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METAPHORICAL CONCEPTUALISATION OF LGBTQ+ IN GHANA

BY

SHERIKA MUJAHIDU

(11007893)

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MPHIL IN ENGLISH DEGREE



DECLARATION

I do hereby declare that this work is the result of original research I conducted and that apart from references to works duly cited, it has not been presented in any form for another degree elsewhere.

Candidate

Signature

Date

Sherika Mujahidu



November 7, 2024

Principal Supervisor

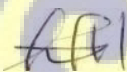
Prof. Gladys Nyarko Ansah



November 7, 2024

Co-supervisor

Dr. Nancy Henaku

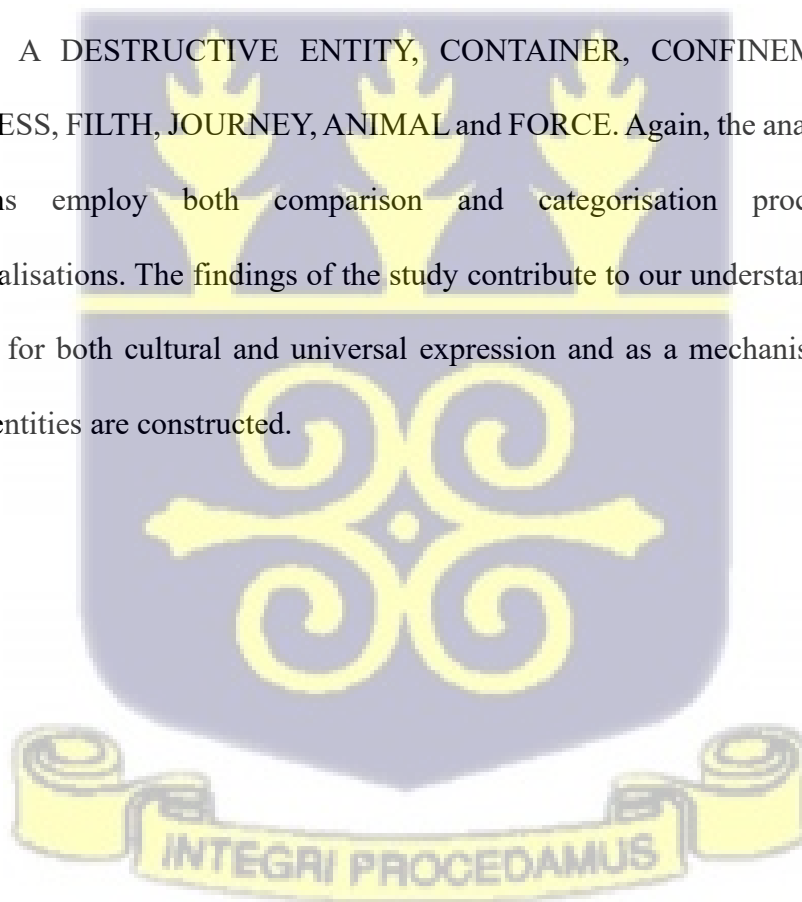


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ABSTRACT

This study employs a cognitive linguistic approach, conceptual metaphor theory (CMT), to examine how Ghanaians metaphorically conceptualize LGBTQ+. The study aims to explore the role metaphors play in revealing thoughts about LGBTQ+ issues in Ghana. Consequently, the study analyses linguistic data from LGBTQ+ discourses in order to identify the conceptual metaphors that underlie how Ghanaians conceptualise LGBTQ+. Data were collected from X (formerly Twitter), Facebook and Ghanaweb, a Ghanaian online news site. Findings from the study reveal that Ghanaians generally conceptualise LGBTQ+ negatively, using the source domains; WAR, DISEASE, SIN, AN EVIL ENTITY, A DESTRUCTIVE ENTITY, CONTAINER, CONFINEMENT/SLAVERY, DARKNESS, FILTH, JOURNEY, ANIMAL and FORCE. Again, the analysis revealed that Ghanaians employ both comparison and categorisation processes in these conceptualisations. The findings of the study contribute to our understanding of metaphor as a tool for both cultural and universal expression and as a mechanism through which social identities are constructed.



DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my mother in recognition of her tireless efforts in getting me educated during the early years of my life and for her emotional support throughout this thesis. I also dedicate this work to my husband who has supported me financially and emotionally throughout the period of this work. Finally, I dedicate this work to my siblings who took up all my other responsibilities at home while I carried out this research.



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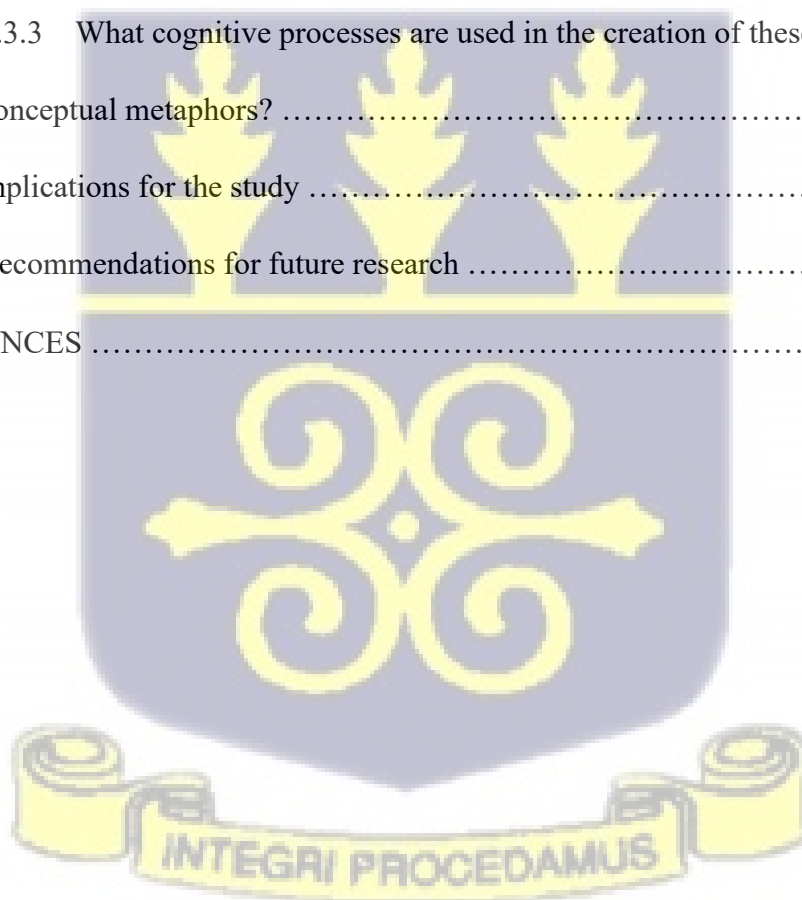
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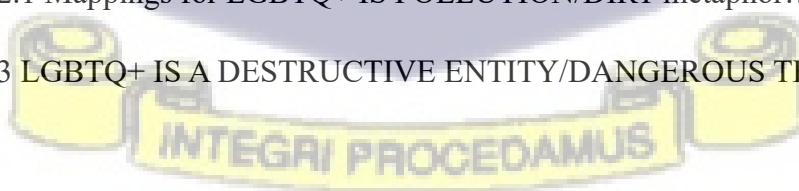
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CMT:	Conceptual metaphor theory
ESM:	Event Structure Metaphor
LGBTQ+:	Lesbian, Gay, Transgender, Queer and other related sexualities
MF:	Metaphor Family
NIV:	New International Version



CHAPTER ONE

1.1. Introduction

This chapter presents an overview of the study. It provides a general background to the study, outlining the relevance of using language (metaphor) to investigate how LGBTQ+ is conceptualised in Ghana. It also presents the problem of the study, the objectives, the research questions, the significance of the study, as well as the organisation of the study.

1.2 Background

This study explores how LGBTQ+ is metaphorically conceptualised in Ghana. It explores the ways in which Ghanaians understand or think about LGBTQ+ as reflected in the ways they use metaphorical expressions to discuss it. There have been public debates about LGBTQ+ since 2006, when a proposal to hold an LGBTQ+ conference in Ghana was first announced. This and subsequent occurrences of LGBTQ+ activities leading to the proposal by Ghana's parliament to pass the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill, dubbed the Anti-LBGTQ Bill have continued to spark public discourses concerning LGBTQ+ in the country. Ghanaians have generally frowned on homosexuality and its related activities (LGBTQ+), while there have been a few human rights activists, as well as the LGBTQ+ community who advocate for the freedom of the LGBTQ+ community in the country.

These public debates generally portray people's understanding of the phenomenon. As Adegbola (2018) argued, language is a crucial tool through which people form their points of view on social issues such as homosexuality. Language can also be used to redefine one's self and gays, for instance, have reconstructed their world to accommodate affectionate and sexual selves through language (Zeve, 2015). Studying metaphors of LGBTQ+ discourses

would reveal the underlying beliefs of language users, as Cameron (2009) believes that metaphors can reflect a user's underlying beliefs.

Cognitive theorists such as Lakoff and Johnson (1980, 2003), Lakoff (1987), and Kövecses (2002) hold the assumption that “language may be a window onto human cognition and that linguistic expressions in part reflect cognitive processes” (Ansah, 2011, p. 12). This foundational concept gave rise to the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) by Lakoff and Johnson (1980), asserting that human thought processes are predominantly metaphorical, and the utilisation of metaphorical linguistic expressions is shaped by an individual's conceptual system.

CMT contends that studying language offers insight into the workings of the human conceptual system, as communication, which is partially language-dependent, is grounded in the conceptual system employed for thinking and acting (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). Consequently, exploring how people perceive LGBTQ+ involves studying their language, particularly linguistic metaphorical expressions that realise conceptual metaphors. Metaphors, according to Grady (1997), not only manifest in language but also serve as reflections of our thought processes and perceptions. According to Shu-qin and Wen-cheng (2022), “metaphors mirror individuals' minds, viewpoints, values, and emotions” (p. 424). Thus, a linguistic study of metaphors used to talk about LGBTQ+ issues in Ghana may provide insights into how the LGBTQ+ concept is conceptualised by Ghanaians.

The study relies on the cognitive linguistic approach to metaphor studies, the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) which allows the study of people's

conceptual systems through their linguistic systems. The study aims to contribute to the role of metaphors as a tool in revealing human thoughts. Consequently, it aims to linguistically explore the nature of LGBTQ+ discourses by shedding light on the frames through which the LGBTQ+ phenomenon is discussed and their implications for LGBTQ discourses in Ghana.

1.2.1 Domain of the study

This study is situated within the broad field of Applied Linguistics, with a particular focus on Cognitive Linguistics and Critical Discourse Studies. It explores the metaphorical conceptualisation of LGBTQ+ issues in Ghana through a qualitative interpretive approach that employs content analysis of naturally occurring texts. The study draws on the cognitive linguistic view that metaphors are not merely linguistic expressions but fundamental conceptual tools that shape how individuals and societies perceive abstract or sensitive issues such as sexuality and identity.

By examining the linguistic patterns and metaphorical structures embedded in public and media discourses, the study situates itself at the intersection of Cognitive Linguistics and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)—fields that together provide a lens for understanding how language both mirrors and reinforces cultural ideologies. Furthermore, given its attention to contextual meanings and social attitudes, the research also aligns with Sociolinguistics, Gender and Sexuality Studies, and Media Studies. These interdisciplinary connections help uncover how Ghanaian socio-cultural values influence the linguistic representation and interpretation of LGBTQ+ identities.

1.2.2 LGBTQ+ Situation in Ghana

Though a majority of the Ghanaian public believes that same-sex relationships or LGBTQ+ practices are alien to the Ghanaian culture and the practice is only known in Ghana as a result of foreign infiltration, several scholars argue that homosexuality or same-sex relationships existed in Ghana even before the Europeans arrived and have continued to exist (Ako, 2021; Coleman et al., 2023; Essien & Aderinto, 2009). The Ghanaian society is, however, not ready to accept that homosexuality has been a part of the Ghanaian culture for a long time because of the conservativeness of the society (Coleman et al., 2023).

Homosexuality became a public discourse in Ghana in 2006 when Prince Kweku McDonald, the president of the Gay and Lesbian Association of Ghana (GALAG) announced an intended meeting of homosexuals in parts of Ghana (Essien & Aderinto, 2009). It raised a lot of debates in both the print and electronic media where the Ghanaian public took a stance related to religious, moral, and cultural ideologies (Essien & Aderinto, 2009). Essien and Aderinto aver that the announcement not only attracted the media's attention but also gained public conversation with the government, religious institutions, and even college students, contributing to the discourse. Before the announcement, there was very little public discourse on same-sex relationships in the country (Sallar, 2011, as cited in Anipah, 2017).

After the GALAG president announced the intended gay meeting in the country, the Minister for Information and National Orientation at the time, Kwamena Bartels in an

official announcement, threatened that the meeting would not be condoned and that GALAG members would be arrested if they defied orders and went ahead to hold the meeting (Ghanaweb, 2006). He added that the government would not allow any activity that goes against the culture, morality, and heritage of the Ghanaian people (Ghanaweb, 2006).

Whenever an announcement concerning homosexuality or a statement seeking to protect the rights of sexual minorities in Ghana is made, it triggers a debate on LGBT rights and the condemnation of sexual minorities and human rights defenders (Ako, 2021). The LGBT debate resurfaced in 2011 when Ghanaweb reported that an NGO had registered approximately 8,000 homosexuals in Ghana's Western and Central regions, many of whom were living with sexually transmitted diseases, including HIV (Baisley, 2015 as cited in Coleman et al, 2023, p. 100). The debate also rekindled when Barack Obama threatened to use diplomacy and the withdrawal of foreign assistance to get countries to respect homosexual rights (Baisley, 2015, as cited in Coleman et al, 2023, p. 100).

The biggest public debate on same-sex relationships, which are majorly homophobic, happened in 2021 when an LGBTI office was opened in Accra, the capital of Ghana by an LGBTI rights organisation (Ghanaweb, 2021). This led to the proposal of the Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Bill (Anti -LGBTQ+ Bill) by some Ghanaian parliamentarians (Coleman et al. 2023). The bill was introduced to parliament as a Private Members' Bill by an eight-member group led by Samuel Nartey George (Outright Action International, 2022). The bill sought to preserve Ghana's cultural and religious values (Memorandum, Promotion of Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values

Bill, 2021).

The Bill, if passed into law, will criminalise any homosexual activity, anyone who advocates for homosexuality, and anyone who sponsors homosexual activities (Memorandum, Promotion of Proper Human Rights Sexual and Ghanaian Family Values BILL, 2021). The Bill will specifically criminalise people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, transsexual, queer, ally, pansexual, or anyone who has any sociocultural conception of sex or sexual relationship that is in opposition to the ideas of male and female or the relationship between males and females, as well as those who are in the process of questioning their sexual orientation (Memorandum, Promotion of Proper Human Rights Sexual and Ghanaian Family Values BILL, 2021). The Bill also covers those with biological abnormalities, such as intersex individuals, as well as those who support or fund activities relating to the LGBTTQQIAAP+ community. Additionally, anyone who performs or takes part in gender or sex reassignment surgery or any other technique designed to produce a sexual category different from the sexual category assigned at birth, except when the surgery is intended to rectify a biological anomaly, including intersex, or a person who engages in sexual activity, is forbidden by the Bill.

Until the proposal of the Promotion of Proper Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill, the only legislation that seems to criminalise homosexuality is Section 104 of Ghana's Criminal Offences Act, which prohibits any sexual activity involving "unnatural carnal knowledge". According to Human Rights Watch (2018), "unnatural carnal knowledge" is interpreted as a "penal penetration of anything other than the vagina" (p. 1). Pro-LGBTQ+

rights activists and some human rights activists, however, argue that the Criminal Offences Act section 104 does not clearly prohibit the issue of transgender, bisexual, the sexual activities of hermaphrodites, and homosexual expression except when they engage in sexual activities involving unnatural carnal knowledge (Atuguba, 2019).

The issue of homosexuality has continued to be a public discourse, considering that pro-LGBTQ+ rights continue to fight for the human rights of LGBTQ+ people to be respected, while anti-LGBTQ+ people continue to argue that LGBTQ+ practices are against the Ghanaian culture and are being forced on Ghanaians by the Western world.

The proposed Proper Human Sexual Rights and Ghanaian Family Values Bill was passed by Parliament on February 28, 2024, under the amended name Human Sexual Rights and Family Values Act, 2024 and if assented to by the president, will become law.

Several factors call for studies on this subject. First, the ongoing debate about the legalities of LGBTQ+ activities means that individuals and the media will frame the LGBTQ+ concept according to their beliefs or stance. Second, the issues surrounding the passing of the bill and the president's delay in assenting to the Bill are an indication that the discourse on LGBTQ+ in Ghana is not ending soon. In fact, when Sam Nartey George, on October 6, 2021, in a Facebook post mentioned how grateful he was to have received a phone call from the leadership of the Pentecost church assuring him that a number of church leaders were going to be in parliament to present memos in support of Anti-LGBTQ+ Bill, a comment under his post said, "Great! May God give you more strength and protection to fight and conquer this battle for him". Also, a headline in 2006 from Ghanaweb stated,

“Gays raid kids' butt”. These linguistic metaphorical expressions suggest that LGBTQ+ identities and the need to stop the practice is conceptualised as WAR or BATTLE. These and several others used to talk about the LGBTQ+ concept make this study necessary to understand how LGBTQ+ is conceptualised through metaphors.

1.3 Problem of the Study

Media representations of queer identities shape public attitudes, social policy, and everyday understanding of sexuality, globally and within Ghana. International studies show that portrayals of LGBTQ+ persons in media and online platforms can both advance visibility and reproduce stigma; for instance, online and internet-based media consumption in African contexts has been linked to increased support for LGBTQ+ people compared to more traditional radio/television media (Winkler, 2021).

In Ghana, scholarship shows that mainstream media (print, broadcast) frames queer identities largely through morality, religious, and human-interest lenses. For instance, Agyeman (2023) in his study of Ghanaian newspapers found that only a small number of stories on LGBTQ+ issues were given prominence, and most adopted morality or human-interest frames.

However, despite the growing importance of social media platforms in Ghanaian public life, there is a notable gap in the scholarship: how queer identities are represented, contested and negotiated on social media platforms (such as Instagram, Facebook, Twitter) remains under-examined. Although a study shows that social media and

emotional support influence flourishing of homosexual identity in Accra, Ghana, the focus has not been on metaphorical, cognitive-linguistic or discursive mechanisms of representation on social media (Abomah & Agleby, 2022).

A chapter on LGBTQ+ activism in Ghana did highlight the use of social media by activists (Asante, Mohammed & Appiah-Kubi, 2024), however, this study did not focus on the metaphorical constructions of queer identity in social media discourse, despite the influence of conceptual metaphors in revealing thoughts, underlying attitudes and beliefs about social issues. .

