

# HOMOSEXUALITY IN THE GHANAIAN MEDIA: A PRELIMINARY SURVEY

*Charles Quist-Adade, PhD*

*Faith Bates*

*Nubwa Wathanafa*

Kwantlen Polytechnic University

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## **Abstract**

This paper examines how homosexuality is represented in the Ghanaian media. More specifically, it focuses on newspaper articles from *GhanaWeb* for the years 2008 - 2011. This research discusses the prevalence of negative stereotypes about homosexuality in the Ghanaian media, and reveals the ways in which the type of language used by the Ghanaian media stigmatizes, dehumanizes, and others the homosexual population. This paper argues that homosexual stereotypes are prevalent in Ghana, and that these stereotypes are reflected in the Ghanaian media. It suggests that it is essential for Ghanaian media to portray homosexuality in a holistic manner in order to debunk stereotypes and myths regarding homosexuality. It focused on attitudes toward homosexuality as presented in the Ghanaian media and not the media (e.g. editors', reporters') attitudes toward homosexuality.

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**Keywords:** Homosexuality, Ghana, media, gay, lesbian, Africa

## **Introduction**

Under Ghanaian criminal law, same-sex sexual activity among males is illegal. It is uncertain whether same-sex sexual activity among females is illegal. Under the chapter 6 of the Criminal Code, 1960, as amended by The Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, 2003, homosexuality is punishable by law. In fact, the Ghanaian constitution criminalizes homosexual coital activity (<http://www.politicsresources.net/docs/ghanaconst.pdf>). Chapter 6 of the Criminal Code, 1960, as amended by The Criminal Code (Amendment) Act, 2003, provides:

Section 104. Unnatural Carnal Knowledge.

(1) Whoever has unnatural carnal knowledge : (a) of any person of the age of sixteen years or over without his consent shall be guilty of a first degree felony and shall be liable on conviction to imprisonment for a term of not less than five years and not more than twenty-five years; or

(b) of any person of sixteen years or over with his consent is guilty of a misdemeanour....

(2) Unnatural carnal knowledge is sexual intercourse with a person in an unnatural manner..

Under Section 99, "unnatural carnal knowledge shall be deemed complete upon proof of the least degree of penetration".(<http://www.refugeelegalaidinformation.org/ghana-lgbti-resources>)

According to Section 296 of the Criminal Procedure Code, which applies because of Section 1 of the Criminal Code, a misdemeanour is punishable by imprisonment for not more than three years.

The constitution, though, is silent on sexual activity between females and homosexuality is restricted to only male-to-male "carnal knowledge". Other members of the GBLT community are not mentioned. But, Section 12(2) of Chapter 5 of the Constitution of Ghana guarantees all residents in Ghana their fundamental human rights. It states:, "Every person in Ghana, whatever his race, place of origin, political opinion, colour, religion, creed or gender shall be entitled to the fundamental human rights and freedoms of the individual contained in this Chapter but subject to respect for the rights and freedoms of others and for the public interest ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT\\_rights\\_in\\_Ghana#cite\\_note-1A](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/LGBT_rights_in_Ghana#cite_note-1A) recent Pew survey of various countries, not all African, reveals that 98 percent of Ghanaians feel that homosexuality is "morally unacceptable," the highest percentage of any country surveyed.

How are homosexuality and homosexuals portrayed by the Ghanaian media? "Everybody in Africa is mad because gay people demand to recognize simply as people," writes Joseph Osei Oppong Brenya, a columnist on **GhanaWeb** (See Appendix B). In a report by Joy Online, Ghana's Minister of Justice, Marietta Appiah Oppong, stated categorically that Ghana's constitution did not recognize gay rights, and asked all who believe in the rights of gays to proceed to the Supreme Court for interpretation. Oppong's view of the law, according to the report, contrasts sharply with the view of the Minister of Gender, Children and Social Protection, Nana Oye Lithur, who does not support the practice of homosexuality but is convinced that gay rights, and the rights of all other Ghanaians, are guaranteed by the constitution and must be protected (<http://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/artikel.php?ID=264400>). The report captures the tone of discourse on homosexuality in the Ghanaian media: While the contrasting views expressed by the two government officials strike a balance on pro-gay and anti-gay views in the discourse of homosexuality, the Ghanaian media tends to tilt heavily towards anti-gay discourse during the period under review.

This research seeks to explore the different attitudes for and against homosexuality in Ghana as reflected in the Ghanaian media. This preliminary research not only focuses on the media's depiction of homosexuality as expressed in general public discourse, but also seeks to unravel how the power elite—political, economic, cultural, and ideological leaders—in Ghana use the news media to construct and depict homosexuality. The aim is to gain a deeper understanding and to investigate the challenges of homosexuality in Ghana. The intent of the research is to consider how the power elite deploy the media to engage people in regards to issues of homosexuality. More specifically, the research investigates and analyzes homosexuality with respect to human rights, religion, homophobia, and HIV/AIDS by examining articles published in the *GhanaWeb*.

