the norm, God ordained, natural and good. Particularly in the Western world, non-procreative sexual acts and other deviations from the norm were seen as the work of the devil or human deliberate sinful acts.

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<sup>33</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>34</sup> Stanley Grenz. *Sexual Ethics: An Evangelical Perspective*. Louisville, Kentucky: Westminster John Knox Press. 1997, 225.

<sup>35</sup> Jenell Williams. *Paris, The End of Sexual Identity: Why Sex Is Too Important to Define Who We Are*. Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity. 2011, 99.

<sup>36</sup> Abbie E. Goldberg (Ed.), *The SAGE Encyclopedia of LGBTQ Studies*. California: SAGE Publications. 2016, 1068.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.* 1036.

<sup>38</sup> Janell L. Carroll. *Sexuality Now: Embracing Diversity*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, Inc. 2019, 266.

<sup>39</sup> Debra A. Hope (Ed.), *Contemporary Perspectives on Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Identities*. New York: Springer Science + Business Media. 2009, 44.

<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>41</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>42</sup> Janell L. Carroll. *Sexuality Now: Embracing Diversity*. Boston, MA: Cengage Learning, Inc. 2019, 266.

<sup>43</sup> Lee Ellis & Ashley M. Ames. "Neurohormonal Functioning and Sexual Orientation: A Theory of Homosexuality-Heterosexuality", *Psychological Bulletin*, American Psychological Association, 1987, Vol. 101, No. 2, 233.

<sup>44</sup> C. Allen. *Perversions, sexual*. In A. Ellis & A. Abarbanel (Eds.), *The encyclopedia of sexual behavior*. New York: Hawthorn Books, 1967, 802-811.

<sup>45</sup> David F. Greenberg & Bystry. *Capitalism, bureaucracy and male homosexuality*. Contemporary Crises. 1984, 8, 33-56.

### Historical overview of Homosexuality in different cultures

Homosexuality is as old as human culture. F. L. Cardoso and D. Werner, in the article titled "Homosexuality", stated that, from the ancient till recent cultures, records of homosexuality have always been present in the form of myths, political histories, legal documents, literature, and religious injunctions<sup>46</sup>. In their explanations, citing Gregersen<sup>47</sup> and Epprecht<sup>48</sup>, some pottery from the Peruvian Mochican culture, over 2000 years old, and rock drawings from African Khoi-San culture, thousands of years old, depicts acts of homosexuality. Some ancient Mesopotamian texts (an Almanac of Incantations) spoke favourably about "love of a man for a man"<sup>49</sup>. According to the Sumerian temple records, from the middle of the third millennium BC, gala priests in Mesopotamia, as well as their later equivalents in Babylonia and Assyria adopted female dress and manners and engaged in passive anal intercourse with other men<sup>50</sup>. The Middle Assyrian laws, in the middle of the second millennium B.C., had severely penalized men who raped other male companions and those who falsely accused others of passive homosexuality<sup>51</sup>. All these are strong indication of the awareness of homosexuality during ancient times.

Most of the ancient Egyptian papyri and inscriptions that have survived contain only a few references to homosexuality<sup>52</sup>. As in the Mesopotamian texts, Will Roscoe, in his "Precursors of Islamic male homosexuality" noted that record of passive homosexuality with humiliation is discovered in one ancient myth from Egypt<sup>53</sup>. Early historians, in the second century B.C., attested that Gays and Lesbians were well known to the Romans. Most young men had male lovers. There were few references to Lesbianism in their literature. Romans of the late Republic were familiar with highly aggressive oral sex and anal intercourse<sup>54</sup>. Citing Murray,<sup>55</sup> they claimed that the Thebes, Sparta, Crete and Athens had customs that encouraged homosexual relations. After the conquest of Alexander the Great and the Hellenization of the empire, homosexual used eunuchs and effeminate boy slaves in different parts of the

<sup>46</sup> Carol R. Ember & Melvin Ember (Eds). *Encyclopedia of sex and gender: men and women in the world's cultures*. (New York, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers. 2003), 204.

<sup>47</sup> E. Gregersen. *Sexual practices: The story of human sexuality*. New York: Franklin Watts. 1983.

<sup>48</sup> Marc Epprecht. Good God almighty, what's this! Homosexual "crime" in early colonial Zimbabwe. In S. O. Murray & W. Roscoe (Eds.), *Boy-wives and female husbands: Studies in African Homosexualities*. New York: Palgrave. 1998, 197–222.