This study, therefore, seeks to occupy that niche: through a metaphor-centered analysis of social media discourse about queer identities in Ghana, the research will draw on Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to identify dominant metaphorical patterns in social media posts and comments to explore how those metaphors reflect and reinforce broader cultural understandings of LGBTQ+ in Ghana. By focusing specifically on social media rather than only traditional media, the research aligns with changing media consumption habits in Ghana and recognises social media's affordances for both marginalisation and resistance.

Addressing this gap is both academically and socially justified. Academically, the study advances metaphor and discourse research into an under-researched African digital context, contributing to African sociolinguistic scholarship. Methodologically, it embraces the emergent field of social media discourse analysis with cultural specificity.

Socially, it surfaces the often-hidden discursive logics underpinning public attitudes toward LGBTQ persons in Ghana, thereby offering clearer targets for more inclusive media practice, advocacy, and public education. In sum, the problem addressed is that while representations of queer identities in Ghanaian media (particularly print and broadcast) have been documented, we lack a focused understanding of how social media discourses metaphorically construct queerness which exposes us to how queerness is cognitively constructed. This limitation restricts our ability to comprehend and challenge the discursive power of digital environments in shaping public meaning of LGBTQ+ lives in Ghana.

1.4 Objectives of the Study

The objectives of the study are to:

- I. identify the linguistic metaphorical expressions that are used to describe the LGBTQ+ community and activities in Ghanaian social media discourse.
- II. infer the conceptual metaphors that underlie these linguistic metaphorical expressions using Steen's (1999) prototypical principle together with the use of context.
- III. explore the cognitive processes (projection or categorisation) employed in the creation of the conceptual metaphors.

1.5 Research Questions

The following questions guide the study;

- I. What linguistic metaphorical expressions are used to describe the LGBTQ+ community and activities in Ghanaian social media discourse?
- II. What conceptual metaphors underlie these linguistic metaphorical expressions?
- III. What cognitive processes are used in the creation of these conceptual metaphors?

1.6. Significance of the Study

Through linguistic data from Ghanaian social media and some news sites, the study contributes to the argument that metaphor is a means of studying human thoughts. The study specifically contributes to the role of metaphors in revealing Ghanaians' conceptualisation of the LGBTQ+ concept. Also, the source domains used to describe LGBTQ+ by Ghanaians indicate their beliefs and values regarding this concept. The findings from this study provide insights into the intersection of language and sexuality in Ghana, contributing to broader discussions on the role of metaphor in constructing social realities and informing LGBTQ+ advocacy efforts within Ghanaian society.

1.7. Organisation of the Study

The subsequent chapters are organised as follows: Chapter Two reviews related literature on cognition and language, Conceptual Metaphor Theory, and existing studies that employed the Conceptual Metaphor Theory to lay the foundation for this study. Literature reveals that indeed, metaphor is a window through which people's conceptualisation of concepts can be studied, and the use of LGBTQ+-related metaphors is influenced by their conceptual system. Chapter three presents the methodology that drives the study and its significance to the research purpose. It also outlines the sources of data, the data collection

method, and the processes of data analysis. Chapter four presents how LGBTQ+ is conceptualised in Ghana. The data reveal that LGBTQ+ is negatively conceptualised. Finally, chapter five draws conclusions based on the findings of the study. The study concludes that Ghanaians generally conceptualise LGBTQ+ negatively using conventional metaphors processed through both comparison and categorisation.



CHAPTER TWO

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of relevant literature for the present study. It presents all the themes that summarise the scope of this study and the background of conceptual metaphor studies. It also reviews the literature on conceptual metaphor theory and LGBTQ+ (homosexuality) discourses and other studies to establish the gap that the current study seeks to fill. The literature reviewed reveals that opposers of LGBTQ+ generally conceptualise it negatively. Majorly portraying it as war or a disease, while pro-LGBTQ+ portray it as liberation. The current study agrees that opposers of LGBTQ+ conceptualise it negatively.

2.2 Cognitive Linguistics

Cognitive Linguistics emerged within cognitive science and approaches the study of language based on the assumption that language reflects certain fundamental properties and design features of human thoughts (Evans & Green, 2006, p. 5). It studies language as a means of disclosing human thoughts (Evans & Green, 2006; Geeraets, 2006; Gibbs, 2014). In other words, this approach offers insights into human ideas and thoughts through their use of language. Cognitive Linguists argue that metaphor is a central feature of human cognition, including language (Evans & Green, 2006). Metaphor is the phenomenon that describes one conceptual domain in terms of another. Metaphor is therefore a property of the mind and not just an embellishment of language, as Aristotle implies (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Gibbs, 1994).

2.3 Conceptual Metaphor Theory

The conceptual metaphor theory propounded by Lakoff and Johnson in their publication, *Metaphors We Live By*, approaches metaphor studies from a cognitive perspective. This theory offers linguists valuable tools to study metaphorical concepts to gain an understanding of the metaphorical nature of our everyday activities through the use of metaphorical linguistic expressions and even symbols (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980). That is, people's understanding of the world can be gleaned from their use of language, specifically, metaphorical linguistic expressions. A conceptual metaphor is systematically understanding a less familiar or unknown concept (target domain) by projecting the knowledge of experience from a more familiar or known concept (source domain) onto the target domain. In other words, conceptual metaphors involve the mental or conceptual mapping of some features of a familiar or concrete concept onto unknown or abstract concepts, i.e., using the knowledge structure of one concept to understand another concept.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) argue that metaphors are not only a matter of talking about one thing in terms of another, but most importantly, thinking about one thing in terms of another thing. For this reason, metaphors, they claim, are pervasive in everyday life, in language, thought, and action. Metaphors viewed this way are conceptual, and our ordinary conceptual system in terms of which we think and act is metaphorical (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, 2003, p. 3). As a result, many of their examples illustrating how we think metaphorically are derived from everyday expressions.

The ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor is derived from expressions such as;

Your claims are indefensible.

He attacked every weak point in my argument.

His criticisms were right on the target.

I demolished his argument.

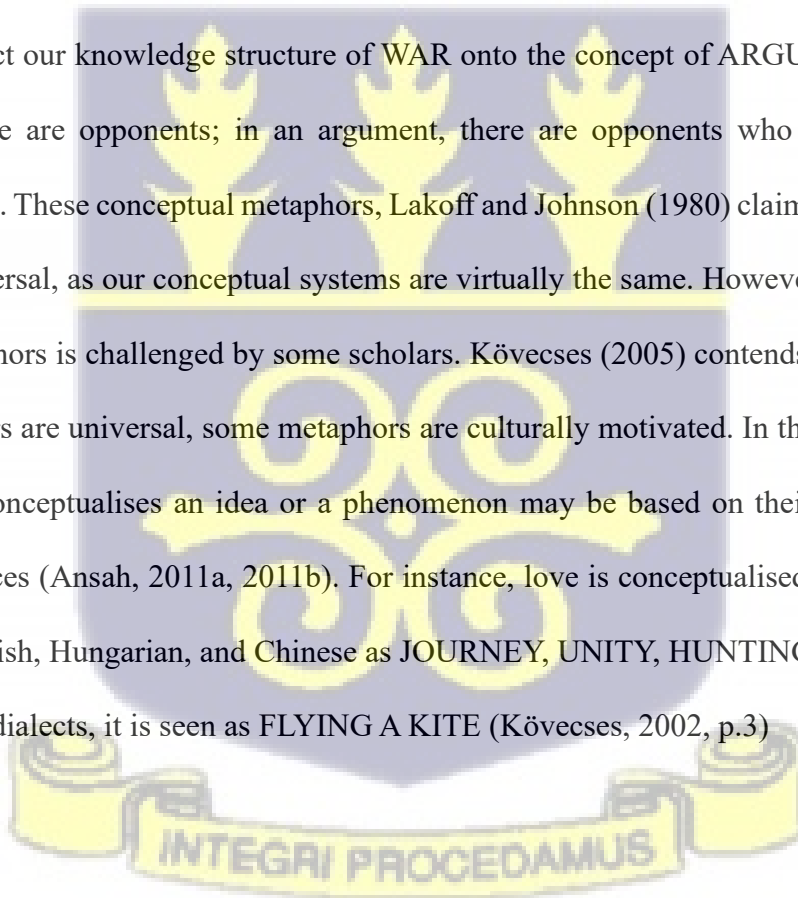
I've never won an argument with him.

You disagree? Okay, shoot!

If you use that strategy, he'll wipe you out.

He shot down all of my arguments.

Lakoff and Johnson (1980) contend that in the conceptual metaphor, ARGUMENT IS WAR, we project our knowledge structure of WAR onto the concept of ARGUMENT. Just as in war, there are opponents; in an argument, there are opponents who strive to win the argument. These conceptual metaphors, Lakoff and Johnson (1980) claim, are conventional and universal, as our conceptual systems are virtually the same. However, the universality of metaphors is challenged by some scholars. Kövecses (2005) contends that though most metaphors are universal, some metaphors are culturally motivated. In this view, the way a person conceptualises an idea or a phenomenon may be based on their cultural-specific experiences (Ansah, 2011a, 2011b). For instance, love is conceptualised in many cultures like English, Hungarian, and Chinese as JOURNEY, UNITY, HUNTING, etc. but in some Chinese dialects, it is seen as FLYING A KITE (Kövecses, 2002, p.3)



2.3.1 Tenets of Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Conceptual metaphor theorists note that there is a pattern in conceptual mappings - they are unidirectional. In other words, mapping is always from the known source domain, which is usually concrete, to a target domain, which is mostly an abstract concept (Evans & Green, 2006). It is also believed that mapping is always partial, i.e., mappings between the source domain and the target domain may not always be based on compatible similarities in all elements of the domains but may be based on correspondences between partial elements or features between the domains where the utilised elements of the source domain are highlighted while hiding the other elements of the source domain that are not useful in structuring the target domain (Evans and Green, 2006). Again, a target domain may be characterised by multiple source domains, such as in AN ARGUMENT IS A JOURNEY: *We will proceed in a step-by-step fashion*, AN ARGUMENT IS A BUILDING: *She constructed a solid argument*, ARGUMENT IS A CONTAINER: *Your argument has a lot of content*, AN ARGUMENT IS WAR: *I couldn't defend that point* (p.107). This is because our concepts have several distinct aspects and one source cannot cater to them adequately; hence, the different metaphors address these distinct aspects (Kövecses, 2002, p. 107). On the other hand, he notes that though rarely observed, a single source domain can describe distinct target domains. For instance, the concept of BUILDING applies to theories and also to societies, etc., giving rise to conceptual metaphors such as THEORIES ARE BUILDINGS, RELATIONSHIPS ARE BUILDINGS, CAREERS ARE BUILDINGS, etc. This concept of the number of target domains a single source concept applies to is what Kövecses (2002) refers to as

“The Scope of Metaphor”, that is, the range of target domains to which a given source domain/concept characterises.

On what determines the diverse meaning orientations of a given source-target pairing, especially in cases where a single source describes diverse target domains, Kövecses (2002) observes that meaning in this instance depends on the meaning focus of the source domain. This ‘meaning focus’ is conventionally determined.

Conceptual metaphors are also characterised by experiential embodiment. Some conceptual metaphors arise as a result of human experiences (Kövecses, 2010). That means that concepts are grounded in human-embodied experiences. We can conceptually link two domains because we experience the interconnectedness of the two domains of experience. For instance, the MORE IS UP AND LESS IS DOWN metaphors are possible because there is a correlation in experience between quantity and verticality, since “when the quantity or amount of something increases, there is MORE of that substance and it rises (UP), and when the quantity of the substance decreases, the substance becomes LESS and decreases (DOWN)” (Kövecses, 2010, p. 80). Expressions such as *His income fell last year* are possible because of the experiential-based conceptual metaphor LESS IS DOWN, while *He kept filling my glass down with wine* is unacceptable because, based on our everyday experience, MORE AND DOWN do not correlate (Amarinthenukrowh, 2020, p. 23).

Another aspect of conceptual metaphors is systematicity. There is systematicity between conceptual metaphors and corresponding metaphorical expressions, and also between the

mapping of the source domain and the target domain. Let's take the mappings of the metaphor SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS ARE PLANTS, for instance.

Table 2.1 Mapping for SOCIAL ORGANISATIONS ARE PLANTS (Kövecses, 2002)

PLANTS (Source)		SOCIAL ORGANISATION (Target)
(a) The whole plant	————→	the entire organisation
(b) A part of the plant	————→	a part of the organisation
(c) Growth of the plant	————→	development of the organisation
(d) Removing a part of the plant	————→	reducing the organisation
(e) The root of the plant	————→	the origin of the organisation
(f) The flowering	————→	the best stage, the most successful stage
(g) The fruit or crops	————→	the beneficial consequences

In conceptual metaphors, the source domain is systematically mapped onto a feature or role of the target domain. The metaphorical mappings, such as the above, which are stored in our long-term memory, give rise to metaphorical linguistic expressions such as: *He works for the local branch of the bank, Our company is growing, The organisation was rooted in the old church, There is now a flourishing black market in software there* (Kövecses, 2002, p. 8). Knowing a metaphor, therefore, means that we know the systematic mappings between the source and target (which is largely unconscious). The knowledge of these mappings ensures the use of linguistic expressions that reflect the conceptual metaphors that are conventionally fixed by a speech community (Kövecses, 2002).

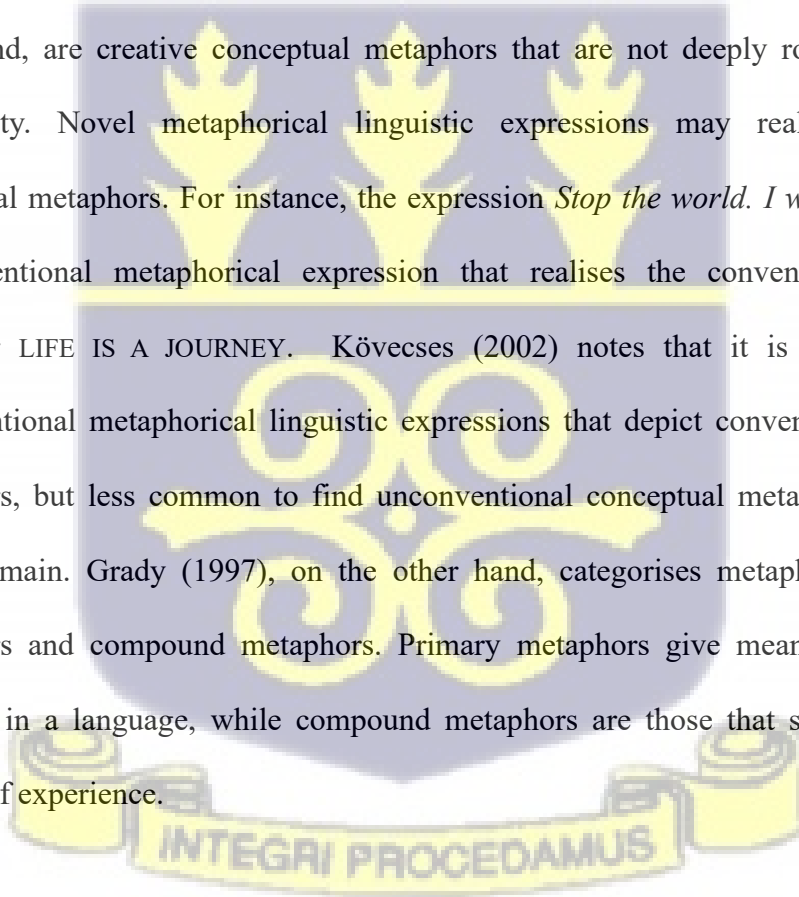
2.3.2 Types of Conceptual Metaphors

Conceptual metaphors are not of one kind. Lakoff & Johnson (1980, 2003), and Kövecses (2002) identify three types of metaphors: structural, orientational, and ontological. Kövecses (2002), just like Lakoff and Johnson (1980), categorises the kinds of metaphors based on their cognitive function – structural, orientational and ontological. That is, the role they (metaphors) play in how ordinary people think about and see the world. Structural metaphors describe how we understand a target concept in terms of/through the structure of a source concept. The target is understood through the structure of the source.

Orientalional metaphors, on the other hand, give a concept spatial orientation, such as up-down, in-out, front-back, on-off, etc., giving rise to metaphors such as HAPPY IS UP/SAD IS DOWN. These types of metaphors are believed to be rooted in our physical and cultural experiences, which structure the majority of our fundamental concepts (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980).

Ontological metaphors allow us to talk about vague or abstract things, experiences, and processes in terms of objects and substances in our physical and cultural environment. “Our experiences with physical objects, especially our bodies, provide the basis for most ontological metaphors” (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 25). It is observed that the most obvious ontological metaphors are those that personify physical objects to allow us to understand nonhuman entities through human motivations, traits, and actions.

Kövecses (2002) also categorises metaphors into conventional and non-conventional or novel metaphors. The conventionality of metaphors (both conceptual metaphors and their corresponding linguistic metaphors) in this sense refers to how well-established and deeply entrenched these metaphors are in the usage of a speech community. These conventional metaphors are ubiquitous in everyday ordinary conversations that their users would not even notice that they use metaphors in their expressions. “Conventional conceptual metaphors are deeply entrenched ways of thinking about or understanding an abstract domain while conventionalised metaphorical linguistic expressions help us talk about abstract domains” (Kövecses, 2002, p.30). Unconventional or novel metaphors, on the other hand, are creative conceptual metaphors that are not deeply rooted in a speech community. Novel metaphorical linguistic expressions may realise conventional conceptual metaphors. For instance, the expression *Stop the world. I want to get off* is a nonconventional metaphorical expression that realises the conventional conceptual metaphor LIFE IS A JOURNEY. Kövecses (2002) notes that it is common to find unconventional metaphorical linguistic expressions that depict conventional conceptual metaphors, but less common to find unconventional conceptual metaphors for a given target domain. Grady (1997), on the other hand, categorises metaphors into primary metaphors and compound metaphors. Primary metaphors give meaning to individual concepts in a language, while compound metaphors are those that structure an entire domain of experience.



2.3.3 Criticism of the Conceptual Metaphor Theory

Despite the strides that Lakoff and Johnson's conceptual metaphor theory has made in the cognitive study of metaphors, Charteris-Black (2004), Musolff (2012) and Semino (2008) have cast doubt on the data used to make their (Lakoff and Johnson) claims. The CMT opponents argue that the data is artificially constructed and also question the amount of data considered adequate to establish conventionality.