## **Background**

A report published by a team of scientists appointed by the Ugandan government asserted that:

Sex is a natural phenomenon in all life forms and is the basis for the reproduction and continuum of life, though some lower forms of life may have asexual reproduction. Sexuality is determined by biology (anatomy, physiology, biochemistry) and how one relates to others which is a function of psychology, sociology, and the culture in which one lives, the latter includes anthropology, religion and other environmental factors. Ultimately, these functions are determined by genes and their interactions with the environment. What, therefore, constitutes normal sexual behavior in any given society (learned sexual practices) is a function of one's biology, psychology, sociology and culture, the last three being dynamic and often changing. Sexuality, on the other hand, depends on four interrelated factors:

- i) sexual identity (XX or XY karyotype that will determine the sex phenotype),
- ii) gender identity (the psychological feeling of being male or female and the accompanying gender roles),
- iii) sexual orientation (one's inner sexual attraction impulses: heterosexual - to opposite sex, or homosexual - to same sex),
- iv) sexual response (desire, excitement, orgasm, resolution.

(See Smith, 2014,

p.1 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/23/africa-homophobia-uganda-anti-gay-law>)

The report goes on to state that:

Homosexual behavior has existed throughout human history including in Africa. Judeo-Christian religions (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) condemn it but not all religions of the world condemn it. Many

Western-based evangelistic missionaries and Arabs penetrated Africa and influenced her people with their views on homosexuality. This continues today. However, different cultures practice their sexualities differently and these practices have often changed with times” (p.2).

For the scientists, homosexuality existed in Africa long before the coming of the white man. However, most African cultures controlled sexual practices, be they heterosexual or homosexual, and never allowed exhibitionistic sexual behavior. Almost universally, they contained homosexual practices to such a point that overt homosexuality was almost unheard of. Indeed, there are undeclared homosexuals in Africa who may not even realize it because their cultures never give room for the expression of such behavior. Many sexually inactive individuals exist throughout African societies, but no one has done any study to unpack their sexual orientations. The present fad of sexual exhibitionism, both heterosexual and homosexual, is alien and repugnant to most African cultures.

Sylvia Tamale, a lecturer at Makerere University in Uganda, notes that “the sad, tired, but widely accepted myth that homosexuality is un-African has been valorized and erected on the altar of falsehood time after time,” adding that “it is a myth that has been played out in numerous contexts, most recently over the debate on Uganda’s anti-homosexuality bill.” Tamale (2014) goes on to debunk the myth. She explains that the “homosexuality is un-African” myth is anchored on an old practice of selectively invoking African culture by the power elite, particularly the political elite. Tamale observes that “African women are familiar with the mantra “It is un-African” whenever they assert their rights, particularly those rights that involve reproductive autonomy and sexual sovereignty” (p.1). She notes that the mistaken claim that anything is un-African is based on the essentialist assumption that Africa is a homogeneous entity and insists that “In reality, however, Africa is made up of thousands of ethnic groups with rich and diverse cultures and sexualities.” She debunks the notion of a monolithic African culture. “As appealing as the notion of African culture may be to some people, no such thing exists. Moreover, even if we wanted to imagine an authentic African culture, like all others, it would not be static” (p.1).

Tamale (2014) goes on to note that African history is full of cases of both erotic and non-erotic same-sex relationships, citing the ancient cave paintings of the San people near Guruve in Zimbabwe, which depict two men engaged in some form of ritual sex. In precolonial times, Tamale (2014) notes, the “mudoko dako,” or effeminate males, among the Langi of northern Uganda were treated as women and could marry men. In Buganda, one of the largest traditional kingdoms in Uganda, it was an open secret that Kabaka (king) Mwangi II, who ruled in the latter half of the 19th century, was gay

(p.1). She buttresses her argument by referring to the vocabulary used to describe same-sex relations in traditional languages that predate colonialism. For example, the Shangaan of southern Africa referred to same-sex relations as “inkotshane” (male-wife); Basotho women in present-day Lesotho engage in socially sanctioned erotic relationships called “motsoalle” (special friend); and in the Wolof language, spoken in Senegal, homosexual men are known as “gor-digen” (men-women). But Tamale (2014) was quick to add that “the context and experiences of such relationships did not necessarily mirror homosexual relations as understood in the West, nor were they necessarily consistent with what we now describe as a gay or queer identity” (p.1), stating that:

Same-sex relationships in Africa were far more complex than what the champions of the “un-African” myth would have us believe. Apart from erotic same-sex desire, in precolonial Africa, several other activities were involved in same-sex (or what the colonialists branded “unnatural”) sexuality. For example, the Ndebele and Shona in Zimbabwe, the Azande in Sudan and Congo, the Nupe in Nigeria and the Tutsi in Rwanda and Burundi all engaged in same-sex acts for spiritual rearmament — i.e., as a source of fresh power for their territories. It was also used for ritual purposes. Among various communities in South Africa, sex education among adolescent peers allowed them to experiment through acts such as “thigh sex” (“hlobonga” among the Zulu, “ukumetsha” among the Xhosa and “gangisa” among the Shangaan) (Tamale, 2014, p.1).

Tamale (2014) also explores the spiritual and magical significance of homosexuality in African cultures to further debunk the same-sex-relationships-are-un-African argument. She notes that in many African societies,

...same-sex sexuality was also believed to be a source of magical powers to guarantee bountiful crop yields and abundant hunting, good health and to ward off evil spirits. In Angola and Namibia, for instance, a caste of male diviners — known as “zvibanda,” “chibados,” “quimbanda,” “gangas” and “kibambaa” — were believed to carry powerful female spirits that they would pass on to fellow men through anal sex (p.2).