<sup>49</sup> Robert A. J. Gagnon. *The Bible and homosexual practice: texts and hermeneutics*. Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press. 2001, 48.

<sup>50</sup> Carol R. Ember & Melvin Ember (Eds). *Encyclopedia of sex and gender: men and women in the world's cultures*. New York, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers. 2003, 204.

<sup>51</sup> David F. Greenberg. *The construction of homosexuality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1988, 125.

<sup>52</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>53</sup> Stephen O. Murray & Will Roscoe, (Eds). *Islamic homosexualities: Culture, history and literature*. New York: New York University Press, 1997.

<sup>54</sup> David F. Greenberg. *The construction of homosexuality*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press. 1988, 154-56.

<sup>55</sup> Stephen O. Murray. *Homosexualities*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000.



empire. Caelius Aurelianus, in the 5th century argued that homosexuality was an inherited disease in the Roman empire<sup>56</sup>. Scholars maintain that sufficient historical evidences to believe the origins of different homosexual activities were common in the ancient Greece and Rome. Ember & Ember<sup>57</sup> noted that early Greek Thinkers like Aristotle and Plato gave considerable attention to homosexual acts in their works.

Recently, several studies that used cross-cultural statistical studies to test behaviors, identities, or desires had also come up with three male homosexual systems. This typology is described by Gorer<sup>58</sup> as the “pathic” (“passive”) or “gender-stratified” system; the “pederasty” or “age-stratified” system, and the “homophilic” or “egalitarian” system. Grore observed that female homosexuality systems are similar but not exactly parallel to the male systems<sup>59</sup>. On the basis of the foregoing, these scholars argued for integration of the homosexual into the society as against discrimination which seems to be the norm before the recent times.

### Research Method

This research’s method is descriptive design with sample survey method in which questions was administered through well-structured questionnaires. This survey is chosen because of limitation of accessing all Christians in the Lagos mega-city within the limit of time. The population of this study comprises of clergymen (103) and Lay Leaders (152) drawn from the evangelicals and non-evangelicals church groups in Lagos metropolis. This study population is considered in order to get diverse responses and in-depth understanding to the research questions. The sample size for this study comprises of 255 respondents randomly selected from Lagos metropolis. The selection comprises of Christians with different gender, ages and areas of ministry in the Church. Instrument for data collection constructed by these researchers is a questionnaire titled “LGBT Practices in Lagos Metropolis” and made up of thirty questions (as shown in Appendix 1). This was divided into two parts. The first part was to collect respondents’ personal data. While the second, subdivided into eight sections, sought information of the statement of the problem. The instrument for this research was thoroughly checked by the author and co-author who is an Associate Professor of Religious Studies, for reliability and appropriateness of the instrument. Also, the Cronbach’s Alpha method of reliability will be adopted to check the reliability of the instrument that will be used in collecting data. These researchers administered this instrument virtually using Google forms questionnaire. This became necessary to uphold the COVID-19 safety protocols. To promote the link through social media amongst the Christian community in Lagos metropolis, these

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<sup>56</sup> *ibid.* 259.

<sup>57</sup> Carol R. Ember & Melvin Ember (Eds). *Encyclopedia of sex and gender: men and women in the world’s cultures*. New York, Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers. 2003, 205.

<sup>58</sup> G. Gorer. *The danger of equality*. London: Cresset, 1966.

<sup>59</sup> *ibid.*

researchers contacted select leaders of the Catholic, The African Church, Baptist, Methodist, The Redeemed Christian Church of God and other Christian Churches in the population for the study. Total of 255 responses were received. The researchers employed Statistical Packages for Social Sciences (SPSS) to carry out the analysis procedure. Descriptive statistic such as means, percentages, tables, and charts were utilized. Collected data were thoroughly interpreted.