The Pragglejaz Group (2007) have also criticised the Lakoffian approach for gathering data based on their intuition and the use of thesauri. They criticised the approach, citing that it lacks a rigorous and systematic approach to arriving at the conceptual metaphors. They argue that the traditional approach takes for granted which expressions are metaphorical and also argue that the approach also fails to explicate which metaphorical expressions are used for specific target domains by speakers in authentic discourse (Kövecses, 2011). They therefore advocate for the adoption of real corpora in identifying expressions, as it can identify many more metaphorical expressions for specific target domains compared to the intuitive, traditional approach (Kövecses, 2011). Kövecses (2011), on the other hand, does not find a problem in how the traditional metaphor researchers arrive at metaphorical metaphors, but with how they call what they arrive at conceptual metaphors, as it suggests that what they found actually exists in the human mind.

Stefanowitsch (2007) also criticises the tradition of CMT for providing a partial inventory of metaphors. He claims that the goal of a metaphor analysis should be to find all the linguistic and conceptual metaphors regarding a target in any given corpus. Responding to

this criticism, Kövecses (2011) agrees that gathering a complete set of metaphors for a particular concept is desirable. However, he states that it should not be the most important thing in the pursuit of metaphor in cognitive linguistics. The most important thing he argues should be knowing to “what extent and what content the metaphors contribute to the conceptualisation of abstract concepts, as well as their cognitive representations” (p. 34). This, according to him, is because the ultimate goal of metaphor studies is to understand the mind that contains a large number of target domains with their corresponding source domains.

Dobrovol'skij and Piirainen (2005) also criticise the traditional metaphor analysis (Lakoffian analysis) for using a top-down approach, which focuses on establishing global cognitive structures by finding some data, generalising the data and suggesting global cognitive structures like conceptual metaphors that are derived from the data. They (Dobrovol'skij & Piirainen, 2005; Kövecses, 2011) advocate for a bottom-up approach which collects data extensively (e.g., an entire corpus), identifies the metaphorical expressions using a systematic procedure (like the Pragglejaz Group's Metaphor Identification Procedure), and then the semantic, structural, pragmatic and esthetic behaviour expressions are identified in their context of use, and finally the conceptual metaphors are established.

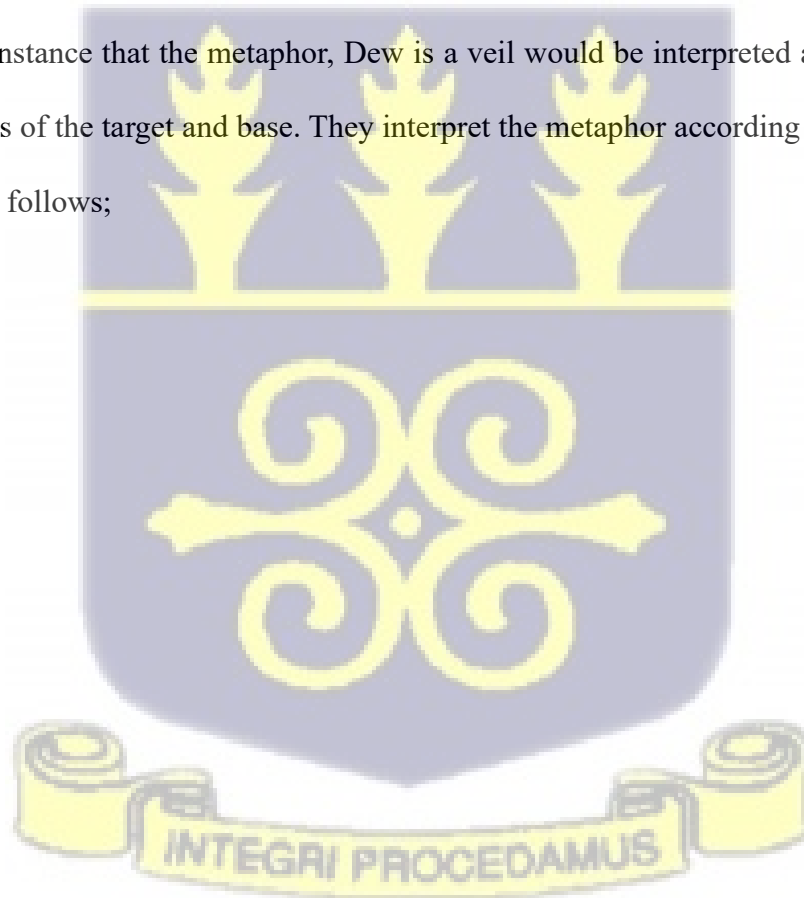
Kövecses (2011) agrees with the criticism about the top-down approach (traditional approach) and acknowledges that indeed, there are irregularities in metaphorical linguistic expressions, as not all linguistic expressions are motivated by global metaphors (especially

in cases of novel metaphors). However, he disagrees with the criticism that CMT cannot account for the different meanings of expressions within the same metaphor. For instance, he argues that *add fuel to fire* and *flare up* are both motivated by the ARGUMENT IS FIRE metaphor (p. 31). He states that though these expressions have different specific meanings, this doesn't invalidate the theory. Conceptual metaphor theory involves detailed mappings between source and target domains, and these fine-grained mappings account for the nuances in meaning. Thus, he argues that the CMT theory can still provide diverse meanings within the same metaphorical work. He therefore advocates that a comprehensive understanding of metaphors in language, culture, and thought requires both approaches and posits that the crucial question should be what proportion of regular and irregular metaphors are in natural discourse.

Based on these arguments, the discourse approach and the corpus-based approach to metaphor analysis are proposed to address the weaknesses of the conceptual metaphor theory. While this study employs Conceptual Metaphor Theory, I try to circumvent the artificial data criticism by using naturally occurring data - real discourses happening on social media and news websites. I also adopted features/properties of both the bottom-up and top-down approach as I collected data from the LGBTQ+ corpus, and identified the metaphorical expressions using the Pragglejaz Group's (2007) procedure and the multistage procedure instead of establishing their semantic, structural and, pragmatic and esthetic behavior as the top-down approach requires, I examined their internal structure as the study seeks to examine how LGBTQ+ conceptualised.

2.3.4 Cognitive Processes in Conceptual Metaphors

Bowdle and Gentner (2005) note that despite the common understanding of metaphors as cross-domain mappings, there is limited agreement on how these metaphorical mappings actually occur. Different approaches have accounted for the processes involved in metaphoric mappings. Widespread among these processes are the categorisation and comparison approaches (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005). The comparison approach to processing metaphors highlights preexisting but hidden similarities between the source and target domains and is thought to involve feature-matching (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005), where features of the source domain are matched to features of the target domain. They cite the instance that the metaphor, Dew is a veil would be interpreted as the overlapping properties of the target and base. They interpret the metaphor according to the comparison model as follows;



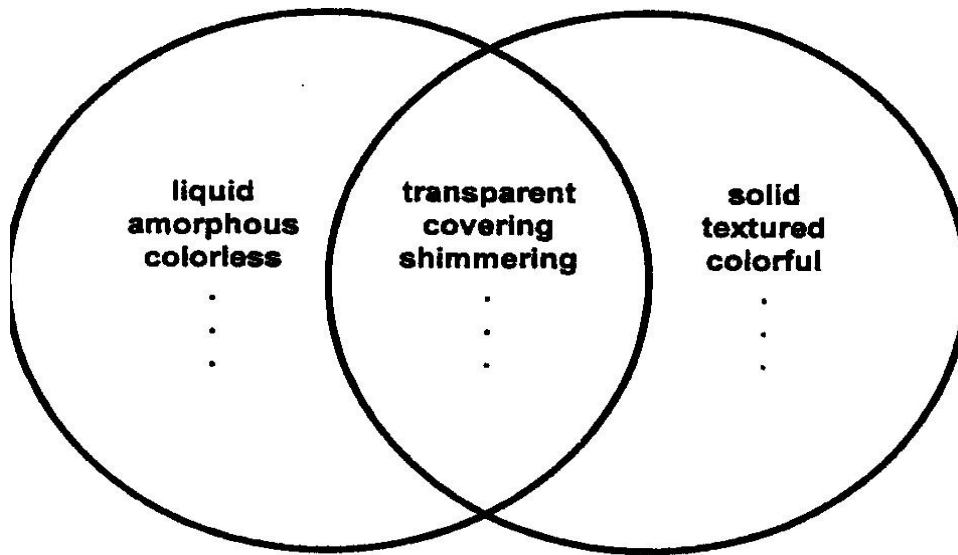


Figure 2. 1: Interpretation of DEW IS VEIL metaphor (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005, p. 195)

However, the comparison approach is criticised for its property selection (see Glucksberg & Keysar, 1990; Lakoff & Johnson, 1999; Tourangeau & Sternberg, 1981, 1982). They note that while the feature mapping models associate figurative meanings with sets of shared properties, not all properties that the target and base of a metaphor share will necessarily be included in its processing interpretation. Using the DEW IS A VEIL metaphor to illustrate this criticism, Bowdle & Gentner (2005) argue that though both DEW and VEIL are inanimate and silent, none of those properties are used in their interpretation. The feature-matching model, in other words, the comparison approach, is also criticised for the issue of asymmetry. The critics (e.g., Conner & Gentner, 2005, as cited in Bowdle & Gentner, 2005) claim that the sequence of metaphors generally cannot be altered, even though the order is not supposed to affect the extent of property overlap.

Glucksberg and Keysar (1990), who proposed the categorisation process, argue that in metaphor processing or comprehension, the literal target and base concepts are not directly compared. Instead, the base concept (source domain) is used to reach or create an abstract metaphoric category where it serves as a prototypical member, and the target concept is then placed in this category.

The dual reference approach (Glucksberg & Haught, 2006) suggest that metaphors are processed based on the grammatical form of a figurative statement. They claim that metaphors that follow the grammatical structure of literal categorisations are understood through categorisation, while similes that follow the grammatical structure of literal comparison are understood through comparison (Gokcesu, 2009).

The career of metaphor theory of processing metaphors (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005) is a growing theory based on structure mapping theory that unifies the comparison and categorisation theories. They posit that as metaphors become conventionalised, the mode of mapping shifts from comparison to categorisation. According to their experiments, this shift of processing is evident in the language people use for figurative expressions. The career of metaphor framework also implies that the way metaphors are processed – whether directly or indirectly and whether at the level of individual concepts or entire conceptual domains – depends on their conventionality and linguistic form. They further suggest that in interpreting figurative statements (such as metaphors and similes), the grammatical cues people use may indicate whether the statements are processed through categorisation or

comparison. Their experiment indicates that participants use double predication in statements they process through comparison, while single predication is used in statements processed through comparison. To illustrate this, Gokcesu (2009) uses the metaphor, A CHILD IS A SNOWFLAKE. The double predication involves the interpretation that both are unique, which is similar to how literal comparisons, such as a tiger is like a lion, are interpreted – both eat meat. This interpretation, they observe, is not compatible with how literal categorisations are interpreted. For instance, the literal categorisation A tiger is a carnivore is not likely to be interpreted as both eat meat.

2.4 Metaphor and Context

Metaphorical conceptualisations of the same concept may be different depending on the context or situation. Kövecses (2015) argues that the variations in conceptual metaphors may be influenced by culture or within individuals. In other words, a person's cultural experience may influence how they conceptualise an issue. Ansah (2011a, 2011b), for instance, observes the differences in how light-skinned persons and dark-skinned persons conceptualise ANGER. When light-skinned persons experience anger, there are visible changes in their skin colour, unlike in dark-skinned persons. Therefore, light-skinned people can conceptualise ANGER in terms of changes in skin colour, which can be seen in the expression, *the lady went red when the man pushed her* (Ansah, 2011a). However, this conceptualisation is not appreciated among Akan-English bilinguals because anger-causing changes in their dark skins are not visible. In the same vein, Kövecses (2011) adds that different experiences, such as the kinds of concerns speakers have, their life experiences

and even physical context, such as the season in which communication is taking place, may influence the production of some metaphors.

Kövecses (2015) attributes metaphorical variations to two main contextual factors: global and local. The general knowledge of metaphor that everyone shares is due to the global context, and universal metaphors are part of this global context since many unrelated languages share the same conceptual metaphors of some emotional concepts (Dawson-Ahmoah, 2024). The local context involves the specific knowledge individuals have about specific situations (Kövecses, 2015). Dawson-Ahmoah (2024) categorises cultural schemas under local contexts. She goes on to state that cultural schemas guide the behaviour of people of the same or common culture. For instance, Ghanaians construct the schema WORLD BANK as a geopolitical space in their political discourse instead of the universal construction of WORLD BANK as a financial institution (Dawson-Ahmoah, 2024).

2.5 Homosexuality Discourse on Social Media

Social media has shifted control of public communication away from mainstream media and the political elite, empowering individuals and groups to create and assess identity-based content through personal and collective platforms (Botsman, 2017; Jones, 2020, as cited in Ukonu et al., 2021). Social media has given people a platform to air their opinions freely, as their identities may be hidden if they so wish.

Ukonu et al. (2021) posit that social media has become a powerful platform for sexuality discourses because of its ability to subvert conventional narratives and strengthen

individual perspectives on self-expression. Discourses on social media are diverse but are mostly about social issues such as gender discrimination, HIV/Aids, and COVID-19, including the discourse of homosexuality. Opara et al. (2016) and Zhang et al. (2020) agree that social media has gained traction as a platform for homosexuality discourses because the platform has made it easy for its users to air their opinions on the subject without the fear of isolation (Ukonu et al., 2021).

Netizens, through airing their opinions, portray or reveal their ideologies consciously or unconsciously through their use of language. As Adegbola (2018) corroborated, language is a crucial tool that people use in forming their points of view on social issues such as homosexuality. These opinions are expressed through several linguistic forms, including the use of metaphors. This study, therefore, finds it important to gather data from social media (X and Facebook) to ascertain how LGBTQ+ activities are conceptualised, which brings to light the universal or cultural motivation of Ghanaians' conceptualisation of the LGBTQ+ concept.

Ukonu et al (2021) examined social media as a relatively novel platform for discourses on homosexuality in Nigeria. They aimed to ascertain the willingness of social media users to express opinions, directions of opinions, and factors affecting opinion formation. The findings reveal that there is a significant willingness to express opinions, which is encouraged by the 'rising interest in the topic'. The study revealed that, though there are some positive and moderate opinions, the majority of the comments/opinions are negative.

The study also revealed that these negative opinions are propelled by religious and moral points of view.

Zhang and Zhuang (2023) analysed public discourses surrounding the representation of homosexuality on Weibo, an online platform in China. The study revealed that Van Leuwen's discursive strategies (i.e. authorisation, moral evaluation, rationalisation, and mythopoesis) contribute to public opposition to homosexuality, portrayed as unhealthy, infertile, disruptive and corrosive. The study reveals that users emphasise their views on traditional values and beliefs. Users also delegitimise homosexuality based on the views that it is a threat to the continuity of the human species, abnormality and a mental illness and equate the issue with other perversions.

These studies reveal that, discourse of homosexuality and its related identities on social media comprises positive and moderate views, but consistently reflects mostly negative attitudes and views towards this issue. However, these studies are mostly carried out elsewhere, outside Ghanaian social media. The current study, therefore, would be revealing, as its findings would support the existing literature or reveal different opinions.

2.6 Global Media Representation of Queer People

Media representation of queer and LGBTQ+ identities has undergone a significant shift globally, moving from near invisibility or negative stereotyping to more visible but often contested inclusion. Historically, mainstream media—particularly film and television—

portrayed LGBTQ+ individuals as deviant, tragic, or merely comic relief, reinforcing social stigma (Thomson, 2021). As representation has increased, scholars question not only the quantity but the quality of visibility, exploring how stereotypes, archetypes, and market forces shape these portrayals.

One systematic review by Gao and Guintu (2025) documents a dramatic transformation over the past decade: LGBTQ+ characters have become more prevalent in media, particularly on streaming platforms, which has broadened their reach and social impact. Yet, despite progress, heteronormative biases and market constraints persist across different regions. Gao and Guintu argue that while increased media representation helps reduce societal prejudice and solidify queer identity, variation in cultural acceptance and market structures across countries remains a major barrier (2025).

Content analyses reveal recurring patterns in how queer identities are framed. In American fiction series on platforms like Max, for example, archetypal tropes—such as the “tragic queer,” “villain,” or “token friend”—still dominate, suggesting that increased visibility does not necessarily equate to complexity or progressive representation (Sexuality & Culture, 2025).

Meanwhile, media advocacy data show that in recent broadcast seasons, although LGBTQ+ presence has grown, transgender and nonbinary representation remains disproportionately low compared to gay and bisexual characters. Such trends highlight persistent gaps in diversity and inclusiveness.

Scholars in media studies argue that representation is not purely a matter of presence, but also of framing and meaning. According to Brooklyn College's gender and media curriculum, simply including LGBTQ+ characters is not enough if their stories reinforce harmful or superficial stereotypes (Brooklyn College, 2025). The concern is that some media offer "diversity hires" without depth, reinforcing invisibility in more nuanced or intersectional forms.

Newer scholarship also examines how digital and streaming media reshape queer visibility. Cummings (2022) explores queer seriality in streaming television, pointing out that shows designed for online platforms can foster serialized queer story arcs that resist episodic tokenism, but they still operate within commercial constraints.

At the same time, technological and commercial pressures sustain the risk of "pink-washing," where queer representation is commodified for market gain rather than social change.

Representation also has real-world consequences. Media exposure can positively impact LGBTQ+ individuals' self-esteem and identity affirmation, though its effect on broader mental health is more complex. In a study with LGBTQ+ college students, positive portrayals contributed to identity confidence, but did not necessarily mitigate anxiety or depression, suggesting that media affirmation alone is not enough to offset systemic stresses (Panessa, 2025).

To summarise, global media representation of queer people has advanced in visibility and reach, yet it remains hindered by stereotypical archetypes, uneven identity inclusion, and commercial pressures. While streaming platforms offer space for more serialised and nuanced queer storytelling, systemic issues—such as underrepresentation of trans identities and market-driven homogenization—persist. Further research must therefore move beyond counting representation to critically examining how language, narrative structures, and platform economics shape the meanings and implications of queer visibility, thus, this study examines how LGBTQ is conceptualised through metaphors.