Tamale (2014) cites contemporary examples of same-sex relationships in several African traditional societies as further proof that homosexuality is not un-African, as anti-gay proponents claim. She writes:

Even today, marriages between women for reproductive, economic and diplomatic reasons still exist among the Nandi

and Kisii of Kenya, the Igbo of Nigeria, the Nuer of Sudan and the Kuria of Tanzania. Like elsewhere around the world, anal intercourse between married opposite-sex partners to avoid pregnancy was historically practiced by many Africans before the invention of modern contraceptive methods (p.2).

For Tamale (2014), it is not homosexuality that is un-African, but rather the laws that criminalized such relationships:

...what is alien to the continent is legalized homophobia, exported to Africa by the imperialists where there had been indifference to and even tolerance of same-sex relations. In Uganda such laws were introduced by the British and have been part of our penal law since the late 19th century. The current wave of anti-homosexuality laws sweeping across the continent is therefore part of a thinly veiled and wider political attempt to entrench repressive and undemocratic regimes” (ibid.).

Tamale (2014) argues that the anti-gay ethos in Africa should be blamed on European and Arabic colonialism and proselytization, writing:

Equally alien to the continent are the Abrahamic religions (particularly Christianity and Islam) that often accompany and augment the “un-African” arguments against homosexuality. African traditional religions were (and still are) integrated into the people’s holistic and everyday existence. It was intricately tied to their culture, including sexuality. With the new religions, many sexual practices that were acceptable in precolonial, pre-Islamic and pre-Christian Africa were encoded with tags of “deviant,” “illegitimate” and “criminal” through the process of proselytization and acculturation. It is ironic that an African dictator wearing a three-piece suit, caressing an iPhone, speaking in English and liberally quoting the Bible can dare indict anything for being un-African (ibid.).

## **Literature Review**

A review of the literature addressing homosexuality in Ghana reveals explanations that generally fit into two categories: Social and political (Tester & McNicoll, 2004). Both of these categories typically focus on how information regarding homosexuality is provided to the public. Content analysis helps examine how the media determines the quantity and quality that is reported on sexuality, sexual health, and sexual rights (S/SH/SR). It also focuses on the extent to which the media contributes to misinformation and negative condemnations, and how the media uses images and language

to promote or devalue issues regarding sexuality (Akinfeleye, 2006). Studies indicate that the media has the power to influence peoples' perspectives on controversial issues. They also have the ability to reinforce stereotypes, making it difficult for individuals to gain informed options (Bangwayo-Skeete & Zikhali, 2011).

According to report in the *Pambazuka News*, a team of top scientists appointed by the government of Uganda to give an opinion on homosexuality declared unequivocally that sexual orientation is natural and has existed in Africa and everywhere in the world since time immemorial. Yet, extant research suggests that homophobia is a major problem in African societies. In fact, some writers have described Africa as having the most homophobic societies in the world (See Smith, 2014 <http://www.theguardian.com/world/2014/feb/23/africa-homophobia-uganda-anti-gay-law>).

Same-sex relations are illegal in 36 of Africa's 55 countries, according to Amnesty International, and are punishable by death in some states. Now a wholesale anti-gay crackdown appears to be taking off. Recent political pronouncements and legislative decisions in several African countries, including Uganda, Nigeria, and Gambia, overwhelmingly condemn and outlaw homosexuality. Al Jazeera reports that Kenya, Tanzania, Cameroon, and Sierra Leone have all expressed the desire to emulate Uganda and Nigeria. At least 38 African countries already proscribe consensual same-sex behavior (<http://america.aljazeera.com/opinions/2014/4/homosexuality-africamuseveniugandanigeriaethiopia.html>).

In February 2014, the Ugandan Legislative Assembly voted to criminalize homosexuality. In January, Nigerian president Goodluck Jonathan signed into law a bill criminalizing same-sex "amorous relationships" and membership of LGBT rights groups. Last week Gambian president Yahya Jammeh declared: "We will fight these vermins called homosexuals or gays the same way we are fighting malaria-causing mosquitoes, if not more aggressively."

Studies demonstrate multiple strains and repercussions which stem from social, cultural, religious, and political factors, and which together work to repress same-sex discourse in Ghana (Essien & Aderinto, 2009). This "new wave of homophobic expression that ensued is partly a product of the new globalization and also a manifestation of the clash between what is considered 'African' and 'un-African' social and sexual behaviour" (ibid., p.121). This notion illustrates how Western societies and African societies differ in their views regarding acceptable sexual behaviour.

Numerous studies also indicate that the government of Ghana and its religious institutions do not identify homosexuality as a human rights issue.

Instead, they perceive homosexuality as a form of “sexual colonialism” or Western ethnocentrism. These beliefs are associated to a host of ideologies structured along the lines of religious, moral, and cultural boundaries (Essien & Aderinto, 2009). For many Ghanaians, especially several government officials, homosexuality is an aberration, not “natural,” and a cultural taboo. In fact, consensual homosexual behaviour is criminalized across the continent (Murray & Viljue, 2007). Since homosexuality is illegal and perceived as going against Ghanaian cultural values, elite discourse on sexuality is replete with gay-bashing as Ghanaian leaders freely employ homophobic and heterosexist language in their discussions of issues regarding homosexuality. Gays and lesbians are frequently stigmatized and devalued as less than human. Elite media discourse spins a web of stereotypes around homosexuals, in particular, and GLBT in general. With almost complete absence of counter-hegemonic discourse to check the straightjacket of homophobic and heterosexist portrayal of gays, lesbians, and other sexual minorities in the media, it is hardly surprising that public attitudes towards gays and lesbians are largely negative. Such attitudes portend to threaten human rights of sexual minorities, which includes their right to freedom of expression, the right to equality and dignity, and the right to having one’s identity respected (Reddy, 2002).