Table 1: Biographical Data

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Male	157	61.6
Female	97	38.0
Prefer not to say	1	0.4
Total	255	100.0
<b>Age range</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
51 Yrs & above	45	17.6
30 Yrs & below	53	20.8
31-50 Yrs	157	61.6
Total	255	100.0
<b>Church Category</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Evangelicals	208	81.6
Non-Evangelicals	47	18.4
Total	255	100.0
<b>Denomination</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Baptist	122	47.8
Catholic	11	4.3
Methodist	15	5.9
The African Church	12	4.7
The Redeemed Christian Church of God	53	20.8
Others	42	16.5
Total	255	100.0

<b>Church Ministry or Service</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Clergy	103	40.4
Church Worker/Member	112	43.9
Deacon(ess)/Leader	40	15.7
Total	255	100.0
<b>Respondents LGA</b>	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>Percent %</b>
Agege	24	9.4
Alimosho	44	17.3
Amuwo-Odofin	3	1.2
Apapa	1	0.4
Badagry	9	3.5
Epe	3	1.2
Eti-Osa	3	1.2
Ibeju-Lekki	3	1.2
Ifako-Ijaiye	28	11.0
Ikeja	27	10.6
Ikorodu	23	9.0
Kosofe	28	11.0
Lagos Island	1	0.4
Lagos Mainland	8	3.1
Mushin	6	2.4
Ojo	3	1.2
Oshodi-Isolo	14	5.5
Surulere	27	10.5
Total	255	100.0

Table 1 above shows the biographical information of the target population who were randomly selected for this project work. Out of 255 respondents from Lagos Metropolis, the work revealed a total of 157 (61.6 percent) for male, 97 (38%) for female while 1 (0.4%) preferred not to disclose gender identity. The Age range of the respondents were equally obtained. 157 (61.6%) were ages 31-50 years, 53 (20.8%) were 30 years or below while 45 (17.6%) were of ages 51 years and above. All these groups were represented. About the Church Category, 208 (81.6%) of the total population of interest were from the Evangelicals while 47 (18.4%) were from Non-Evangelicals Churches. On area of Denomination, the highest number of respondents, 122 (47.8%)

were from Baptist churches with, 53, (20.8%) from the Redeemed Christian Church of God, 15 (5.9%), Methodist, 12, (4.7%), The African Church, 11 (4.3%) Catholic, while respondents from other churches add up to 42 (16.5%). Concerning respondents' areas of Church Ministry or Service, 112 (43.9%) were either Church Workers or active Members, 103, (40.4%), clergymen while 40, (15.7%) were Deacons, Deaconesses or other Leaders in the Church. Respondents spanned across the 19 of 20 Local Government Area in Lagos Metropolis. Alimosho 44 (17.3%) have highest respondents, Ifako-Ijaiye & Kosofe 28 (11%) each, Ikeja 27 (10.6%), Agege 24 (9.4%), Ikorodu 23 (9%), Surulere 20 (7.8%), Oshodi-Isolo 14 (5.5%), Badagry 9 (3.5%), Lagos Mainland 8 (3.1%), Surulere 7 (2.7%), Mushin 6 (2.4%), Amuwo-Odofin, Epe, Eti-Osa, Ibeju-Lekki, & Ojo 3 (1.2%) each, while Apapa & Lagos Island 1 (0.4%) each.

## Responses to Research Questions

### Research question 1

Table 2: What is the level of Respondents' awareness of homosexuality among Christians in Lagos metropolis?

Questions	Not Applicable		Fairly Applicable		Applicable		Strongly Applicable	
	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%	Freq	%
I am familiar with the meaning of the word 'homosexuality.'	3	1.2%	9	3.5%	42	16.5%	201	78.8%
I know or have heard of at least one person in Lagos who has identified as either a gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender or such gender.	35	13.7%	41	16.1%	73	28.6%	106	41.6%
I am aware that those who prefer same-sex attractions are being discriminated against in the Lagos metropolis.	21	8.2%	43	16.9%	84	32.9%	107	42.0%
I know the difference between these terms: lesbians, gays, bisexuals and transgenders.	6	2.4%	12	4.7%	59	23.1%	178	69.8%
Average	16	6.4%	26	10.3%	65	25.3%	148	58.0%

Questions	I know some who prefer dressing not meant for their sexual identity	I have met those who demonstrated inexplicable hatred for people of opposite sex/gender	I have actually seen people who are attracted to both sexes	I know some men with unusually high-pitched voice and excessive hand gestures while	I know some who take part in human movement with aversion to sex	I have noticed some people who have their hair dyed in the colours of the rainbow
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From the analysis, 16 (6.4%) of the respondents feels they are not aware of homosexuality, 26 (10.3%) fairly aware, 65 (25.3%) are aware while 148 (58.0%) are strongly aware.