2. 7 Media Representation of LGBTQ+ in Ghana

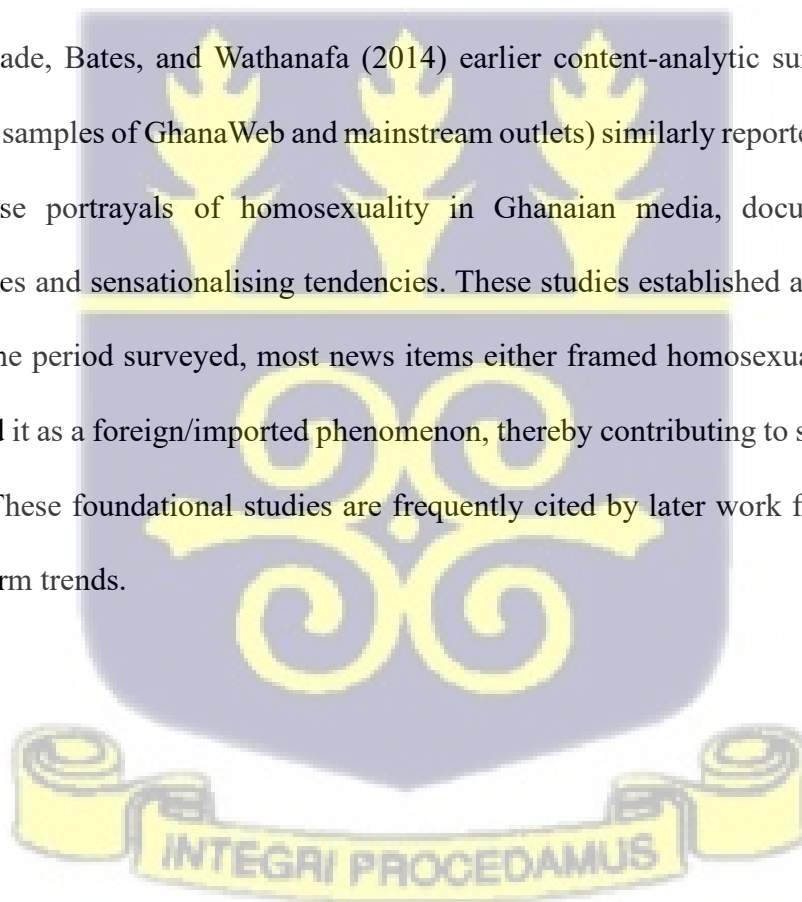
Research on media representations of LGBTQ+ people and issues in Ghana shows a consistent pattern: mainstream Ghanaian news media and popular platforms largely frame same-sex sexuality and gender diversity in negative, marginalising, and securitised terms. Agyeman (2023) posits that press accounts in Ghana usually reflect the prejudices against LGBTQ+ concerns. Studies point to recurrent frames that emphasise moral threat, foreignness, illness/criminality, and danger — frames that both reflect and amplify high levels of social intolerance documented by public-opinion surveys. The media environment is also shaped by political and legal developments (including the passage and debate around restrictive legislation), and by the rise of social media, which can both reproduce hostile narratives and create new spaces for marginalised voices (Nartey, 2022).

Agyeman (2023), in his study, sought to analyse the importance given to LGBTQ issues in the media, examine the frames adopted to portray LGBTQ issues and consider the factors that affect how media professionals cover LGBTQ+. The study found that the two publications – Daily Graphic and Daily Guide gave little prominence to LGBTQ+ issues during the period of study, and only two of the 45 stories that were discovered within the time frame were printed on the front page. Prominence was given in terms of story size and enhancement, and most of the stories on LGBTQ issues were straight news from religious leaders, politicians, and medical experts. The study discovered that the morality frame was used the most by the two media outlets, followed by the human-interest frame, which was attributed to the population's predominance of Muslims and Christians. The media professionals acknowledged that, though they uphold their professional standards, culture, religion, and the laws of Ghana have influenced their views on LGBT issues. The study concludes that media content, framing and reporting styles all reflected the dominant views of Ghanaians, which are opposed to LGBTQ issues, which makes it difficult for gays, lesbians and their supporters to express their opinions through these two media outlets, thereby constricting audiences' perspectives on these issues.

Quantitative surveys (e.g., Afrobarometer analyses) document persistently high levels of social intolerance toward people in same-sex relationships in Ghana, including willingness to exclude or report LGBTQ+ people. Scholars use these survey results to argue that media frames both reflect and reinforce public attitudes, creating a feedback loop between public opinion and media discourse, which helps explain the limited visibility of positive or rights-based coverage in mainstream outlets (Armah-Atttoh, 2020).

Gyasi-Gyamerah, Amissah and Danquah (2019) have explored attributional-discourse interventions (message strategies aimed at humanising or changing perceived causes of behaviour) as a way to reduce negative attitudes. These experimental and quasi-experimental studies suggest that carefully designed media messages can shift attitudes to some degree, but effects are often short-lived and mediated by respondents' religiosity, education, and pre-existing beliefs — indicating the challenge of changing attitudes through media alone in a highly conservative environment.

Quist-Adade, Bates, and Wathanafa (2014) earlier content-analytic surveys (e.g., cross-sectional samples of GhanaWeb and mainstream outlets) similarly reported a predominance of adverse portrayals of homosexuality in Ghanaian media, documenting frequent stereotypes and sensationalising tendencies. These studies established a baseline showing that, in the period surveyed, most news items either framed homosexuality negatively or presented it as a foreign/imported phenomenon, thereby contributing to social distance and stigma. These foundational studies are frequently cited by later work for contextualising longer-term trends.



2.8 Studies on LGBTQ+

Research on LGBTQ+ issues in Ghana, Africa and the world over has gradually expanded over the past decade, reflecting growing scholarly interest in how sexual and gender minorities are represented, perceived, and regulated within the sociocultural and political landscape of countries. Existing studies consistently highlight the tension between entrenched heteronormative cultural values and emerging discourses shaped by globalisation, digital media, and human-rights debates. Scholars have examined how public attitudes, media narratives, religious ideologies, and state policies interact to shape the lived realities of LGBTQ+ persons, often producing heightened stigma, moral panic, and political contestation. The following body of works establishes an important foundation for understanding how language, representation, and ideology converge in different contexts.

Reddy (2002), on the other hand, studied the language of homophobia. Drawing insights from language and gender, queer theory, discourse analysis, and Foucauldian poststructuralism. Reddy profiles homophobia as a form of hate speech. The study analysed the linguistic choices made by speakers in a particular context or situation and explained how these choices are intrinsically linked to gender issues, language, and power, using data from media reports in both print and electronic forms from Namibia, Zimbabwe, Kenya, Swaziland, Uganda, Zambia, and Egypt. The study found that the language that is used to show hostility and devalue homosexuals comprises abnormality, xenophobia, racism, barbarism, immorality, unpatriotism, heterosexism, anti-Christianity, unAfricanism, animalistic behaviour, inhuman behaviour, criminality, pathology, and satanism. One of the recurring themes in homophobic discourses is the ‘gay plague’.

Reddy argues that this term was popular in the early days of the HIV/AIDs epidemic in the US since the virus was first identified amongst gay men. He argues that scientists even labelled HIV as GRID (Gay Related Immuno Deficiency) and that though AIDs superseded this label in the eighties, the associations of HIV as a gay disease remain to this day, though the virus is present in a predominantly heterosexual population. The study also revealed that the language used to characterise homosexuality construes it as an abnormal sexual behaviour which should be corrected for the gay subject to re-enter the heterosexual world as a patriotic, moral, and obedient citizen. Another theme discovered from the study is homosexuality depicted as 'UnAfrican'. This theme, Reddy states, is achieved through the use of the military as 'alien' and 'foreign'. This metaphor, he claims, projects homosexuality as the 'other'. The study concludes that homophobia and hate speech threaten democracy and human rights.

Sivertsen (2016), in his thesis, employed a Critical Discourse Analysis framework to analyse the ongoing debate regarding discursive and social practice. The study aimed to identify the dominant discourses and key positions of conflict about the homosexuality debate in Uganda. It also sought to investigate the power relations revealed through these discourses and how they affect the relationship between Uganda and the West. He claims that the different perspectives and assertions in the debate form part of three operating discourses: the humanitarian discourse and the neo-colonial discourse. The study reveals that the dynamics of power that exist between Uganda and the Western world are reflected in these discourses. On power and hegemony, the thesis argues that the West plays a

proactive and prominent role in the debate on homosexuality in Uganda. The point of convergence between these studies and the current study is that they discuss homosexuality and its related concepts from a linguistic point of view. However, whereas these studies employ other linguistic approaches to study homosexuality, the current study approaches LGBTQ+ from a cognitive linguistic approach, which will provide insights into the thoughts of Ghanaians about LGBTQ+ activities.

Adegbola (2018) also carried out a sociolinguistic investigation of public discourses, opinions, and points of view on homosexuality by both homosexuals and heterosexuals as portrayed in some Nigerian newspapers to unearth the socio-cultural and ideological presuppositions underlying these views. It examined the linguistic representations of different points of view on homosexuality. The study discovered collocation, lexical reiteration, hyponymy, and labelling, among others, as the lexical strategies used to portray homosexuality on the grounds of culture, religion, morality, law, and health arguments. In the use of evaluative language for the reflection of attitudes in the discourses, the study discovered that homosexuality is stereotypically represented as a crime. However, this view is equally resisted through the use of language. The study concludes that words and sentences are not only linguistic components but are essential ideological tools in discourses of homosexuality. The public discourses are found to be extremely stereotypical, influencing society to view homosexuals as enemies. While Adegbola's study is conducted in Nigeria, the current study is situated in a Ghanaian context. Though both studies are from a linguistic perspective, the current study is from a cognitive linguistic perspective.

Nartey (2022) employed a discourse analysis framework to study the prejudicial construction of LGBT issues in the Ghanaian news media and how that contributes to a discriminatory discourse leading to the marginalisation of LGBT people in Ghana. The study revealed that the news content on LGBT issues is biased and inflammatory, and portrays LGBT people as expendables and undesirables. Nartey argues that through the choice of provocative headlines, biased news content, and the deliberate use of certain quotations, the voice of LGBT people and their advocates is often silenced. He further argues that the suppression of their voices lays the foundation for the material and symbolic attack that this sexual minority suffers. The study revealed that the media achieved this by exploiting three discourses or forms of othering, focusing on (re)production and naturalisation of moral panic; a discourse of medicalisation or pathologisation, a discourse of amorality/immorality and societal destruction, and a discourse of alienisation. While Nartey's study is from a discourse analysis perspective, the current study investigates the same subject from a cognitive linguistic perspective, which gives insights into Ghanaians' thoughts. The point of convergence between this study and the current study is that both studies were conducted in Ghana; therefore, both studies found the pathologisation of LGBTQ identities, the religious conceptualisation – immorality, and LGBTQ as societal destruction.



2.8.1 LGBTQ+ Studies from a Conceptual Metaphor Perspective

While the above studies employed other linguistic approaches and non-linguistic approaches to study how homosexuality is perceived, other studies employed the Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT) to study how homosexuality or LGBTQ is cognitively conceptualised in different contexts.

Chiang & Su (2022) investigated the conceptualisations and ideologies concerning family destruction metaphors in same-sex marriage debates in Taiwan through the lens of Critical Metaphor Analysis (CMA), which is a combination of the conceptual metaphor theory and critical discourse analysis. The study sought to explore how conceptual metaphors can be employed together with other linguistic resources to influence and create new meanings of family. The study shows that the same conceptual metaphor may be used in different circumstances to construct binary/diverse ideologies. The study also revealed that the use of the family destruction metaphor indicates that a family, a complete, stable, and wholesome environment, is accepted as a destructible object that needs to be protected. It concludes that the use of family destruction metaphors in different contexts showed differences in the ideologies in the ideal membership for marriage, the attackers and protectors of family, the victims of family destruction, and the causes and consequences of family destruction. The study also concluded that conceptual metaphors can be used to reinforce conventional beliefs or introduce new values within a socially accepted frame.

Hart-Brinson (2016), in his study, examines the growing support for same-sex marriage in the United States, considering the evolving social perception of homosexuality. Employing

the tension theory of metaphor and conceptual metaphor theory, he measures social imagination at the micro level by analysing the frequency and semantic context in which certain students and their parents use metaphors and analogies to discuss same-sex marriage. The study revealed that younger informants conceptualise homosexuality as an identity, while older informants conceptualise homosexuality as behaviour. The study concludes that individuals who came of age after 1990 are more likely to support same-sex marriage, while older generations are also showing shifts in their attitudes.

Amarinthukrowh (2020) in his M.A. thesis investigated the metaphorical patterns in the US legalisation of same-sex discourse to illustrate how metaphor is used to conceptualise same-sex marriage controversies. He gathered data from 254 news articles published in 2015, not only in the US but also from other countries, including Ghana. He employed both the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) and the conceptual blending theory (CBT) in his analysis. The study revealed that eight (8) types of metaphors characterised the same-sex marriage controversy. They are the COMPETITION METAPHOR FAMILY (MF), the Location Event Structure Metaphor (L-ESM), Ontological, Building/Construction, Religion and the Supernatural, Crime, Light and Darkness, and Disease/Illness metaphors.

The data revealed that same-sex marriage defenders make use of the COMPETITION MF to highlight social inequality and struggles the LGBT people face and empower one another, while the opposers of same-sex marriage use the same metaphors to portray themselves as protectors of righteousness and construct the supporters of LGBT as a violent, harmful group of people. The Location ESM is found to be missing from the

discourse of the opponents of same-sex marriage, but is utilised by the supporters to construe the struggle and efforts toward achieving worthwhile goals. The ontological metaphors are used as building blocks for more complex metaphorical expressions. The Building/Construction and the Religion and Supernatural metaphors are found to be an extension of the ontological metaphors. The Crime, Light and Darkness, and Disease/Illness metaphors are employed to portray the negative viewpoints toward same-sex marriage.

Dalton's (2016) study sought to uncover how homosexuality is construed through the various qualities and attributes of diseases and addictions in the Australian Parliamentary debates regarding the decriminalisation of homosexuality. The study reveals that parliamentary discourse was characterised by three competing metaphoric pathological models: disease, addiction, and habit and that no common pro-homosexuality metaphoric models were discovered despite the sympathetic sentiments that clouded the debates.

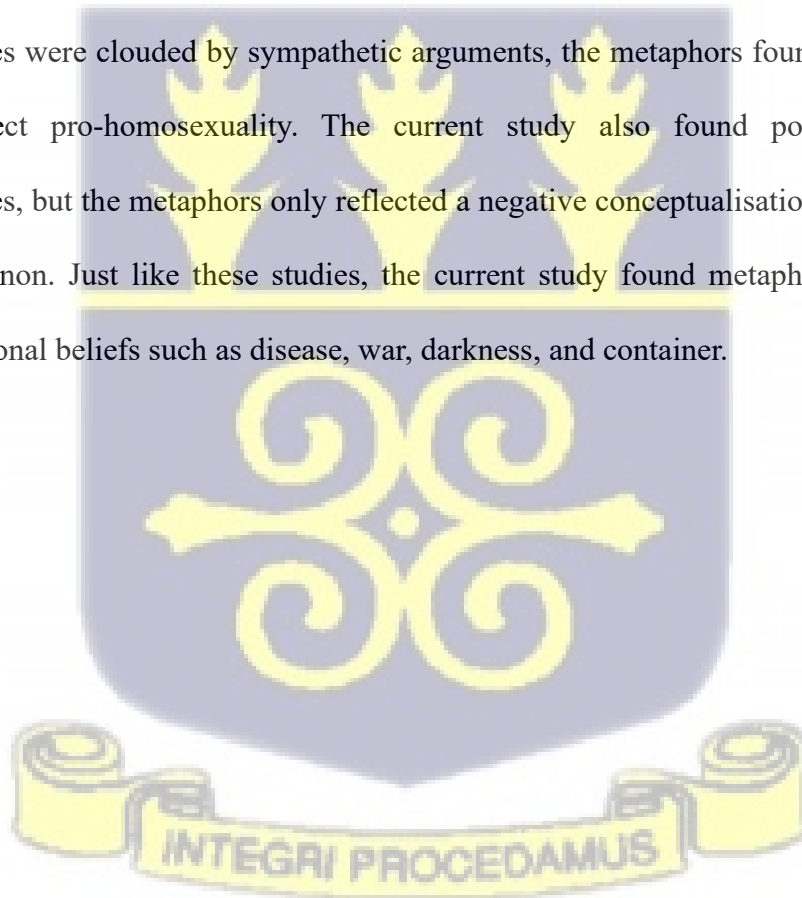
Dalton (2016) argues that the “pathologisation of homosexuality as a congenital condition has long been held in the medical and legal discourse until it was removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) by the Psychiatric Association in 1973” (p. 9). However, this notion of homosexuality as a disease continues to linger.

The homosexuality as a disease metaphor constructs homosexuals as susceptible to the ravages of homosexuality. Because homosexuality is conceptualised as a disease, the debates portray the need to quarantine gay men as deviant, diseased outlaws. The disease

metaphor is also a result of HIV/AIDs being described as a homosexual disease. In conceptualising homosexuality as an addiction and habit, the debates construct homosexuals as behaving in a way which is beyond their control. Their desire for homosexual contact is portrayed as a terrible compulsion that causes a spiraling effect. One craves the continuation of homosexual practices, the more one practices them. Just like drug addiction grows, homosexual activities grow by feeding on their own practice. This metaphorical construction construes the homosexual as trapped in an endless quest for fulfilment that only strengthens a hold on his addictive desire. The debates frame homosexuality as a habit, addiction and alcoholism. The study concludes that the use of these metaphors contributed to the stigmatisation of gay male subjectivity and that homosexuality was derided and rendered abject, even in the criminal law debates on homosexuality.

Dyrmo (2023) explored the metaphors of ‘coming out’ in the Polish language. The study sought to understand how Polish speakers conceptualise coming out and to describe their coming-out experiences. Data was collected from 94 participants through an anonymous survey in Polish social media and other public outlets for LGBT+ individuals. The study used MIP (Pragglejaz Group, 2007) to identify metaphors. The study reveals that coming-out metaphors are influenced by different conceptual structures and meaning foci. People conceptualise coming out through the metaphors: KNOWING IS SEEING, COMMUNICATION IS TRANSFER, and SECRETS ARE HEAVY OBJECTS. The conceptual structures are the image schema of FORCE and CONTAINER, the concept of OPENNESS and VISIBILITY, the domain of MOVEMENT and TRANSFER and the frame of SHARING AN OBJECT.

These studies argue that the same conceptual metaphor can be used in different situations to construct diverse/binary ideologies. For instance, Amarinthnukrowh (2020) found that while same-sex marriage defenders used the COMPETITION MF to highlight discrimination against LGBT people, opposers of same-sex marriage use the same metaphor to portray themselves as defenders of righteousness while portraying LGBT people as a violent, harmful group. In the same vein, the current study supports this argument as pro-LGBTQ+ people used the disease metaphor to portray anti-LGBTQ+ people as mentally insane for being homophobic. Dalton (2016) also argues that while discourses were clouded by sympathetic arguments, the metaphors found in his study did not reflect pro-homosexuality. The current study also found positive/sympathetic discourses, but the metaphors only reflected a negative conceptualisation of the LGBTQ+ phenomenon. Just like these studies, the current study found metaphors influenced by conventional beliefs such as disease, war, darkness, and container.



CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the research design that guides this study. It outlines the types of data and their sources, the methods employed in data collection, and the process of data analysis.

3.2 Research Design

Research design refers to the plans and processes for a study, ranging from general hypotheses to specific techniques for gathering and analysing data (Creswell, 2009). This study employs a qualitative approach to analysing the data. A qualitative research approach allows the researcher to explore and understand the meaning that individuals or groups assign to a social problem in order to uncover the rich meanings and interpretations hidden within the data (Creswell, 2009). The qualitative approach is suitable for this study as it allows the researcher to explore the nuances and complexities of how Ghanaians conceptualise LGBTQ by providing insightful interpretations of the data. The study relies on a qualitative interpretive design. The interpretive paradigm assumes that reality is socially constructed and that knowledge emerges from understanding the meanings individuals or communities attach to their experiences (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). The interpretive approach recognises that meaning is context-dependent and best understood through close engagement with participants' language, culture, and communicative practices. According to Denzin and Lincoln (2018), qualitative interpretive research allows the researcher to study things "in their natural settings" and to make sense of phenomena based on the meanings people bring to them. In this study, social media

platforms —Facebook and X (formerly Twitter)—serve as naturally occurring sites of discourse, where public opinions and emotions are linguistically performed. The interpretive design, therefore, enables an in-depth examination of the discursive, symbolic, and metaphorical dimensions of this online talk. Furthermore, interpretive design emphasises understanding over measurement and interpretation over quantification (Schwandt, 2015). This theoretical grounding aligns with Conceptual Metaphor Theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), which posits that metaphors are not mere linguistic ornaments but reflect underlying conceptual structures that shape thought and social experience. Thus, by employing an interpretive design, this study can critically analyse the figurative language through which Ghanaian social media users construct and contest queer identities.

3.3 Data in Metaphor Research

Different disciplines (e.g., Psychology, Rhetoric, Linguistics) have used different forms of data to conduct metaphor studies. The various approaches to metaphor research include discourse approaches (e.g., Cameron, 2003), corpus-based approaches (e.g., Stefanowitsch, 2007), cognitive linguistic approaches (Kövecses, 2010, 2002; Lakoff & Johnson, 1980), psycholinguistic approaches (e.g., Martinez, 2003) and critical metaphor approaches (Charteris-Black, 2004; Koller, 2004; Musolff, 2004).

Discourse approaches focus on how metaphors are used in naturally occurring discourse or context-based language, while corpus-based approaches tend to be concerned with metaphor occurrence as well as how frequent metaphors occur in context-based language in order to make generalisations about the language. Cognitive linguistics and

psycholinguistics research on metaphor, on the other hand, focuses on how metaphor is processed. However, whereas cognitive linguistics relies on linguistic data to make conclusions, psycholinguistics relies on laboratory-based experiments to test hypotheses about metaphors (Ansah, 2011a). The approaches that combine corpus-based and discourse approaches rely on the strength of both approaches. Finally, critical metaphor approaches combine discourse and cognitive approaches to metaphor studies.

Each of these approaches employs different methods of data collection and analysis based on the focus of the approach. Discourse approaches collect data from naturally occurring discourse by hand-picking relevant data. Corpus-based approaches focus on the use and manipulation of large data in order to draw generalisations. Psycholinguistic approaches collect data in the laboratory through experiments (Ansah, 2011), while the pioneers of the cognitive linguistic approach to metaphor studies gathered data based on native English speakers' intuition (Lakoff and Johnson, 1980). Their approach has since been criticised by many scholars (Charteris-Black, 2004; Koller, 2004; Semino, 2004). Nevertheless, the cognitive approach remains useful in metaphor studies. Consequently, this study relies on the cognitive linguistic approach for analysis while adopting the discourse approach to data collection (from naturally occurring discourse).

3.4 Data for this Study

Data comprised any written LGBTQ+-related expression in the form of post or a comment in response to a post on any of the three sources of data that is conceives LGBTQ+ and its related identities in terms of familiar concepts since the objectives of the study are: to

identify the linguistic metaphorical expressions that are used to describe the LGBTQ+ community and activities in Ghanaian social media discourse; infer the conceptual metaphors that underlie these linguistic metaphorical expressions using Pragglejaz Group's (2007) Metaphor Identification Procedure (MIP); explore the cognitive processes (projection or categorisation) employed in the creation of the conceptual metaphors.

The researcher determined metaphorically used words by identifying metaphorical pointers. These metaphorical pointers are words or expressions used figuratively rather than literally. Although the structure of similes is quite different from metaphors since they include comparison markers such as 'like', 'as', 'than', etc., the researcher included them in my data because, just like metaphors, similes project conceptual jumps (through comparison) between two different domains. As Amarinthnukrow (2020) argues, similes are one of the linguistic realisations of metaphorical mappings. Dancygier and Sweetser (2014) argue that when a simile becomes conventionalised, its comparison markers, such as 'like', 'as' and 'as if', are no longer necessary and its mappings can therefore be treated as a conceptual metaphor. The data consisted of only written posts and did not include multimodal data, as the scope of the study did not include a multimodal study.

3.4.1 Sources of Data

This study collected data from January to July 2024 from naturally occurring discourse on LGBTQ+ covering the span of 2006 to 2024. Since 2006, when LGBTQ+ issues first gained public attention in Ghana, Ghanaians have expressed their views on the matter through various media channels. The study investigates how Ghanaians conceptually

metaphorise the concept (LGBTQ+). Therefore, data was collected from Ghanaweb.com, a Ghanaian news media source, and two social media platforms (Facebook and X). Facebook and X (formerly Twitter) were selected because they are the most widely used social media platforms in Ghana, where national discourses occur, unlike the other social media platforms (like Instagram and TikTok), where photographs and videos are widely shared. Ghanaweb.com is a widely used online media website which is easily accessible and also reports news from all the major radio stations and other media outlets. This means that data collected from the website covers news from other news outlets.

3.4.2 Data Collection Procedure

The study relied on a discourse approach to data collection, where data were collected from naturally occurring discourses—posts and comments on social media. The researcher employed purposive sampling in data collection. Posts about LGBTQ+ and its related discussions were manually searched for and selected on Facebook, X and news articles on LGBTQ+ from Ghanaweb.com. Then the posts and comments from 2006-2024 were read to purposively select the posts and comments that had words or utterances that are potential metaphors (used to describe the LGBTQ+ concept in terms of another concept based on experiences). Comments and posts beginning from 2006 were selected because that is the year LGBTQ+ gained public attention in Ghana when an LGBTQ+ conference was proposed. Since then, LGBTQ+ discourse has been a major discourse in the country.

On Twitter, tweets from handles @LGBTRightsGhana, @lgbtghana, and notable politicians like Sam George, a Ghanaian parliamentarian who actively engages in the

LGBTQ+ discourse, were searched using the search engine platform's search engine. The comments were read to identify potential metaphorical words or statements based on the assumption that they are used beyond their basic meaning. The hashtags #homosexualityinghana, #LGBTinghana and #LGBTbill were used both on Facebook and Twitter to get appropriate and relevant comments to the study. I selected comments or tweets in which one domain is understood in terms of another domain. To ensure that data collected from Facebook and X are actually from Ghanaians, comments under Ghanaian bloggers and notable Ghanaian personalities were purposively selected. Wherever there is a doubt about the nationality of the text producer, the researcher visited the profile of the text producer to ascertain their background. The nationality of text producers was established by studying their profiles on social media, where most people state their origin or location and also through a scrutiny of their posts. Where the researcher was not able to establish the nationality of the text producer, the text concerned was ignored. The nationality of the authors of the post is significant to the study because the study's objective seeks to identify how Ghanaians conceptualise LGBTQ+ in social media discourse. Therefore, it is imperative that the data collected is produced by Ghanaian social media users.

On Ghanaweb.com, data was collected from LGBTQ+-related news articles and the opinion section. On Ghanaweb.com, I used the search engine to search for news headlines related to LGBTQ+ and its identities for the years, 2006 to 2023. Each article was then read to identify metaphorical expressions in relation to LGBTQ+.

Considering that the data was manually collected, a number of methodological and ethical challenges were encountered. The vast amount of online content made it difficult to identify and extract only relevant posts on LGBTQ+ issues in Ghana. Search and filtering limitations, as well as restricted access to private or moderated groups, further complicated data retrieval. So, all comments under related posts were read to filter the relevant data.

Ethical concerns were also significant, given the sensitivity surrounding LGBTQ+ discourse in Ghana. Although the data were publicly accessible, user anonymity and privacy were strictly protected by omitting names and identifiable information during transcription. Only posts from public personalities are disclosed in the data while assigning numbers to data from private individual posts.

Representational bias posed another challenge, as social media users do not reflect the entire Ghanaian population, and algorithms influence what content is visible. To address this, data were drawn from multiple platforms to ensure a broader range of perspectives.

Manual data collection was time-consuming, but a systematic approach—using a data log and categorising texts thematically—helped maintain accuracy and consistency. Despite these challenges, the manual process allowed for close engagement with the linguistic and contextual nuances of the data, strengthening the credibility and depth of the analysis. To ensure credibility, validity, reliability, and objectivity, posts were systematically selected based on explicit inclusion criteria. Linguistic metaphorical expressions were identified following Pragglejaz Group's (2007) metaphor identification procedure, with multiple

readings and coding checks to enhance consistency. Detailed records of search strategies, dates, platforms, keywords, and coding decisions were maintained to support replication and methodological transparency

3.4.3 Data Size

2,728 LGBTQ+ related comments were read on Facebook, 803 comments on X and 28 news articles and 1 opinion article were read on Ghanaweb.com. 51 linguistic metaphors were identified manually from the comments read on X, 44 on Facebook and 90 from Ghanaweb.com. This is represented in the table below:

Table 3.1: Data size Distribution across sources of data

Source of Data	Number of comments on LGBTQ	Number of Linguistic Metaphors Identified
Facebook	2, 728	44
X	803	51
Ghanaweb.com news articles	28 and 1 opinion article	90
Total	3560	185

This table is a pictorial representation of the data gathered. The amount of the data gathered does not have a bearing on the results since this study is not a corpus linguistic study, as corpus Linguistics practitioners like Stefanowitsch (2007) argue that a large corpus of metaphors should be used in metaphor analysis - each and every linguistic and conceptual

metaphor relating to a target in a given corpus collected and analysed. Kövecses (2011), on the other hand, believes that gathering an exhaustive set of metaphors for particular concepts should not be the focus of metaphor in cognitive linguistics. Kövecses (2011) argues that the most important reason should be to what extent and what content the metaphors contribute to the conceptualisation of abstract concepts as well as their cognitive representations, since the goal is to comprehend the mind that consists of a large number of concepts that function as target domains associated with an equally large number of source domains. Boakye-Yiadom (2020) also argues that the right size of data needed for a study depends on the kind of study, but is usually not specific.

3.5 Data Analysis

Steen and Gibbs (1999) define metaphor analysis as a goal- and norm-oriented activity in which there is a deliberate, technical extraction of conceptual metaphors from discourse using metaphorical language. Though metaphor analysis is important to several disciplines, there are no clear approaches or methods for metaphor analysis due to various research purposes or focuses (Zhang, 2021). As a result, Low and Todd (2010) contend that research questions, the theories that underpin a study, and the practical aspects of a situation determine the way a metaphor analysis is conducted. In the same vein, Amarinthnukrowh (2020) suggests that the focus of metaphor analysts should be on justifying why a particular theory is used to account for the metaphorical expressions in a given discourse situation rather than focusing on which theory is more beneficial than the other. Following these arguments and considering the aim of this research—to explore how Ghanaians conceptualise LGBTQ+ and taking into consideration the success of conceptual metaphor

theory (CMT) in demonstrating that linguistic expressions reflect cognition, this study employs the CMT framework to analyse the data.

To ensure the reliability and consistency of coding linguistic metaphorical expressions, an inter-rater reliability test was conducted. A 20% sample of 37 expressions from Facebook, X, and GhanaWeb was independently coded by two researchers into three conceptual metaphor categories: QUEER RIGHTS ARE WAR, QUEER PEOPLE ARE DISEASE, and COMING OUT IS REVEALING. Agreement between coders was assessed using Cohen's Kappa (κ). The coding results are summarized in Table 3.2. The observed agreement was high, and Cohen's Kappa ($\kappa = 0.875$) indicated almost perfect agreement between coders. Discrepancies were discussed and resolved, and the coding guidelines were refined to ensure transparency, consistency, and replicability. This procedure strengthens the credibility, validity, and reliability of the metaphor analysis.

Table 3.2: Inter-rater agreement on coding 37 linguistic metaphorical expressions from Facebook, X, and GhanaWeb. Cohen's Kappa ($\kappa = 0.875$) indicates almost perfect reliability.

Coder A \ Coder B	War	Disease	Revealing	Row Total
War	12	1	0	13
Disease	1	7	0	8
Revealing	0	1	15	16
Total	13	9	15	37

3.5.1 Identifying Metaphorical Expressions

The study employs the conceptual metaphor theory to ascertain how LGBTQ+ is conceptualised in Ghana. The theory contends that linguistic expressions reflect cognitive processes. CMT is a qualitative theory. Consequently, it allows the researcher to infer mental representations from the linguistic expressions. Though the pioneers (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) of the theory have devised different methods for analysing data, these methods have been criticised and improved upon. This study, therefore, adopts the Pragglejaz Group's (2007) systematic procedure for identifying metaphors, the metaphor identification procedure (MIP). This procedure (MIP) reduces biases and provides a relatively reliable, systematic tool for identifying metaphorical language in discourse. The procedure requires;

1. The analyst reads the entire text/discourse to establish a general understanding of the meaning.
2. Determine the lexical units in the text or discourse.
3. For each lexical unit, determine its contextual meaning and establish if it has a more basic meaning than its contextual usage. The basic meaning is more concrete (thus, it evokes what is easier to imagine, see, feel, smell, and taste), and related to bodily action. It is more precise rather than vague or historically older. The basic meaning does not mean the most frequent meaning of lexical units.
4. If the basic meaning contrasts with the contextual meaning yet can be interpreted in relation to it, it is marked as a metaphorical usage.

The MIP, however, is not a ready-to-use tool. It requires the analyst to make some adjustments. It requires the researcher to state the lexical units which will be considered as the unit of analysis in each data set and to also state the resources which will be used in determining the basic meanings of the lexical units. Following this, I assessed each word as a lexical unit in each comment or post (data) collected, except for the phrases which, when decomposed, lose their intended sense. For instance, in the sample data (1) below:

1. Finally, I came to the “I was born this way” junction. This tends to be a **breaking point** for many who struggle with same-sex tendencies and more so those with a Christian inclination like Prince’s and mine. Beyond this point, God has taken me through a painfully slow process of recovery, but it has been well worth the effort. There have been many relapses, but things are pretty stable now (Ghanaweb, 2006).

I considered the expression *breaking point* as a lexical unit, as the compound unit conveys the idea of a point of maximum tension or stress, whereas decomposing it into separate units will convey other senses other than what the contextual meaning suggests.

I also used the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (1st ed) (Rundell & Fox, 2002) as a tool to determine the basic meanings of lexical units. It is appropriate for this study since its large, systematically processed corpus of 220 million words makes it adequate for general language analysis (Pragglejaz Group, 2007). The Shorter Oxford English Dictionary on Historical Principles, Vol. 2 (Little et al., 1933) was used to determine which basic meaning is historically older where two basic meanings of a lexical

unit occur. The Online Cambridge English Dictionary <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/english/developer> is also used to look up the basic meaning of words, which the Macmillan Dictionary does not clearly define. For instance, the word ‘homophobes’ was not found in the Macmillan English Dictionary. Only the basic meaning of ‘homophobic’ is found in the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners, and therefore, the Online Cambridge English Dictionary was referred to for its meaning.

Below is an example of how the MIP was used in identifying the linguistic metaphorical expressions.

Sample 1:

• Yhup... I spent so much time and energy fighting homophobes last year, this year we will be happy (a response to a tweet on X)

Step 1: Identify the general meaning of the text.

1. “Yhup... I spent so much time and energy fighting homophobes last year, this year we will be happy” is a response to the tweet “this year, I need a lot more queer documenting that isn’t on our grief, losses, or homophobes who don’t matter. I want to document queer joy, queer marriage, queer pride, queer people traveling around the world. I want to hear queer elders and trans and intersex queer stories”. (X)

I interpret the data to mean that the queer responder chooses not to engage with homophobes, as arguing with them only leads to their own unhappiness. Instead, they prioritise focusing on their own happiness.

Step 2: The lexical units of analysis for this utterance (sample 1) are:

Yhup/... I/ spent/ so/ much/ time/ and/ energy/ fighting/ homophobes/ last year/ this year/
we/ will/ be/ happy/

Step 3:

‘Yhup’

- (a) Contextual meaning: In the text, it means that what the tweet says is true.
- (b) Basic meaning: It is another way of saying ‘yep’ which is an informal way of saying ‘yes’. Its basic meaning is telling someone that what they have said or asked is true or correct.
- (c) Contextual vs. Basic Meaning: there is no difference between the contextual and basic meaning. Since there is no difference between the contextual and basic meaning, we conclude that the lexical unit ‘yhup’ is not metaphorically used in the text.

‘I’

- (a) Contextual meaning: It refers to the speaker (the person who tweeted). It is used in the sense of the first-person singular pronoun.
- (b) Basic meaning: It has no other basic meaning.
- (c) Contextual meaning: The contextual meaning is no different from the basic meaning. It is therefore not used metaphorically in the text.

‘Spent’

(a) Contextual meaning: In context, “spent” means the speaker indulged in arguing with homophobes for a long time.

(b) Basic meaning: It is the past tense of ‘spend’ and its basic meaning is to use money to pay for something. This is the first sense of the word in the Macmillan English Dictionary (Rundell & Fox, 2002). The sense is more concrete as it is easy to imagine. According to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary on Historical Principles, this meaning is historically older.

(c) Contextual vs. Basic Meaning: the contextual meaning is different from the basic meaning and can be understood when compared with it. Though ‘spent’ is used metaphorically, it is not in relation to the subject under study, LGBTQ+. Therefore, it will be ignored.

‘so’

(a) Contextual meaning: ‘so’ is used in context to show the extent of ‘how much time’ was spent.

(b) Basic meaning: it does not have a more basic meaning.

(c) Contextual vs Basic meaning: there is no difference between the contextual and basic meaning. It is therefore not metaphorically used.

‘Much’

(a) Contextual meaning: it shows the extent of time the speaker used in engaging in arguments with homophobes. It is used to modify the non-count noun ‘time’.