Like most constitutions in Africa, the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights does not uphold the rights of GLBT identity. Furthermore, the issue of sexual orientation is not a priority for the African Commission, despite the tremendous violation against gays and lesbians. Although the African Charter does not specify the rights of gays and lesbians, it does include a broad range of civil, political, social, cultural, and individual rights that are said to be protected. Thus, one can conclude that homosexual rights fall within its umbrella, as the document is considered to be a living document and purports to be adaptable to change. Moreover, criminalizing consensual same-sex relationships can be deemed as violating the rights of and respect for human integrity and social identity (Murray & Viljue, 2007). When these elements are not understood as fundamental components of an individual’s life, they result in an erosion of the sense of belonging of sexual minorities (Goodwill & McCormick, 2012).

Identity and culture are important components in terms of finding one’s place in society. (Tester & McNicoll, 2004). Intense external pressure from the Ghanaian power elite, the media, and society as a whole has alienated, devalued, criminalized, and pathologized the homosexual community (Kirmayer, 2007). This pressure has created profound consequences for gays and lesbians. In order to explain the importance of belonging and self-worth, scholars of sexuality often use social identity theory to explain how it is necessary for homosexuals to be recognized



asworthy individuals. In addition, social identity theory predicts the challenges of identity between different sexual orientation, especially when one is classified as a majority, and how this can be problematic for gays and lesbians due to the conflicting values, norms, and morals of Ghanaian culture. Social identity theory also supports the concept that homosexuals are generally suppressed and thus often struggle to find ways of integrating into Ghanaian society (Goodwill & McCormick, 2012).

When one evaluates social identity theory in relation to the Ghanaian media, one may conclude that the media has persuasive functions in terms of how homosexuals are identified in the public realm. The media also has the power to affect their sense of belonging within Ghanaian society. In other words, the media has the ability to alienate homosexuals from society and to devalue their self-worth. Ultimately, the media can represent and manipulate homosexuality in a manner that allows for stereotypes and biases to proliferate (Akinfeleye, 2006).

### **Methodology**

The purpose of this study was to understand the representation of the homosexuals in the Ghanaian media. A cross-sectional sample of 42 newspaper articles from *GhanaWeb* spanning from 2008 - 2011 was collected in order to offer a holistic selection of media representations of homosexuality. (*GhanaWeb* is an online news portal which serves as repository and clearing house for current news from the major news outlets in Ghana. It carries and publishes opinion and analytical articles from freelance writers and bloggers, and prints interviews from the major radio and television stations in the country). These years were chosen due to the high number of articles that were available for the research. The search terms for this research were "homosexual," "gay," "lesbian," and "media." In searching *GhanaWeb*, the news archive function was used, and the search terms were taken into account with dates and categories, which included news, sports, business, entertainment, and opinions. Mixed methods were used in data collection. The total population of the articles from 2008 and 2009 were used, due to their limited number, and a convenience sample was used for the years 2010 and 2011, in which a random quantity of articles, six for 2010 and 12 for 2011, was also utilized. The study focused on attitudes toward homosexuality as presented in the Ghanaian media and not the media (e.g. editors', reporters') attitudes toward homosexuality. The articles included commentaries and views of Ghanaians, including Christian ministers, pastors and opinion leaders toward homosexuality in Ghana.

The method of research was content analysis, which refers to a method of summarizing content by grouping it based on various aspects. Considered a secondary type of data analysis, content analysis looks at data

that has been collected by someone else and is therefore subject to the biases that the original person had when creating the data. It also refers to the “systematic examination of written text”(Babbie & Benaquisto, 2010, p. 232), but offers much more than that. It presents a way of looking at many different samples of material and making some comparable and interesting connections, or lack thereof, of different ideas or patterns of findings. Content analysis is a useful tool as a qualitative research method because of its non-intrusive nature. With content analysis, we can add to what we already know without any potential harm to participants or the researcher.

The newspaper’s articles were coded utilizing five specific topics: The source/columnist, the headline of the article, the number of words in the article, the date of the article, and whether the article had a positive or negative connotation regarding homosexuality. Quantitative results were produced using Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS), and qualitative results were created by putting the articles into the themes of human rights, religion, homophobia, and HIV/AIDS. These themes were then analyzed.

Utilizing the entire population of the newspaper articles allowed the researcher to obtain a complete trend of the types of subjects that the media was writing about in the selected date span. One criticism that needs to be considered when using specific keywords is the biases that are inherent to the sampling procedure. By limiting our research to the four key search terms, the results will be reflective of only those terms. Since the entire population of newspaper articles was used for this research, it can be seen as representative of the media’s perspective of homosexuality on the Ghanaian media. This is considered acceptable because of the very nature of qualitative research. One uses qualitative research to understand a particular phenomenon, and is cognizant of the systematic bias that is apparent with the sample procedure as well as the sample size.

The research was separated into the five different categories based on the particular subject matter of the article. This allowed for a comparison of the topics that were being discussed with overall topics, as well as the subtopics that were pervasive throughout.