Table 3: Some signs that may signify that someone in your church or Christian organization or group is homosexually inclined.



				talking		
N	255	255	255	255	255	255
Mean	3.13	3.06	2.97	2.97	3.18	2.94
Std. Deviation	0.826	0.927	0.924	0.827	0.903	0.980
Coefficient of Variation (CV)	26.4	30.3	31.1	27.9	28.4	33.3
Ranking of CV	1st	4 <sup>th</sup>	5 <sup>th</sup>	2nd	3rd	6th

Table 3 above shows the descriptive measures concerning signs which may imply the presence of LGBT people in some Lagos metropolis churches or Christian organizations or groups. The Coefficient of variation above was applied because it measures the likelihood of occurrence of each of these LGBT signs among the church people of Lagos metropolis. The smaller the Coefficient of variation the more reliable the estimate of mean, the more often such signs are noticeable among the members of Christian community in Lagos metropolis. This analysis reveals that those who prefer dressings not meant for their sexual identity, 26.4, ranked 1st, men with unusually high-pitched voice and excessive hand gestures while talking, 27.9, ranked 2nd, some who take part in human movement with aversion to sex, 28.4, ranked 3rd, those who demonstrate inexplicable hatred for people of opposite sex/gender, 30.3, ranked 4th, people who are attracted to both sexes, 31.1, ranked 5<sup>th</sup>, while those who have their hair dyed in the colours of the rainbow, 33.3, ranked 6th. This implies that more people who prefer dressings not meant for their sexual identity are more often seen in the Lagos metropolis Church community, while those who have their hair dyed in the colours of the rainbow (LGBT colours) are rarely seen.

### Research question 2

Table 4: To what extent do Lagos Christians agree that homosexuals affirm the Bible as their highest authority for praxis?

Scale	Frequency	Percent	Cumulative%
1.50	1	0.4	0.4
1.75	9	3.5	3.9

2.00	10	3.9	7.8
2.25	9	3.5	11.4
2.50	18	7.1	18.4
2.75	36	14.1	32.5
3.00	21	8.2	40.8
3.25	58	22.7	63.5
3.50	27	10.6	74.1
3.75	10	3.9	78.0
4.00	56	22.0	100.0
Total	255	100.0	

From this analysis in Table 4, the distribution of mean indicates that 226 (88.6%) moderately or strongly feels that homosexuals do not affirm the Bible as their highest authority for praxis while 29 (11.4%) of the respondents fairly or strongly feels they do.

Table 5: To what extent do Lagos Metropolis Christians agree that homosexuals affirm the Bible as their highest authority for praxis.

Questions	Not Applicable		Fairly Applicable		Applicable		Strongly Applicable	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
I think someone who holds the Holy Bible as the highest authority in life can still be a homosexual	147	57.6%	66	25.9%	20	7.8%	22	8.6%
I am aware that the Holy Bible condemns all homosexual behaviour completely	19	7.5%	5	2.0%	14	5.5%	217	85.1%
I think the Holy Bible condemns only sexual excesses for both homosexual and heterosexual persons	138	54.1%	50	19.6%	17	6.7%	50	19.6%
The understanding of human sexuality in the ancient Bible times and cultures is different from the contemporary understanding of it, I suppose	87	34.1%	43	16.9%	61	23.9%	64	25.1%

Table 5 above shows that respondents strongly feel that the Holy Bible condemns all homosexual behaviour completely with 217 (85.1%). 125 (49.0%) moderately or

strongly feels the understanding of human sexuality in the ancient Bible times and cultures is different from the contemporary understanding of it, 67 (26.3%) moderately or strongly feels the Holy Bible condemns only sexual excesses for both homosexual and heterosexual persons while 42 (16.5%) moderately or strongly feels someone who holds the Holy Bible as the highest authority in life can still be a homosexual.