(b) Basic meaning: it does not have a more basic meaning.

(c) Contextual vs Basic meaning: there is no difference between the contextual and basic meaning. Used metaphorically? No.

‘Time’

(a) Contextual meaning: it tells the duration the speaker engaged in arguing with homophobes.

(b) Basic meaning: it does not have a more basic meaning.

(c) Contextual vs Basic meaning: the contextual meaning is not different from the basic meaning in comparison. It is therefore not metaphorically used.

‘And’

(a) Contextual meaning: it is used as a conjunction to connect the nouns ‘time’ and ‘energy’.

(b) Basic meaning: it does not have a more basic meaning.

(c) Contextual vs Basic meaning: There is no contrast between the contextual and basic meaning. It is therefore not metaphorically used.

‘Energy’

(a) Contextual Meaning: contextually, it indicates the abstract efforts the speaker used in responding to or arguing with homophobes about queerness.

(b) Basic meaning: the basic meaning of the noun, ‘energy’, is a supply of physical power that one has for doing things that need physical effort. For example. She didn’t even have the energy to get out of bed. In this same sense, it also means a person’s enthusiasm

and determination to do something. However, according to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary on Historical Principles (p. 609), the first sense is historically older than the second sense.

(c) Contextual vs Basic meaning: the contextual meaning contrasts with the basic meaning and can be understood in comparison with it. The abstract effort that the speaker puts in arguing with homophobes can be understood in terms of the physical power that one needs to do things that require physical effort. 'Energy' is therefore metaphorically used in this context.

'Fighting'

(a). Contextual meaning: contextually, 'fighting' is used as a verb to mean the engagement of the speaker in arguing or disagreeing with homophobes.

(b). Basic meaning: the first sense of 'fight' as a verb according to the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners is the use of guns or weapons against each other. The same sense (to contend in battle or single combat) according to the Shorter Oxford Dictionary on Historical Principles (p. 696) is historically older than any other sense of the word.

(c). Contextual vs Basic meaning: the contextual meaning is slightly different from the basic meaning but can be understood in comparison with it. We can understand the abstract conflict in the contextual meaning in comparison with the use of physical weapons and striving to win a war in terms of the basic meaning of the word. It is therefore metaphorically used.

‘Homophobes’

- (a) Contextual meaning: in context, ‘homophobes’ refer to people who are against queer people and their activities.
- (b) Basic meaning: the most basic and only meaning of a ‘homophobe’ is a person who has an extreme fear or dislike of gay people (Cambridge English Dictionary Online, SHAYPRAM Developers).
- (c) Contextual vs Basic meaning: there is no contrast between the contextual and basic meaning of the word. Metaphorically used? No.

‘Last year’

- (a) Contextual meaning: the ‘year’ indicates the time period that the speaker engaged in arguing with his/her opposers (homophobes). The adjective ‘last’ qualifies the exact time period as the year prior to the time in which the statement is being made.
- (b) Basic meaning: the most basic meaning of ‘year’ is a period of 365 days or 366 days in a leap year, divided into 12 months.
- (c) Contextual vs Basic meaning: the contextual meaning is closely related to the basic meaning, and there is no contrast with it. It is therefore not metaphorically used.

‘This year’

- (a) Contextual meaning: contextually, ‘this year’ indicates the current period that the speaker intends not to engage in arguing with homophobes.
- (b) Basic meaning: the most basic meaning of ‘year’, as previously stated, is a period of 365 days or 366 days in a leap year, divided by 12 months. ‘This’ can be used as a

determiner, a demonstrative pronoun and as an adverb. The first sense of ‘this’ indicates ‘the one that is known’ used when you are referring to a particular person, thing, fact, etc, that has just been mentioned, or when it is obvious which one is being referred to.

(c) Contextual vs Basic meaning: there is no contrast between the contextual and basic meanings of ‘this year’. It is therefore not used metaphorically.

‘We’

(a) Contextual meaning: in this context, “we” refers to queer people.

(b) Basic meaning: it does not have a more basic meaning.

(c) Contextual vs Basic meaning: there is no contrast between the contextual and the most basic meaning of “we”. It is therefore not metaphorically used.

‘Will’

(a) Contextual meaning: it is a modal auxiliary verb used to show the future intention of the speaker to not engage in arguing with homophobes but to focus on enjoying his/her life.

(b) Basic meaning: it does not have a more basic meaning.

(c) Contextual vs Basic meaning: there is no contrast between the contextual and basic meaning. ‘Will’ is therefore not metaphorically used.

‘be’

(a) Contextual meaning: used as an auxiliary verb to link the modal verb ‘will’ to the adjective ‘happy’.

- (b) Basic meaning: it does not have a more basic meaning.
- (c) Contextual vs Basic meaning: there is no contrast between the contextual and basic meaning of 'be'. Metaphorically used? No.

'Happy'

- (a) Contextual meaning: in this context, it indicates the writer's intentions to not be sad or worried about what queer haters think about them (queer people) but to remain cheerful.
- (b) Basic meaning: the basic meaning of 'happy' is feeling 'pleased' and 'satisfied'.
According to the Macmillan English Dictionary for Advanced Learners (Rundell & Fox, 2002), 'happy' is a metaphor since feeling happy and hopeful is like being high up or moving upwards.
- (c) Contextual vs Basic meaning: the contextual meaning is the same as the basic meaning. 'Happy' is, however, an orientational metaphor. But it doesn't relate to the concept, LGBTQ, under study.

From the analysis of sample 1, the linguistic expressions *fighting*, *spent*, and *happy* have been found to be metaphorically used. However, 'spend' and 'happy' are not directly related to the LGBTQ+ concept and therefore will be ignored. *Fighting*, on the other hand, portrays how the LGBTQ+ concept is conceptually perceived from the evidence of the linguistic data. One way of metaphor analysis is "collecting examples of linguistic metaphors used to talk about the topic... generalising from them the conceptual metaphors they exemplify, and using the result to suggest understandings or thought patterns which construct or constrain people's beliefs or actions" (Cameron & Low, 2009, p.88).

Therefore, using the context in which the linguistic metaphor, ‘fighting’, has been used, the conceptual metaphor that I hypothesise from the linguistic metaphor is LGBTQ+ IS WAR.

WAR is the source domain used to understand the target domain, LGBTQ+.

3.5.2 Identifying Conceptual Metaphors

While the MIP is a relatively systematic process of identifying linguistic metaphors, it does not state how conceptual metaphors are derived from linguistic metaphorical expressions.

This issue has remained a concern for many metaphor analysts. Some metaphor researchers (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980; Lakoff, 1987; Kövecses, 2002) have employed a top-down approach in analysis, while others (Dobrovolskij & Piirainen, 2005) advocate for the use of a bottom-up approach. The top-down approach, also referred to as the traditional approach (Kövecses, 2011), formulates conceptual metaphors first and then finds linguistic evidence to support them (the conceptual metaphors), while the bottom-up approach derives conceptual metaphors based on linguistic evidence. The top-down approach has been criticised in favour of the bottom-up approach (Ansah, 2011). Despite all the strides made in identifying conceptual metaphors, there are still challenges in formulating conceptual metaphors.

Kövecses (2015) suggests that deriving metaphors from context is a systematic method to ensure that metaphor interpretations in discourse are accurate. Steen (1999), on the other hand, suggests that analysts use the prototypical principle to select the most relevant domain. Therefore, alongside the prototypical principle, this study considers the context in

which specific metaphorical expressions appear in interpreting metaphors. Both processes (context and prototypicality) are used to establish connections between conceptual domains. This study formulates conceptual metaphors from linguistic metaphors by using the data to identify all lexis that may serve as the starting point for determining the relevant source and target domains (Dawson-Amoah, 2024).

The features/aspects of the source domains are mapped onto the aspects of the target domains and presented in a tabular form, indicating which feature of the source domain maps onto which feature of the target domain, indicating how text producers perceive LGBTQ+ in Ghana. However, in instances where the features of the source domain are not mapped onto the features of the target domain but are only categorised under a source domain, the mappings are not tabulated. Evans & Green (2006) suggest that mapping is always partial, i.e., mappings between the source domain and the target domain may not always be based on compatible similarities in all elements of the domains but may be based on correspondences between partial elements or features between the domains where the utilised elements of the source domain are highlighted while hiding the other elements of the source domain that are not useful in structuring the target domain.

Subsequently, the conceptual metaphors inferred from the source domains are used to create conceptual keys and presented using SMALL CAPITAL LETTERS as used in the conceptual metaphor tradition, like ARGUMENT IS WAR. The conceptual metaphors are finally thematized according to their source domains, frames, or schema, and discussed. I will illustrate this using the data sample 1 above. The linguistic metaphor identified is

‘fighting’. Considering the word ‘fighting’, it is prototypically used in the context of war, which involves physical violence, indicating a physical struggle between two opponents. However, considering the context of usage in the text, there is no indication of physical violence. Fighting, as used in the data, refers to an abstract effort by the queer writer to avoid abstract violent engagements with homophobes.

Data processing presented challenges related to identifying, categorizing, and managing linguistic metaphorical expressions. To address interpretive challenges, Steen’s prototypical framework and contextual use of metaphors guided the identification of conceptual metaphors. A coding framework with clear conceptual categories was developed, and ambiguous cases were discussed collaboratively to ensure consistency. Inter-rater reliability testing was conducted with two independent coders, and Cohen’s Kappa confirmed substantial agreement. Finally, all expressions were systematically organised in structured spreadsheets to maintain transparency, traceability, and replicability. The conceptual metaphor LGBTQ+ IS WAR is derived, and the features of WAR are highlighted and mapped onto the target domain LGBTQ+ IS WAR as follows:

Table 3.3: LGBTQ+ IS WAR Metaphor

Source: WAR	Target: LGBTQ+
Attackers	homophobes
Defenders	LGBTQ+ people
Fighting	disagreements in Queer discourses
Launching attack	societal discrimination/criticism
Defending	asking for LGBTQ+ choice to be respected

Table 3.3 is an example of how the source domain, WAR, of a conceptual metaphor LGBTQ+ IS WAR, is mapped onto the target domain, LGBTQ+.

The following conceptual metaphors were derived from the metaphorical expressions gathered from the three sources of data: Ghanaweb.com, Facebook and X. The table presents the conceptual metaphors with their frequency of occurrence in the metaphorical expressions.

Table 3.4: Conceptual Metaphors Derived from the Database Base = N =185

METAPHOR	FREQ	(%)
LGBTQ+ IS WAR	59	32.0
LGBTQ+ IS INSANITY	32	17.3
LGBTQ+ IS A SIN	20	10.8
LGBTQ+ IS AN EVIL SPIRIT/DEMON	14	7.6
PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ+ ARE ANIMALS	13	7.0
LGBTQ+ IS A DISEASE/ILLNESS	13	7.0
LGBTQ+ IS A DESTRUCTIVE ENTITY/DANGER	9	4.9
LGBTQ+ IS A CONTAINER	6	3.2
LGBTQ+ IS CONFINEMENT/SLAVERY	4	2.16
LGBTQ+ IS DARKNESS	4	2.16
LGBTQ+ IS FILTH	6	3.2
LGBTQ+ IS A JOURNEY	3	1.6
LGBTQ+ IS A FORCE	2	1.08
TOTAL	185	100

3.5.3 Analysing the Cognitive Processes in Metaphor Creation

Though this study relies on the conceptual metaphor theory (CMT) in its data analysis, in analysing the cognitive processes, the study adopts the tools of the career of metaphor theory (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005), as this would allow a holistic approach to analysing the cognitive processes used in processing LGBTQ+ metaphors. This is because CMT largely relies on the comparison approach in processing metaphors, which only offers a one-way processing method to metaphors.

Bowdle & Gentner (2005) argue that despite the general view of metaphors as cross-domain mappings, there is little consensus on how mapping between metaphors takes place. Different approaches have therefore accounted for the processes involved in metaphoric mappings. The categorisation and comparison approaches are widespread among these processes (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005). The comparison approach, according to Bowdle & Gentner (2005), highlights preexisting but hidden similarities between the source and target domains.

The proponents of the categorisation model (Glucksberg & Keysar, 1990) argue that in metaphor processing, the literal target and base concepts are not directly compared. Instead, the base concept (the source) is used to reach or create an abstract metaphoric category where it serves as a prototypical member, and the target concept is then placed in this category. The dual reference theory (Glucksberg & Haught, 2006), on the other hand, suggests that metaphors are processed based on the grammatical form of a figurative

statement. They claim that metaphors which follow the grammatical structure of literal categorisations are understood through categorisation, while similes that follow the grammatical structure of literal comparisons are understood through comparison (Gokcesu, 2009).

The career of metaphor theory of processing metaphors (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005) unifies the comparison and categorisation theories. They posit that as metaphors become conventionalised, the mode of mapping shifts from comparison to categorisation. They claim that this shift is present in the language people use for figurative expressions. The framework also implies that the way metaphors are processed – whether directly or indirectly and whether at the level of individual concepts or entire conceptual domains – depends on their conventionality and linguistic form. The career of metaphor hypothesises that novel figurative statements are characterised by double predications as they are processed as comparison, while conventional figurative statements are processed with single predications as they allow categorisation as well as comparison (Gokcesu, 2009).

Following the hypothesis of the career of metaphor framework, the study identified any metaphor characterised by a double predication as processed through comparison, while any metaphor characterised by a single predication is considered to have been processed through categorisation. A single feature or property from the source domain is mapped onto the target domain in a single predication, whereas several properties from the source domain are mapped onto the target domain in a double predication. It produces an attribute transfer that is more sophisticated and multilayered, frequently incorporating complicated

interactions between the two domains. To determine if a metaphor is characterised by single predication or double predication, the researcher identified the properties/features of the source domain and if it had more than one feature, then they are mapped onto the features of the target domain and therefore considered a double predication, however, if the source domain is characterised by one property, it is marked a single predication. To illustrate this, I use the conceptual metaphor, LGBTQ+/HOMOSEXUALITY IS A CAGE, derived from the words bolded in the expression below.

2. Prince, for me, represents the archetype **struggler** with homosexuality. For onlookers, the drug addict, rapists, thieves, gays, etc., have a “problem” and need to be “put away”. That’s all well and good when you are not the one **caught in its clutches**. If we look closer, we’ll find that there are deeper issues that need to be addressed (Ghanaweb.com, 2006).

Firstly, the properties/features of the source domain are identified. They include: a confined place, it entraps, and it can be put away or discarded. These features are mapped onto being LGBTQ+ as follows: LGBTQ+ is an enclosed place where people who identify as LGBTQ+ find themselves and cannot leave at their will because it overpowers them and entraps them. They need help to be able to leave the confined space, thus to get rid of those feelings of being attracted to same-sex people. The context of the expression also conveys the feeling of how society wishes to ‘put people who identify as LGBTQ+ away’, like how a bird in a cage can be put away. The cognitive process involved in this metaphor is

therefore one of comparison since it is characterised by double predication. It allows us to process the metaphor LGBTQ+ IS A CAGE in several ways.

The cognitive process involved in the conceptual metaphor, LGBTQ+ IS SIN, is one of categorisation. In this process, the property of the source domain, SIN, is anything considered wrong or immoral in the face of religion. This process involves the straightforward and direct mapping of the characteristic of being morally wrong (or sinful) from the source domain (sin) onto the target domain (LGBTQ identities). The LGBTQ+ IS SIN metaphor is derived from the following statements (they are responses to a press statement where Catholic priests declared that they hate the act of LGBTQ+ but not the people who practice it, and would therefore bless them if they came to the church).

3. Great decision for the community. Y'all should stop being hypocrite. Y'all have secret **sin** you're enjoying doing it so allow others to enjoy their freedom. (X)

4. Do you know the difference is we know what we do is **sinful** and we are always praying for forgiveness and praying that God will rescue us from ourselves. But this people, they think they are right and what they are doing is not **sinful**, that is the difference (X).

5. This is equal to giving license to **sin**. No explanation will ever make sense of this statement. You can show love and mercy to LGBT people, but to bless their union is whatever contest is going against God's will

3.6 Ethical Considerations

Data for the study, which are comments collected from a Ghanaian news media website and social media platforms, are already in the public domain and therefore I did not need consent from the text producers. However, to ensure the privacy and anonymity of social media users, data is labelled with numbers instead of the names of the text producers. Links to the comments from social media platforms are not attached as references to ensure that the links do not lead to the profiles of the text producers, in order to ensure that, their privacy is protected. Also, data collected from the opinion section of the news website is labelled with numbers to protect their authors' privacy and anonymity. The links to data are discarded after the research report is examined by the university.

Following these measures to protect the privacy of the authors of the comments serving as the data for the study, I sought ethical clearance from the Ethics Committee for the Humanities, University of Ghana and was approved with ID, ECH 249/23-24.

3.7 Chapter Summary

In this chapter, I have outlined the methods used for data collection and the procedures for their analysis. The data and their sources, the tools for data collection, and the justification for their use have been described and explained.

CHAPTER FOUR

4.0 DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I analyse how Ghanaians conceptualise LGBTQ+. The chapter addresses the following research questions: (a) What linguistic metaphorical expressions are used to describe the LGBTQ+ concept, the LGBTQ+ Community, and LGBTQ+ activities in Ghana? (b) What conceptual metaphors underlie these linguistic metaphorical expressions? And (c) What cognitive processes are used in the creation of these conceptual metaphors? The chapter is organised by first categorising conceptual metaphors according to the source domain, schema or frames that were utilised to conceptualise LGBTQ+. Then, the correspondences between the source and target domains are established. Subsequently, the instances of the metaphorical expressions from which the conceptual metaphors are derived are presented. Finally, based on the feature mapping or correspondences between the source and target domains, I elucidate the cognitive processes employed in the creation of these conceptual metaphors. It is worth mentioning that the linguistic data is presented in the form it was collected. Therefore, the grammatical and spelling errors in the data are overlooked.