One of the major considerations that every research project needs to contemplate is ethics. In qualitative research, the samples usually include human participants, and the well-being and anonymity of the participants need to be forefront in the research. Principles, such as honestly representing the data, striving to maintain objectivity, and by doing so, maintaining the integrity of the research, are important in all research, including content analysis. As noted above, content analysis is considered to be secondary data analysis, and the issue of ethics does not need to be the main consideration (Glesne, 2011). That is not to say that ethics are completely absent from this research; rather, it is to say that because the articles used as

samples were in the public domain and available to everyone, there would be very little chance of a breach. Another consideration is the researcher’s personal biases while conducting the research. In this research, many topics were discussed, so maintaining objectivity was incredibly important. By using the entire population in newspaper articles, the researcher was able to eliminate the potential bias of only picking articles that may have promoted the researcher’s point of view (Glesne, 2011).

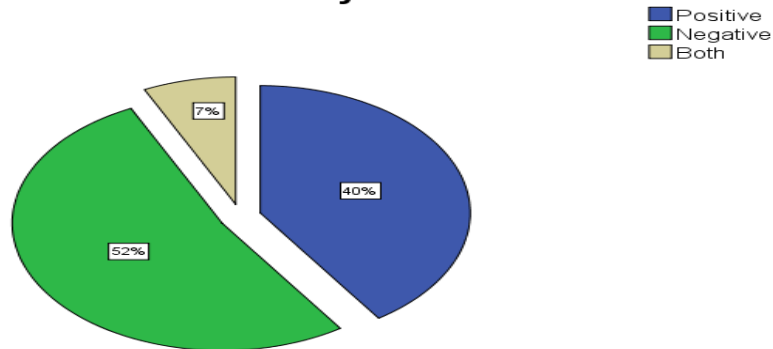
One of the major limitations of this research was the inability to use any method other than content analysis. Due to the specifics of this class, it was the only available option. A way of increasing the verification of the research would have been to use triangulation, which involves using multiple research methods as a way of gaining more supportable research. For example, it would have been beneficial to interview different media representatives, such as reporters, editors, and even the general public, to see if the media representations of homosexuality are accurately portrayed in the articles that are being written (Glesne, 2011).

### Findings and Analysis

When the data was analyzed, it was found that with a small majority, 52% (n = 22), the media representations of homosexuality in the Ghanaian media held negative views. A further 40% (n= 17) held positive views, and 7% (n=3) held both positive and negative views of homosexuality.

Figure 1

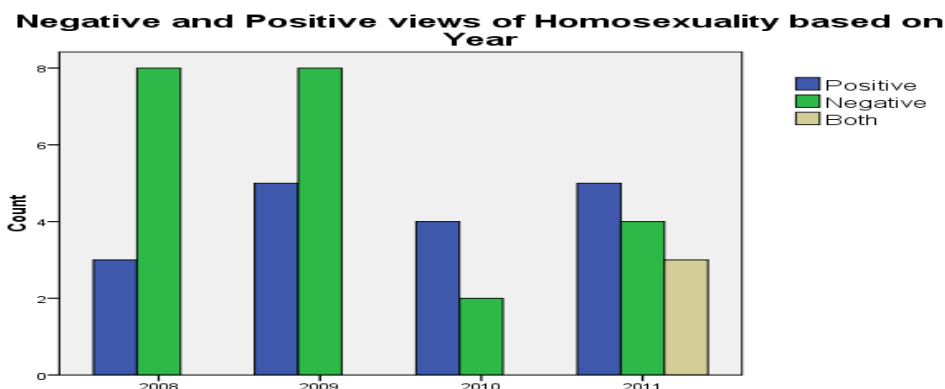
#### Views of Homosexuality in the Ghanaian Media



This suggests that although the majority of views regarding homosexuality within the Ghanaian media are negative, there is a smaller but equally important percentage of positive views. In a large majority, 92%, the media reflects a strong view of homosexuality. It is only in a very small number of articles that both sides are portrayed with equal consideration.

In coding the articles with SPSS, a trend developed. As shown in Figure 2, the articles in 2008, a large majority (n=8) were found to be negative. This is in direct comparison to the negative articles in 2011, with the result being much lower (n=4). For the first time in 2011, the articles show an unbiased approach the topic of homosexuality (n=3).

Figure 2



While the number of positive views has remained fairly steady over the past four years, the results show a continual and substantial decrease in the amount of negative views. The political pressure being placed upon Ghanaian leaders, as reflected through the media, may be the cause of this decrease. Articles such as “No Gay Rights, No Foreign Aid - Obama” (*GhanaWeb*, 2011) emphasize the importance of global human rights in relation to the aid that Western states will offer. This aid is provisional if sexual orientation is valued as a human right under the African Charter on Human and Peoples’ Rights, Article 2, which states:

Every individual shall be entitled to the enjoyment of the rights and freedoms recognized and guaranteed in the present Charter without distinction of any kind such as race, ethnic group, color, sex, language, religion, political or any other opinion, national and social origin, fortune, birth or other status (African (Banjul) Charter on Human and People’s Rights, 1986).

In this article, “sex” should be interpreted to include sexual orientation, because it is important for the document to address issues that respond to the changing circumstances and the lack of respect towards homosexuality as a violation of human dignity and freedom (Murray & Viljuen, 2007).

The data demonstrate that although there is a downward trend in the amount of negative views towards homosexuality, negativity continues to be prevalent. This could be associated with the ways in which religious

institutions often denounce any attempts for individuals and/or groups to promote sexual orientations as a human right. Furthermore, “[the church] said homosexuality was not only an abomination before God but also a threat to the moral and spiritual foundation of the society” (*GhanaWeb*, 2010). This statement illustrates the failure of homophobic religious leaders to establish adequate visions for a positive discourse on homosexuality (Essien & Aderinto, 2009).