**Research question 3**

**Table 6: Do Christians in Lagos metropolis think homosexual orientations are sane or sick?**

Parameter	I think LGBT persons are born with their sexual orientations like heterosexuals, it is normal, they should remain so	I think LGBT behaviours are mental illness and they should seek medical help	I am aware there is medical therapy LGBT people can go through to correct that anomalous behaviours	I think LGBT people should be ignored and left on their own as they constitute no threat to religion or society at large
N	255	255	255	255
Mean	1.58	3.02	2.62	1.59
Std. Deviation	0.900	1.092	1.109	0.869
Coefficient of variation (CV)	56.8	36.2	42.4	54.7
Rank of the Coefficient of variation (CV)	4 <sup>th</sup>	1 <sup>st</sup>	2 <sup>nd</sup>	3 <sup>rd</sup>

This analysis shows whether Christians in Lagos metropolis thinks homosexual orientations are sane or sick. The Coefficient of variation above was applied because it expresses the validity of comparison between the means and standard deviations. The smaller the CV the more reliable the estimate of mean. Christians in Lagos metropolis who think LGBT behaviour is a mental illness and they should seek medical help with 36.2 ranked 1st, those who knew about medical therapy that LGBT people can go through to correct that anomalous behaviours 42.4, 2nd, those that think LGBT people should be ignored and left on their own as they constitute no threat to religion or society at large 54.7, 3rd, while others who think LGBT persons are born with their sexual orientations like heterosexuals, it is normal, they should remain so with 56.8, ranked 4th. That the mean ranges from 1.58 to 3.02 may suggest a fairly or moderately

applicable feeling about the sanity or sickness of LGBT people in Lagos metropolis Christian community.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

Data from the questionnaire were collated and analysed into tables, figures, frequencies, and percentages. Major findings from the respondents showed that:

1. There is high level of awareness of homosexuality in the church community of the Lagos metropolis, though there is general denial of the homosexual behaviours.
2. It is practically impossible to hold the Holy Bible as the highest authority in praxis and fully affirm the homosexual behaviours at the same time.
3. Homosexual orientations are being regarded as against the society's sexual norms. It is also viewed as a curable mental sickness.
4. Homosexuality is sinful before God but can be repented of, forsaken and forgiven.
5. LGBT People can be fully included in the church life and ministry, only if they are saved and converted to heterosexual orientations.

The Church community is aware about the emerging LGBT community in Lagos metropolis and generally holds that such sexual orientations are not consistent with the Bible. This awareness about the LGBT people and practices should move the Church in Lagos metropolis beyond the level of denial to the level of establishing a ministry to respond to this emerging reality. The Holy Bible, the inerrant Word of God is the universal standard and final authority for those who are genuinely Christians and the major tool for this task. No one who rightly interprets and applies the Bible will affirm homosexual lifestyle. Through conversion to Christian faith, homosexuals are enabled to become heterosexuals and reparation is made possible through the power of Christ in them. Full inclusion of any repented and converted LGBT in the life and ministry of the Church is a possibility which must be cautiously embarked on. Moreover, Christian response to the LGBT in Lagos metropolis should include specialized outreaches, sound Bible teaching that will not condone the practice of homosexuality but cuddle them with Christ's love.

### **Recommendations**

Consequent upon the foregoing, this section provides recommendations to the Christian community in Lagos metropolis, Christians in politics at the state level, and theological institutions in Lagos Metropolis as follows:

1. The church in Lagos metropolis should strengthen the Bible teachings about human sexuality. A deliberate and decisive discipleship labour may be required to achieve this.
2. Christian Association of Nigeria and Pentecostal Fellowship, Lagos chapters should synergize to put a strategy in place to reach the emerging LGBT community. This may include establishing special social and welfare centers to cater for the needs of these

people with the intention of rehabilitating them when they repent and seek to join the membership of any church. Moreover, the social media should be thoroughly engaged to carry out enlightenment campaign against homosexual activities.

3. The Church in Lagos metropolis should not be intimidated by the activism of the Gay Movements and the threat they tend to pose. Since the LGBT people are not ashamed to speak about their rights, the Church people should not be ashamed to speak about the Gospel which is contrary to the homosexuals' rights. Each person is entitled to and responsible for the choices made.

4. It is imperative to stress that the church must continually show love to persons with any of the LGBTQ sexual orientations. The Church should continue to show love, avoid hate and prejudice and never mind when anyone describes the Gospel as 'hate'. Such is normal with the world system.

5. It is must be noted that this paper focuses more on the assessment of the understanding and perceptions of selected Christians in Lagos metropolis however, it is strongly recommended that any interested researcher wishing to explore this study can do a more thorough work on the Lagos Christian response to LGBTQ, to be able to give a more robust recommendations to the church on the inclusion of homosexuals.

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