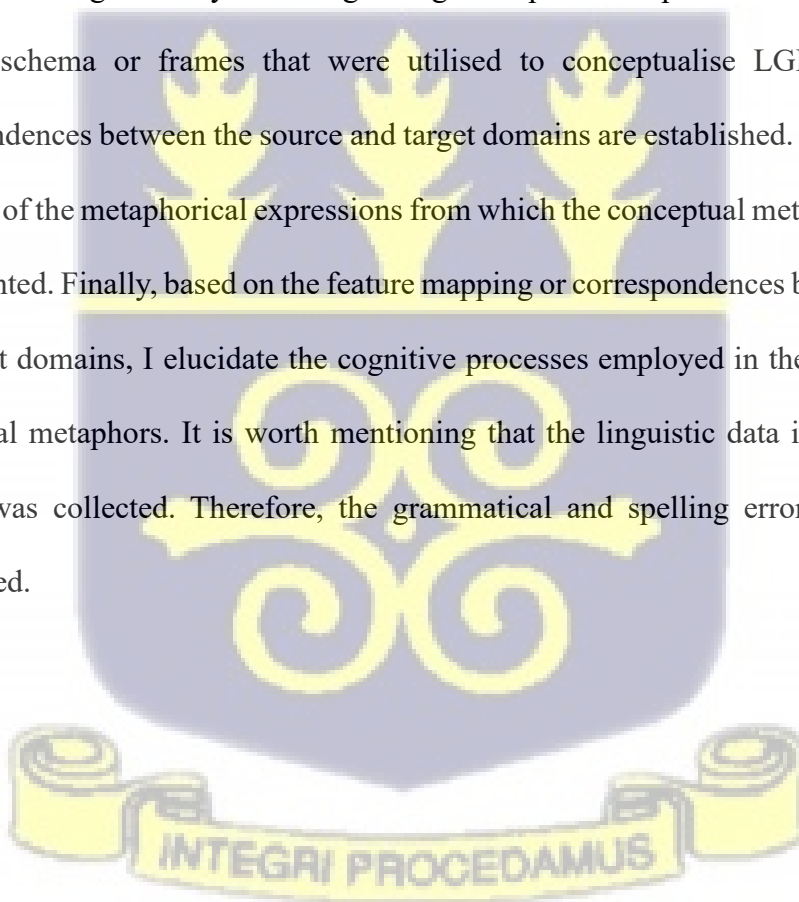


Table 4.1: Conceptual Metaphors and their qualitative details

Conceptual Metaphor	Qualitative Details
LGBTQ+ IS WAR	Frames LGBTQ+ presence as an invasion or attack threatening Ghanaian cultural and moral stability.
LGBTQ+ IS INSANITY	Constructs queer identity as a psychological abnormality or mental dysfunction.
LGBTQ+ IS A SIN	Aligns LGBTQ+ identities with religious transgression and moral wrongdoing.
LGBTQ+ IS AN EVIL SPIRIT / DEMON	Depicts LGBTQ+ as spiritually corrupt or influenced by satanic/demonic forces.
PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ+ ARE ANIMALS	Dehumanises LGBTQ+ individuals by comparing them to non-human creatures.
LGBTQ+ IS A DISEASE/ ILLNESS	Frames LGBTQ+ as contagious, infectious, and socially harmful.
LGBTQ+ IS A DESTRUCTIVE ENTITY / DANGER	Portrays LGBTQ+ as a threat to national morality, youth, and future development.

Conceptual Metaphor

Qualitative Details

LGBTQ+ IS A CONTAINER

Suggests LGBTQ+ identity is something stored inside an individual (e.g. “filled with gay ideas”).

LGBTQ+ IS FILTH

Represents LGBTQ+ identity as unclean, impure, and contaminating.

LGBTQ+ IS CONFINEMENT/
SLAVERY

Indicates LGBTQ+ individuals are enslaved or held captive by their desires.

LGBTQ+ IS DARKNESS

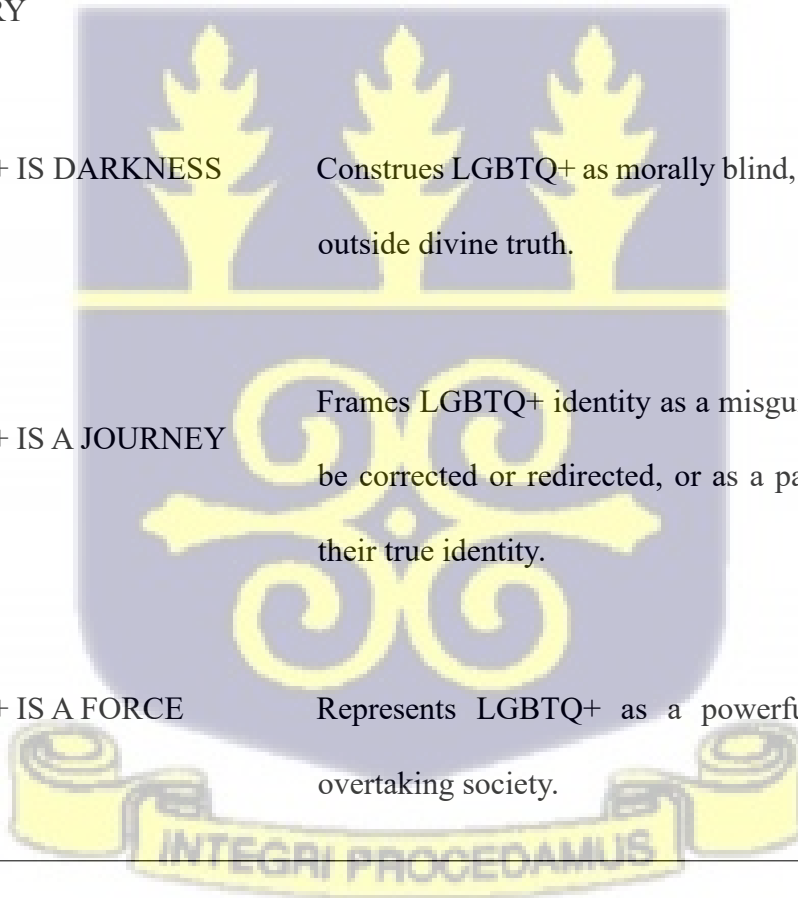
Construes LGBTQ+ as morally blind, spiritually lost, or outside divine truth.

LGBTQ+ IS A JOURNEY

Frames LGBTQ+ identity as a misguided path that can be corrected or redirected, or as a path to discovering their true identity.

LGBTQ+ IS A FORCE

Represents LGBTQ+ as a powerful external wave overtaking society.



4.2 LGBTQ+ IS WAR

From the data, the War metaphor has been used the most frequently to conceptualise LGBTQ+ by Ghanaians. LGBTQ+ is conceptualised as war 59 times in the data, making up 32%. The high frequency of the WAR metaphor is not surprising, as most arguments are characterised by the schema of war, since the people in arguments see themselves as opponents who must either win or lose the argument. This metaphor is grounded in our knowledge and experience of war and therefore built on the conceptual system of our culture (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980, p. 64), just as Lakoff and Johnson's (1980) ARGUMENT IS WAR metaphor. Flusberg et al. (2018) reiterate the ubiquity of war metaphors by stating that the widespread use of the WAR metaphor is a result of its ability to structure how people communicate and think about several topics, since many topics of discussion resemble war in structure and emotion. Flusberg et al. (2018) argue further that the knowledge of a prototypical war is widespread since many people have either experienced war or have learned about it. Thus, it is a significant part of human life and continues to shape our sociopolitical landscape. The mappings of the LGBTQ+ IS WAR metaphor are as follows:

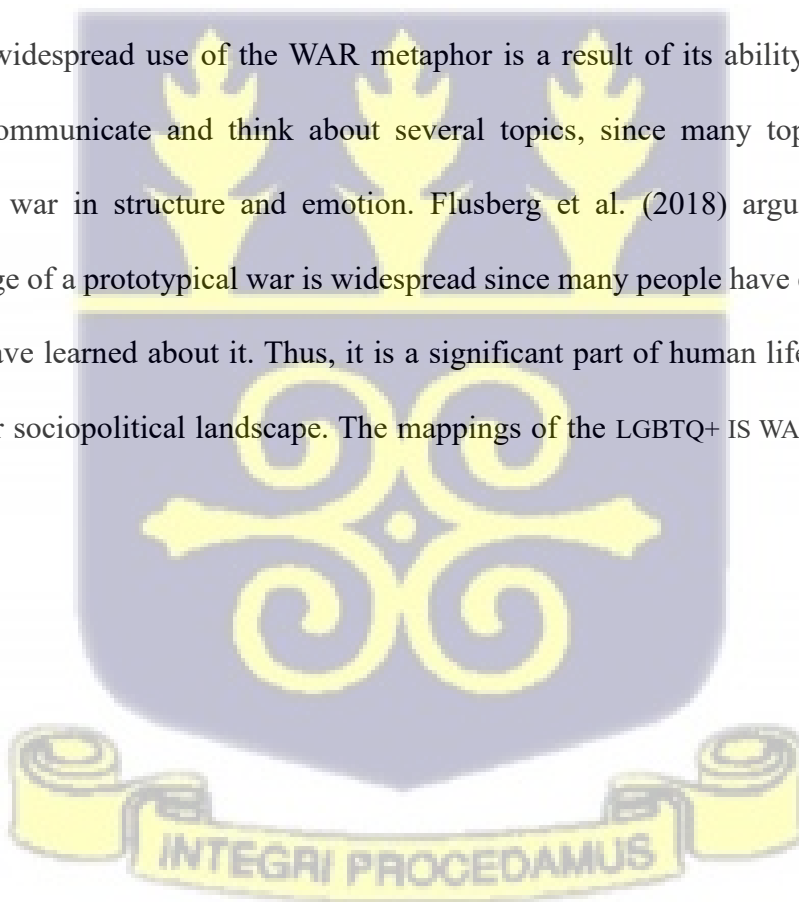


Table 4.2: LGBTQ+ IS WAR Mapping

Source: War		Target: LGBTQ+
Attackers	————→	homophobes
Defenders	————→	LGBTQ+ people
Fighting	————→	disagreements over Queerness
Launching attack	————→	societal discrimination/criticism
Defending	————→	asking for LGBTQ+ choice to be respected
Battle	————→	opposing LGBTQ+

The WAR metaphor frames an adversarial relationship between two groups who strive to win a goal. One group in this LGBTQ+ war, homophobes/opponents of LGBTQ+, are the attackers because they perceive anyone whose sexuality falls outside of heterosexuality, the normative social ideal of sexuality, as an opponent who must be stopped. The opponents of this war intend to win the fight by getting LGBTQ+ people to stop the practice. On the other hand, those who identify as LGBTQ+ are structured as defenders in the LGBTQ+ war who need to defend their sexuality. The bone of contention or the fight is the disagreements over LGBTQ+ subjectivity between its supporters and opponents. The opponents, in this fight, launch attacks by discriminating against the LGBTQ+ community or criticising them for their sexuality.

In the following metaphorical expressions, the text producers position themselves as attackers in the issue of LGBTQ+ by using words like *fight*, *battle*, and *wage war*, which

prototypically portray the use of violence to win war/combat. However, in the context of the use of these words, there is no physical violence like what happens in wars. Therefore, the words are not used literally. The text producers rely on their familiar knowledge or experience of war to explain how seriously they perceive the resistance of the target domain, LGBTQ+. This metaphor evokes the feeling of fear and violence. Flusberg et al., (2018) posit that the fear evoked by the war metaphor can intensify people's perception of the threat posed by an issue. The conceptualisation of LGBTQ+ as WAR can influence people to perceive LGBTQ+ and people who identify as LGBTQ+ as a threat that needs to be weeded out, and this may lead to violence against the LGBTQ+ community. The following instances realise the war metaphor in this study:

8. The Presiding Bishop of Winning Grace International Church, Gospel Osei Tutu has called on the church in Ghana to be steadfast in the **fight** against homosexuality (Ghanaweb, 2021).

9. The statement (of the National Chief Imam of Ghana) further drew attention to both the Koran and the Bible on their abhorrence of what it called immoral tendencies and called on all imams and the clergy to **fight** what it termed an alien practice to Africa (Ghanaweb, 2011).

10. We will **resist** any attempt to allow this nonsense to permeate in this country. So help us God (X).

11. I am so proud of the decision of SCOTUS today that resounds with the desires of majority of Americans.

Heterosexuals have the right to hold views on members of the LGBTQI and **fight** for our beliefs to be RESPECTED and ENFORCED. We are on the right path (X).

12. We'll NEVER accept this kind of madness into our society... at least NOT in our time. We'll even **wage war** to prevent this, if we have to. Now get the ANTI-GAY bill done for our coconut head Prez to sign(X).

13. Hon. Sam George, this is the **battle** of the Lord. He's a **winner** and all those on His side will be crowned winners. I love you and support you (X).

In the following expressions, the supporters of LGBTQ+ are portrayed as the defenders in the LGBTQ+ war.

14. The UN human rights experts on Friday condemned the arrest and alleged arbitrary detention of 21 people **defending** the rights of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans and gender diverse (LGBTQ) community (Ghanaweb.com 2021.)

15. Ghana should ensure that no one is criminalized for **defending** the fundamental rights of LGBT people (Ghanaweb, 2021).

The LGBTQ+ supporters are not only on the defending side of the LGBTQ+ 'battle', they also attack the opposers of the act. The following linguistic metaphorical expressions show

how pro-LGBTQ+ people sometimes are on the attacking side. Extract (17) is a response by a person who identifies as a queer person responding to a tweet by another queer person who expressed their intention to document all their happy experiences.

16. Ningo Prampram Member of Parliament, Sam Nartey

George, has disclosed how his advocacy for the antiLGBTQ+ Bill has earned him **attacks** from pro-samesex relations (Ghanaweb, 2023)

17. Yhup... I spent so much time and energy **fighting**

homophobes last year, this year we will be happy (X).

From the data, the LGBTQ+ IS WAR metaphor not only structures a war between the opposers of LGBTQ+ and its supporters, the metaphor also structures an adversarial relationship between people who identify as LGBTQ+ and the struggle to accept their identity. This conceptualisation portrays LGBTQ+ individuals as being at war with their identities as they struggle to accept their sexual orientation. The expression (18) illustrates this conceptualisation. It is an account of a gay man who has struggled with his identity and is at a point where he seems to have gotten rid of the feeling of being attracted sexually to other men, but acknowledges the challenges he had to go through to get to that point.

18. Finally, I came to the “I was born this way” junction.

This tends to be a breaking point **for many who struggle with same-sex tendencies** and more so those with a Christian inclination like Prince’s and mine. Beyond this point, God has taken me through a painfully slow process of recovery but it has been well worth the effort.

There have been many relapses but things are pretty stable now (Ghanaweb, 2006).

The expression (18) specifically reveals the metaphor, SEXUALITY ORIENTATION ACCEPTANCE IS A BATTLE where the source domain is a battle and the target domain is sexual orientation acceptance (LGBTQ+). The struggle or ongoing fight against an adversary in a battle is likened to the internal conflict that one who identifies as LGBTQ+ goes through as a result of the emotional and psychological struggle in accepting one's orientation. Though the word *relapse* is prototypically used in the field of health, in the war metaphor, it can be conceptualised as the moments of losing grounds in the fight/battle and this is likened to the instances of doubt or difficulty that impede progress in the acceptance of one's sexual orientation. This is why some scholars (e.g. Cameron, 2003; Yasynetska, 2005, p. 30) argue that depriving some metaphors highlighted in metaphorical expressions may be a problem since "simultaneously used metaphors can be believed to incorporate different concepts in a single statement" as knowing which conceptual mapping is intended most by the text producer may be difficult. So, just as there are victories in war, this victory is mapped onto the periods of growth and self-acceptance of one's sexual orientation. Finally, the stability an opponent in war feels after achieving a balanced and secure state after a battle corresponds to an individual subsequently accepting their sexual orientation.

The WAR metaphor is also used to frame the Ghanaian family as an adversary who is at war with LGBTQ+. LGBTQ+ in this frame is understood as a destructive agent to the family and therefore, the family needs protection against LGBTQ+. The mapping above is

relevant to this frame as well. However, the opponents in the war as portrayed by the expressions below are family and LGBTQ+.

19. So, of course we may have to love the homosexuals, we have to care for them just as we love every sinner but we must not condone and connive with that kind of evil practice which is basically **going to destroy the family** it is basically going on right now in US. It is better the church wake up. I believe in loving the people but I still hate the behaviour called homosexuality. (Ghanaweb,

2021)

20. Yes, Sam, you get it. They never just wanted equality they want superiority they want everyone to say LGBT is good and if you refuse, they will hurt you. **RUN from LGBT protect your families**, cities and nations from it

(X).

21. This is not just a national thing it is **a fight to save the family** it is a world problem. We are learning fast how dangerous LGBT is. (X)

This finding, LGBTQ+ IS WAR metaphor strongly converges with Anipah's (2017) observation that online news platforms often portray LGBTQ+ debates as conflict-laden, and with Amarithnukrow's (2020) argument that public rhetoric constructs LGBTQ+ identities as part of a broader cultural "war." Baisley (2015) similarly noted that across the African region, political actors frame LGBTQ+ issues as ideological invasions. The

consistency between these studies and the present findings confirms that conflict-based frames remain a dominant interpretive resource in Ghanaian public discourse. A point of divergence emerges, however, with Atuguba (2019), who found that legal and political debates often adopt constitutional language over explicitly war-like metaphors. This difference is likely due to the nature of the datasets: formal institutional discourse tends to be technical and procedural, whereas social media discourse is more emotionally expressive, making conflict metaphors more pronounced in the present study.

From the mapping of the features of the source domain (WAR), it is evident that most of the features of the source domain are mapped onto the features of the target domain, LGBTQ+ thus establishing similarities between the source domain and the target domain. Thus, the two opposition groups in a war, the attackers and defenders have been mapped onto the two opposition groups in the LGBTQ+ disagreements; homophobes and pro-LGBTQ+ people. Just as they are winners and losers in a war, the supporters or opposers of LGBTQ+ will be winners if any of the sides achieve their goals. In a war, there is a goal to be won, just as in the LGBTQ+ disagreements. This mapping is therefore a double predication, indicating that the metaphor is processed cognitively through comparison.

4.3 LGBTQ+ IS A DISEASE/ILLNESS

The LGBTQ+ IS A DISEASE/ILLNESS metaphor appeared in 13 instances which makes 7% of the data. This metaphor portrays the LGBTQ+ concept as pathogenic/pathological. Thus, the LGBTQ+ IS A DISEASE/ILLNESS metaphor is grounded in the experience of what a disease is like. Thus, it allows the text producers to understand LGBTQ+ as something they know

more readily, a disease, which can be contracted as well as get treated. Charteris-Black, (2004) argues that “since most of us have experienced loss of health at some point in our lives, the DISEASE metaphor is an easily accessible conceptual frame” (p. 150). I will discuss the metaphor LGBTQ+ IS INSANITY as part of the DISEASE/ILLNESS metaphor since they are related. Both metaphors allow text producers to conceptualise LGBTQ+ as a medical problem and therefore portray people who identify as LGBTQ+ as people who need medical intervention. The INSANITY metaphor also appears 32 times in the data making 16.32 percent.