The negativity in the majority of the articles also suggests that stereotypes about homosexuality are common, especially in regards to HIV/AIDS. For example, “if you ask the majority of the people how the HIV virus originated many would point their fingers to the homosexuals in society, Bible verses would be quoted stating how God detest homosexuals and that's why he has made his disapproval known by plaguing them with this deadly virus” (*GhanaWeb*, 2009). The belief that the incidence of HIV/AIDS is higher among homosexuals is a common misconception among Ghanaians. Studies have demonstrated that this claim is false due to the lack of scientific evidence. It is worth noting that not all Ghanaians believed this myth to be true; many supported sexual freedom of homosexuals as a democratic principle that is rooted in Pan-Africanism (Essien & Aderinto, 2009).

## **Conclusion**

Our research has clearly shown that there is an overtly negative stigma attached to homosexuality in the Ghanaian media, but it has also shown there has been a slight shift in thinking. Although most of the articles include negative connotations of homosexuality, there is a push towards changing that. The media has been proven to be a powerful tool in influencing the way people think or see things, and its negative categorization of a whole population can be destructive for that population. The media in Ghana has been using terms such as “plague,” “epidemic,” and “blasphemous” to describe the gay population. These terms are damaging, as they present the homosexual community as a group of people who are sick and sinful. To present people who are homosexual in this way makes it seem as though the gay and lesbian population has to be eradicated, or that they have to be cured from the “disease” of homosexuality. Words are powerful instruments, and there is no question that the description of homosexual populations in the Ghanaian media has to be changed in order to prevent discriminatory behaviour against homosexuals in Ghana. Another important finding is that the Ghanaian media tend to conflate the term “homosexual” with “GLBT,” or use them as synonyms, hence the former was sparsely deployed in the Ghanaian media during the period under review.

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## **Appendix A**

Coding for Ghana Research Project: Year 2008 - Faith

Source/Columnist: Ghanaian Times

Headline: Police in sex scandal

Approximant # of words: 595

Date: December 19 2008

Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: Gyan, Eric

Headline: HIV in our Campus

Approximant # of words: 1,097

Date: December 1 2008

Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: Agboka, Godwin Yaw  
Headline: A society of criminals: Deconstructing our Prisons  
Approximant # of words: 1,751  
Date: November 18 2008  
Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: ADM  
Headline: Drugs and Homosexuality in Ghanaian Prisons  
Approximant # of words: 441  
Date: November 18 2008  
Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: musah@africanewsanalysis.com  
Headline: Pay just price for raw materials produced by Africa  
Approximant # of words: 311  
Date: September 30 2008  
Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: GNA  
Headline: GES reiterates its serious concern about occultism in schools  
Approximant # of words: 263  
Date: August 29 2008  
Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: The Mirror  
Headline: Male Prostitutes practice openly in Accra  
Approximant # of words: 690  
Date: June 29 2008  
Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: Afreh, Manu Bernard  
Headline: Kwaku Bonsam and acts dressed in feathered gown  
Approximant # of words: 1,269  
Date: May 21 2008  
Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: GNA  
Headline: Government urged to improve on Human Rights  
Approximant # of words: 560  
Date: May 7 2008  
Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: GNA  
Headline: Kumasi Catholic Archdiocese gets new Archbishop  
Approximant # of words: 379  
Date: May 3 2008  
Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: pinknews  
Headline: Ghanaian delegation attends African Lesbian Conference  
Approximant # of words: 278  
Date: February 28 2008  
Positive/Negative: Positive

Coding for Ghana Research Project: Year 2009 - Andrea

Source/Columnist: The Speculator  
Headline: Managers, policemen were clients - Gay Prostitute  
Approximant # of words: 850  
Date: December 20, 2009  
Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: GNA  
Headline: Churches asked to stop demanding HIV/AIDS test before marriage  
Approximant # of words: 314  
Date: November 24, 2009  
Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: Biakoye, Nana  
Headline: 30 Press Conferences in 10 Months  
Approximant # of words: 665  
Date: December 1, 2009  
Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: Wellington, Naa  
Headline: The Effects of Globalization on the Ghanaian Child  
Approximant # of words: 2,026  
Date: September 22, 2009  
Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: Graphic  
Headline: Ghana's Challenges With Homosexuality  
Approximant # of words: 1,743  
Date: September 15, 2009

Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: GNA

Headline: “Telephone sex” prevailing in second cycle schools

Approximant # of words: 535

Date: July 11, 2009

Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: Ghanaian Times

Headline: Homosexuality is an abomination – Rev.

Approximant # of words: 535

Date: July 9, 2009

Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: MP

Headline: When Silence Becomes Death

Approximant # of words: 535

Date: June 1, 2009

Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: GNA

Headline: Christianity is not only about singing, prayers and sermons

Approximant # of words: 161

Date: May 13, 2009

Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: Karikari, Isaac

Headline: Before “Sakawa”: Tracing the Origins of the Youth’s Involvement in the Occult

Approximant # of words: 1,260

Date: May 5, 2009

Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: The Stateman

Headline: Gay And Lesbian Club On Legon Campus

Approximant # of words: 521

Date: April 2, 2009

Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: Unknown

Headline: The Slow ‘Death’ of Ghanaian Cultural Values

Approximant # of words: 1,300

Date: February 12, 2009  
Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: GNA  
Headline: Ministry to train staff of Training Colleges  
Approximant # of words: 330  
Date: February 8, 2009  
Positive/Negative: Negative

Content Analysis: Coding for Ghana Research Project: Year 2010 - Jethro

Source/Columnist: Ghana Web  
Headline: The Woes Of A Lesbian Ghanaian Woman  
Approximate # of Words: 591  
Date: 28 August 2010  
Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: Ghana Web  
Headline: GEC condemns attempts to promote homosexuality  
Approximate # of Words: 421  
Date: Sunday, 8 August 2010  
Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: Ghana Web  
Headline: Gays have rights, they must be respected  
Approximate # of Words: 849  
Date: Friday, 18 June 2010  
Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: Citifmonline.com  
Headline: Thousands Attend First Anti-gay Protests In Ghana  
Approximate # of Words: 497  
Date: Friday, 4 June 2010  
Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: Daily Guide  
Headline: Gays, Lesbians Go Gospel  
Approximate # of Words: 645  
Date: Friday, 28 May 2010  
Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: CitiFM

Headline: Ghana's laws do not prohibit homosexuality - Law lecturer

Approximate # of Words: 557

Date: Friday, 14 May 2010

Positive/Negative: negative

Content Analysis: Coding for Ghana Research Project: Year 2011- Sonal

Source/Columnist: Nketia, Seth

Headline: No Grounds for Homosexuality, lesbianism in Ghana

Approximate # of Words: 1,219

Date: June 11 2011

Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: citifmonline

Headline: There is no Justification for homosexuality-Methodist Bishop

Approximate # of Words: 551

Date: June 09 2011

Positive/Negative: both

Source/Columnist: Karikari, Isaac

Headline: Homosexuality in Ghana: Senior High Schools-The Real Hotspots?

Approximate # of Words: 738

Date: June 09. 2011

Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: Star Observer

Headline: World News: Ghana Orders the Arrest of All Homosexuals

Approximate # of Words: 231

Date: July 21 2011

Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: Amnesty International

Headline: AI Condemns Comments by Ghanaian Minister

Approximate # of Words: 541

Date: July 27 2011

Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: citifmonline

Headline: Ghanaians are Hypocrites-University Don Bares Teeth

Approximate # of Words: 267

Date: November 4 2011

Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: Various

Headline: No Gay Rights, No Foreign Aid- Obama

Approximate # of Words: 209

Date: December 6 2011

Positive/Negative: positive

Source/Columnist: citifmonline

Headline: Nana Oye Lithur: Gays Have Rights & Must Be Respected

Approximate # of Words: 312

Date: November 4 2011

Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: LGBT Asylum News

Headline: Gay Community Fights Government Attack

Approximate # of Words: 1,335

Date: August 6 2011

Positive/Negative: both

Source/Columnist: pinknews

Headline: Ghana Gay Rights Leader Urges UK Not To Cut Aid

Approximate # of Words: 313

Date: October 12 2011

Positive/Negative: Positive

Source/Columnist: Xinhua

Headline: British PM Under Attack in Ghana

Approximate # of Words: 635

Date: November 2 2011

Positive/Negative: Negative

Source/Columnist: Adom News

Headline: 3% of Ghanaians are Homosexuals

Approximate # of Words: 242

Date: November 4 2011

Positive/Negative: both

## **Appendix B**

Homosexuality discussed in Ghana

I will reform gay Andrew Solomon - Foh Amoaning (2013-02-12)

Andrew Solomon is doing more harm to Mahama (2013-02-11)



Andrew Solomon wants Mahama to take a lead role in promoting gay rights (2013-02-10)  
Prez. Mahama is too liberal on homosexuality- Sammy Awuku (2013-02-07)  
Constitution frowns upon gay rights- Justice Minister-designate (2013-02-07)  
Oye Lithur supported gay marriage- Ayikoi Otoo (2013-02-06)  
Amofo Yeboah declares support for gay rights (2013-02-06)  
Mahama's friendship with gay doesn't make him one - Ken Agyapong (2013-02-05)  
Forces behind homosexuality are strong- Foh-Amoaning (2013-02-05)  
Is homosexuality the biggest immoral act in Ghana? Akomfrah asks (2013-02-03)  
Ayariga 'lied' about Mahama's links with gay lobbyist Andrew Solomon (2013-02-03)  
Mahama must emulate Mills and stop encouraging "dirty acts" – P.C. A ppiah Ofori (2013-02-02)  
There is no law on homosexuality in Ghana - Ndebugri (2013-02-02)  
Mahama did not receive cash from gay activist- Ayariga (2013-02-02)  
Parliament has betrayed Ghanaians - Concerned Clergy (2013-02-02)  
Even animals have rights why not gays - Joseph Yamin (2013-02-02)  
President Mahama speaks: Homosexuality is criminal (2013-02-01)  
"I will not promote homosexuality" - Oye Lithur (2013-01-31)  
I have never said that homosexuality should be promoted- Nana Oye Lithur (2013-01-30)  
Gays have rights and I will protect them - Oye Lithur (2013-01-30)  
Clergy petitions Appointment Committee over Oye-Lithur (2013-01-29)  
Clergy Posture against Oye Lithur is distasteful - Dr Amo-Antwi (2013-01-29)  
Leave Oye Lithur alone - Amnesty International (2013-01-15)  
We're not against Nana Oye but protecting Ghana's future - Clergy (2013-01-15)  
Ministry hails appointment of Nana Oye Lithur (2013-01-15)  
Oye Lithur's appointment opposed over her 'support' for homosexuality (2013-01-14)  
No gay rights, No foreign aid -Obama (2011-12-06)  
Nana Oye Lithur: Gays Have Rights & Must Be Respected (2011-11-04)  
Oye Lithur: Homo hate speech not a solution (2011-11-04)  
Ghanaians are hypocrites - University don bares teeth (2011-11-04)  
3% of Ghanaians are homosexuals (2011-11-04)  
British PM under attack in Ghana (2011-11-02)  
Government flexes muscles over UK gay threat (2011-10-12)  
Ghana gay rights leader urges UK not to cut aid (2011-10-12)

Gay Community Fights Government Attack (2011-08-06)  
AI condemns comments by Ghanaian Minister (2011-07-27)  
British MP objects to Ghana's latest anti-gay campaign (2011-07-27)  
BBC: Paul Evans Aidoo's Ghana gay spy call 'promotes hatred' (2011-07-22)  
World Media Condemns Regional Minister For Anti-Gay Comments (2011-07-22)  
World News: Ghana Orders the Arrest of All Homosexuals (2011-07-21)  
No grounds for homosexuality, lesbianism in Ghana (2011-06-11)  
Kwesi Pratt: Catholics And Anglicans Support Sodomy (2011-06-11)  
Homosexuals Have Rights Of Association - Ndebugri (2011-06-11)  
There is no justification for homosexuality - Methodist Bishop (2011-06-09)  
Homosexuality in Ghana: Senior High Schools - The Real Hotspots? (2011-06-09)  
Gays can be prosecuted (2011-06-07)  
Why are Ghanaian women switching men for women? (2011-05-01)  
Same Sex Wedding Held In Kumasi (2011-04-28)  
One percent of Ghanaians are gay or lesbian (2011-01-02)  
The Woes Of A Lesbian Ghanaian Woman (2010-08-28)  
GEC condemns attempts to promote homosexuality (2010-08-08)  
Gays have rights, they must be respected - Lithur (2010-06-18)  
Thousands Attend First Anti-gay Protests In Ghana (2010-06-04)  
Gays, Lesbians Go Gospel (2010-05-28)  
Gays and lesbians invade Takoradi (2010-05-21)  
Ghana's laws do not prohibit homosexuality - Law lecturer (2010-05-14)  
Gays To Boycott Elections? (2008-05-23)  
Sodomy Cases Rise In Prisons (2008-02-29)  
British sodomite to be deported (2007-11-15)  
Opinion: A Ghanaian take on homosexuality (2007-09-12)  
Gays persecuted by criminal legislation in Ghana -GHF (2007-08-05)  
Gay Prostitutes Invade Accra (2007-05-19)  
Lesbian In Ghana To Lobby (2007-05-18)  
Gays address Kufuor in UK (2007-03-13)  
Ghanaian gays to meet Kufuor (2007-03-12)  
'Fa wo to begye sika' syndrome rises (2006-12-11)  
62% of Ghanaian Gays indulge in heterosexual activities (2006-12-06)  
Lesbians Meet In Accra (2006-11-20)  
Gays Target Kufuor's UK visit (2006-11-15)  
Gays Demonstrate Against Ghana (2006-10-05)  
Stiff Opposition for Gays, Lesbians in Ta'di (2006-09-26)  
Gay leader asks: What is Ghanaian culture? (2006-09-25)  
Gay Laws in Ghana And Around the World (2006-09-21)  
Thank You, Mr President (2006-09-20)

Apostle Appiah's Take On The Lesbian-Gay Syndrome (2006-09-15)  
E/R Residents Rage Over Gays, Lesbians Issue (2006-09-14)  
Gay Conference At Legon? (2006-09-11)  
Ordination of gay Anglican Bishops - 'Ghana cannot comment' (2006-09-11)  
The conference that never was! (2006-09-11)  
Ghana To Endorse Gay & Lesbian Practices? (2006-09-10)  
Homosexuality in Ghana: The Great 'Coming out' (2006-09-08)  
Presbyterian Church condemns homosexuality (2006-09-08)  
Why Should Kufuor Peep Into Our Bedrooms (2006-09-07)  
Ghanaian gay leader attacks media (2006-09-07)  
Chief Imam supports homo conference ban (2006-09-06)  
Charismatic churches support ban on homo conference (2006-09-06)  
Homosexuality: The Last Ghanaian Taboo? (2006-09-05)  
Christian Council calls for aluta (2006-09-05)  
Muslims hail decision to stop homo conference (2006-09-05)  
Is it illegal to use a 'sex toy' in Ghana? (2006-09-04)  
Gays Meet Opposition In Ghana (2006-09-02)  
Research Showed Homosexuality Is Real In Ghana (2006-09-02)  
Govt bans International Homo Conference (2006-09-01)  
Proposed gay conference still sketchy (2006-09-01)  
Is Homosexuality Really New In Ghana? (2006-08-30)  
Ghana's gays battle AIDS underground (2006-08-21)  
Ghana Gay and Lesbian group concerned (2005-06-23)  
Gay, lesbianism against God's purpose for marriage - Bishop (2005-03-12)  
Students dismissed for homosexuality (2005-03-08)  
Ghana's gays organise to fight British criminal law (2005-03-05)  
CHRAJ Won't Advocate Gay Rights - Short (2003-12-17)  
Anglican Church Opposed to Any Form of Unnatural Carnal Behaviour (2003-11-26)  
Study Shows Homosexuality Hits High in Tema, Eastern Regions (2003-07-02)