These metaphors (DISEASE/INSANITY) together appear as the second most frequently conceptualised domain. Dalton (2016) argues that the “pathologization of homosexuality as a congenital condition has long been held in the medical and legal discourse until it was removed from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM) by the Psychiatric Association in 1973” (p. 9). Krafft-Ebing’s (1886) work, *Psychopathia Sexualis* is one of the first to have classified homosexuality as a psychopathological condition. This view has continued to influence people’s thoughts about sexuality and other minority sexual identities. The disease conceptualization also aligns with Adegbola’s (2018) work, which documented how Nigerian social media users employ infection- and contamination-based language to describe socially marginalised groups. Baisley (2015) likewise found that metaphors of sickness and moral contamination are common in African anti-LGBTQ+ rhetoric. The present study therefore, confirms that biomedical metaphors remain a powerful tool for framing LGBTQ+ identities as harmful and socially destructive. While Anipah (2017) emphasised conflict rather than disease framing, the prominence of

biomedical imagery in this study may reflect the highly emotive and alarmist tendencies of user-generated online content, which privileges metaphors that invoke fear and urgency. The feature mappings characterised by the DISEASE/ILLNESS/INSANITY metaphor are as follows;

Table 4.3.: Mappings of the LGBTQ+ IS A DISEASE/ILLNESS metaphor

Source: DISEASE/ILLNESS		Target: LGBTQ+
Disease/illness	—————	
Symptoms	—————	confusion and uncertainty about LGBTQ+ sexual identities
Contagion	—————	prevalence of LGBTQ+
Treatment	—————	intervention
Recovery/healing process	—————	process of change
Insanity	—————	identifying as LGBTQ+
Relapse	getting sexually	attracted to same-sex after getting rid of the feelings for a while

Conceptually, LGBTQ+ is equated to a disease or illness, the spread or contagious nature of a disease is understood conceptually by text producers as the prevalence of LGBTQ+ in Ghanaian society; the confusion and uncertainty that individuals who start to experience same-sex attraction may feel about their identities are conceptualised in terms of the confusion that the symptoms of a disease may cause, the knowledge that there is the need

for the treatment of a disease or illness maps onto the need for some form of intervention for people who identify as LGBTQ+, the process of change from identifying as LGBTQ+ to being 'straight' or heterosexual is understood in terms of the recovery or healing process from an illness. And just as some diseases like AIDs lead to stigmatisation, there is a social stigma towards people who identify as Lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgenders and queer persons. The following metaphorical expressions realise the LGBTQ+ IS A DISEASE/ILLNESS metaphor.

22. Finally, I came to the "I was born this way" junction.

This tends to be a breaking point for many who **struggle** with same-sex tendencies and more so those with a Christian inclination like Prince's and mine. Beyond this point, God has taken me through a painfully **slow process of recovery** but it has been well worth the effort.

There have been many **relapses** but things are pretty stable now (Ghanaweb, 2006).

23. **Like the Bird flu**, the lack of proper mechanisms will only result in further corruption. Many torn in this web do not know which side of the pendulum to swing to but with **the right counsel, prayer and TIME**, the desired change can come. The comments of some Christians startle me! Christ hated sin but not the sinner! (Ghanaweb,2006).

24. This immoral **disease** will not be allowed to be **epidemic** in our motherland despite our differences. I am with you (X).

25. History will forever be grateful to you @samgeorgegh for such a good fight. For the useful idiots who don't get it like @Brongs_kasa, just follow @libsoftiktok for example and you may understand the **pathology** of this social menace (X).

26. Let's be biblical enough, sin is **contagious** we must raise our kids right but we must also **sanitize** the environment in which the kids live. Remember the righteous Lot was distressed by the sin of Sodom (Facebook).

From the text 22-26, the expressions *relapse*, *recovery*, *epidemic*, *pathology*, *contagious* and *sanitize* are prototypically used in the domain of medicine and specifically used when speaking about diseases. The context of usage suggests that the text producers use the disease schema to conceptualise the LGBTQ+ concept. The expressions *contagious* and *epidemic* transfer the knowledge of the wide and fast spread of a disease or virus unto the concept of LGBTQ+. In this way, it suggests that one can protect themselves from being infected with the LGBTQ+ disease. The use of the simile 'Like the bird flu' also likens LGBTQ+ to a disease or virus. However, the simile does not outrightly compare the features of the bird flu to the LGBTQ+ concept but highlights the management of the spread of the bird flu in Ghana. Indicating that LGBTQ+ is fast spreading like a virus and if measures are not put in place to curb its spread, it will likely infect everyone. Besides the

words that prototypically refer to a disease or illness, some expressions directly frame LGBTQ+ as a disease by directly using expressions like *disease*, *sick*, *not healthy*, etc. This finding is not surprising as Steen (1999) observes that there are many instances where the name of a particular conceptual metaphor is used in a linguistic expression and that provides the linguistic support for conceptual metaphors. The expressions from 27-30 illustrate Steen's claim where the use of direct words like *disease*, *sick*, and *not healthy* implies the DISEASE/ILNESS metaphor.

27. You all should forget this. We will remain in this poverty

and fight this **disease** until it is no longer heard even

before in our lives. You two beautiful mothers shouldn't even start this. Ahh Akuya Osei paaa what are u talking about. I adore u so much, don't give me reasons not to pls (facebook).

28. Did God send his only begotten son, Jesus Christ to save

only the **RIGHTEOUS**? Jesus said in Luke 5:31-32: "**It is not the healthy** who need a doctor, but the **sick**. I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance."

(X).

29. Citing the plight of some vulnerable people who have

been abused or exploited because of poverty, Rev. Dr.

Lawrence Tetteh said that prostitution and homosexuality are **not right or healthy** and that he

would not want his children to be involved in such activities (Ghanaweb, 2024).

30. All in the name of a certain +. What sort of **sickness** is that? May Allah guide and protect us from these people (X).

LGBTQ+ is also conceptualised as INSANITY. This domain is the second-highest source domain used to conceptualise LGBTQ+. Insanity in this context is seen as a disease that makes someone do things that they cannot be held accountable for. This conceptualisation can lead to social stigmatisation and discrimination against the LGBTQ+ community. The metaphorical expressions that realise the INSANITY metaphor are;

31. We are done with this discussion long ago. It is clear Ghana stands against LGBTQI+ **insanity** by likemindedness. Not those 275 honorables out of the over 32million Ghanaians sitting in large room talking everyday (X).

32. That is satanic, mentally **insanity**, religiously immoral, naturally against nature, socially unacceptable and physically disgusting and despicable and I spit on it (X).

33. When we warn that these are the real dangers associated with this **mental disorder** masquerading as wokeness, people say we are full of hate. Absolutely! We hate the assault on the innocence of our children! (X).

34. We beg waa, try induce some sense into the parliamentarians make they try pass the bill and to officially consider lgbtq a CRIME. Yentumi 3ny3 hw3

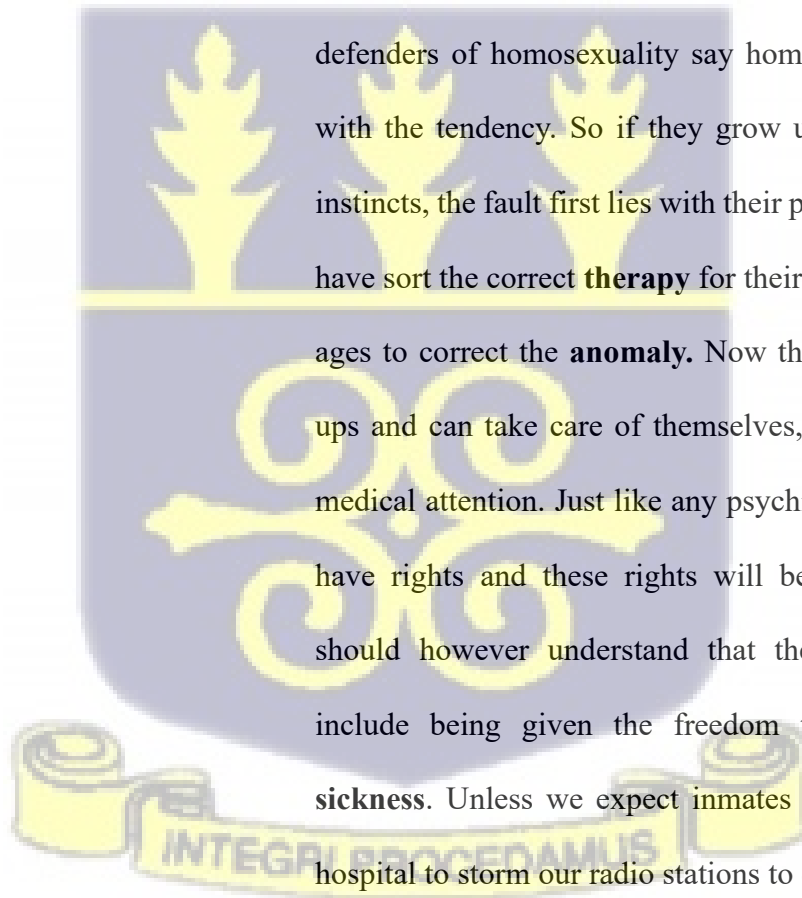
have for this **madness insanity** barbaric act we have to be accepted in our society regardless our norms, morals and values. #STOPLGBTG (X)

35. We must stop this **madness** before it becomes a problem here in Ghana. (X)

36. **Mental derangement**, even if from birth is a malaise that should be **treated** at the **psychiatric hospital**.

Psychiatric patients have human rights that should be respected as they undergo medical treatment. Now the defenders of homosexuality say homosexuals are born with the tendency. So if they grow up still with those instincts, the fault first lies with their parents who should have sort the correct **therapy** for their kids in their early ages to correct the **anomaly**. Now that they are grown ups and can take care of themselves, they should seek medical attention. Just like any psychiatric patient, they have rights and these rights will be respected. They should however understand that their rights do not include being given the freedom to manifest their **sickness**. Unless we expect inmates of the psychiatric hospital to storm our radio stations to defend their rights to roam our streets to manifest their mental disorders!

(facebook)



The expression in (37) however, frames homophobia as insanity. Though this is the only instance, it is worth noting that while opposers of LGBTQ+ conceptualise the identity as insanity, some of the supporters or the LGBTQ+ community also see the opposers as mentally unwell for fighting against sexual minority groups. This resonates with the finding that the same conceptual metaphor can be used in different situations to construct diverse/binary ideologies (Amarinthukrowh, 2020; Chiang & Su, 2022).

37. Homophobic is a **mental diseases**..when the brain doesn't work they body suffers. That is why they are suffering their brains are not working..stop using children to justify ur hate for the LGBTIQ community.....shame on you..all of you. (X)

LGBTQ+ has also been framed as an ABNORMALITY. This framing allows LGBTQ+ to once again be construed as a sickness/illness which can be medically corrected. The following linguistic expressions realise the abnormality frame. These expressions are responses to a video of an interview of a gay man where he shared his experiences.

38. U ankasa **only abnormal pple** u dey interview (Facebook)

39. Have you finished interviewing all the **normal people** in Italy?? (Facebook)

The LGBTQ+ IS A DISEASE/ILLNESS metaphor is characterised by double predication as multiple properties of a sickness /illness have been projected onto the target domain, LGBTQ+. The double prediction employed indicates that the DISEASE metaphor is processed cognitively through comparison.

4.4 LGBTQ+ IS A SIN

The LGBTQ+ IS A SIN metaphor appeared 20 times, making 10.8% of the data and was the third highest occurring metaphor in the data. This is not surprising as Ghana is a religious country with Christians being the largest number (Ghana Statistical Service, 2021). Sin, according to the Macmillan English Dictionary is “an action, thought, or way of behaving that is wrong according to religious laws” (p. 1332). This metaphor is influenced by religious knowledge and belief. SIN has a schematic structure that frames LGBTQ+ identities within a context of moral and spiritual deviance. It draws on concepts of morality, spirituality, and supernatural malevolence to convey negative judgments about LGBTQ+ identities.

LGBTQ+ IS SIN metaphor is used to conceptualise LGBTQ+ as a violation of divine or religious laws. Though, these domains are equally abstract like the target domain, they are subjectively accessible conceptually due to the knowledge from religious experience and are therefore used by the text producers to conceptualise LGBTQ+. Just as sinners are to be punished by a supreme being, God, this frame portrays LGBTQ+ individuals as offenders of divine or religious laws who are deserving of punishment, whether social, legal, or spiritual, in line with the concept of sin and its repercussions. The linguistic expressions that realise the SIN frame are as follows;

40. Why bless that which God calls **sin**? It is time one
educates himself to be able to read through the scriptures

and know God's original will for mankind and not accept man's interpretation (X).

41. This is equal to **giving** license to **sin**. No explanation will ever make sense of this statement. You can show love and mercy to LGBT people, but to bless their union is whatever contest is going against God's will (X).

42. Did God send his only begotten son, Jesus Christ to save only the **RIGHTEOUS**? Jesus said in Luke 5:31-32: “It is not the healthy who need a doctor, but the sick. I have not come to call the righteous, but **sinner**s to repentance.” (X)

43. If God forbids a **sin** who is priest to bless that sin? (X)

44. We love the people but we hate the behaviour. We separate the people from the behaviour, of course, we love **sinner**s. Homosexuality is not the only **sin** there is in the world, we have adulteress/adulteresses, we love them, we care deeply for them, but to say to support that **evil behaviour**, that is where the issue is so we must not try to combine that two that if I am against the behaviour it doesn't necessarily mean I am against the person (Ghanaweb, 2021).

The expressions 40-44 are comments responding to the Catholic Bishops' declaration that they will bless people who identify as LGBTQ+ when they need the blessing for, it is the

act that must be condemned and not the people. The text producers frame the LGBTQ+ as a violation of religious laws which makes it a sin and those who practice the act as sinners. This construal convinces the text producers that the ‘sinners’ do not deserve God’s blessings and therefore should be punished. This conceptual metaphor is based on the categorisation process. The features of LGBTQ+ cannot actually be similar to that of sin as sin is seen as a unit. The text producers therefore categorised LGBTQ+ as anything that is against divine laws. The mappings that characterise the LGBTQ+ IS SIN metaphor are as follows.

Table 4.4.: Mappings for LGBTQ+ IS SIN metaphor

Source: SIN		Target: LGBTQ+
Sin/offence	—————→	LGBTQ+
Sinners/offenders	—————→	LGBTQ+ individuals
Divine punishment	—————→	societal/legal/spiritual consequences
God (Judge)	—————→	law/society

4.5 LGBTQ+ IS AN EVIL ENTITY

I discuss the frames EVIL SPIRIT, DEMON and DEVIL under the LGBTQ+ IS AN ENVIL ENTITY in line with Morgan’s (2008) metaphor family idea as these frames share similar schematic structures. Morgan (2008) introduces the idea of metaphor families to explain situations where crossover mappings can occur among a set of domains that share identical schematic structures. Devil refers to “the most powerful evil spirit in many religions such as Christianity and Islam” (p. 379). Demons are also known as “evil spirits” (2002, p. 368). Devil, evil spirit, and demon can therefore be used interchangeably in the light of religion.

The EVIL SPIRIT/DEMON/DEVIL schema is built upon personification based on religious knowledge. The abstract concept of LGBTQ+ is understood in terms of a relatively concrete supernatural entity, EVIL SPIRIT/DEMON/DEVIL which has the ability to mislead people into doing things which are against divine laws. In the expression (45) for instance, devil has been given the quality of a human, lying. This quality allows the text producer to see LGBTQ+ as an entity which can probably speak or whisper words to convince you wrongly into developing homosexual feelings. The expressions which this metaphor is derived from are the following:

45. **Evil spirit** is entering many people in America, and **the chief liar, the devil**, wants to spread into other parts of the world rapidly. (X)

46. I support this move, but the best of it all is that all chiefs should place a Curse on their land against **this evil** act in Ghana. (FACEBOOK)

47. God richly bless those who are against **this evil**, our chief Imam should also lead the way. We can't tolerate this barbaric act in the name of human rights. (FACEBOOK)

48. **Evil prevails** when the righteous keep quiet. We will fight this **thing** till we win. (FACEBOOK)

49. I'm excited to read this, at least we still have leaders who are not being led by their own selfish desires, we still have leaders who know the difference between **demonic possession** and human rights....I'm a happy man this

morning (facebook)

50. Madam take ur useless antics and cheap **demonic** infested sympathy seeking tactics away. So we should allow **your demon** to influence our children with his he/she mentality and behaviour. If you’ve failed to nurture him but reared him, don’t force us to accept a reared him (facebook).

Table 4.5: Mappings of LGBTQ+ IS AN EVIL ENTITY metaphor

Source: AN EVIL ENTITY	Target: LGBTQ+
Evil/Demon	LGBTQ+ Orientation
Harmful	destruction of societal norms

The examples from 45-49 are responses to a video in which a mother of a Ghanaian transgender person asked Ghanaians to accept her daughter as she preferred to be seen as a woman. The metaphors portrayed LGBTQ+ orientation to be an evil spirit and therefore see LGBTQ+ people as demons. This “demon” (LGBTQ+ orientation), is seen to be harmful, thus a destruction of Ghanaian societal norms.



4.6 LGBTQ+ IS DARKNESS

This metaphor occurred only four (4) times, making 2.16 percent of the data. This frame is also based on the experience of religious knowledge. According to the Dictionary of Bible Themes (2009) whose work is based on the New International Version (NIV), darkness is often used in the scripture as a symbol of sin and its effects. In a religious setting, especially Christianity, Darkness is symbolically associated with evil, sin, ignorance, or being away from the divine light. These associations form the source domain of the metaphor. Darkness is often portrayed as the opposite of goodness, morality, or godliness, and is linked to moral deviation, spiritual corruption, or estrangement from God's will. LGBTQ+ in this light is portrayed as a sin and a moral deviation. This framing portrays LGBTQ+ individuals as sinners and morally wrong individuals. This framing shapes how society perceives LGBTQ+ and the people who identify as LGBTQ+ as people who should be condemned and seek repentance. The religious conceptualisations – SIN, EVIL, DARKNESS closely mirror findings by Amarithnukrow (2020), who noted that US same-sex discourse often positions LGBTQ+ identities as moral threats requiring spiritual or ethical resistance. Baisley (2015) similarly observed that religiously informed moral condemnation shapes anti-LGBTQ+ attitudes in many African contexts. While Atuguba (2019) acknowledged the presence of religious beliefs in public debates, his focus on legal rhetoric meant these metaphors were not as prominent. This divergence is again attributable to differences in communicative context, as social media discourse foregrounds moral emotions and spiritual judgments more readily than legal texts.

Table 4.6: Mappings for LGBTQ+ IS DARKNESS metaphor

Source: DARKNESS		Target: LGBTQ_
Sin	————→	LGBTQ+ orientation
Immorality	————→	practicing LGBTQ+

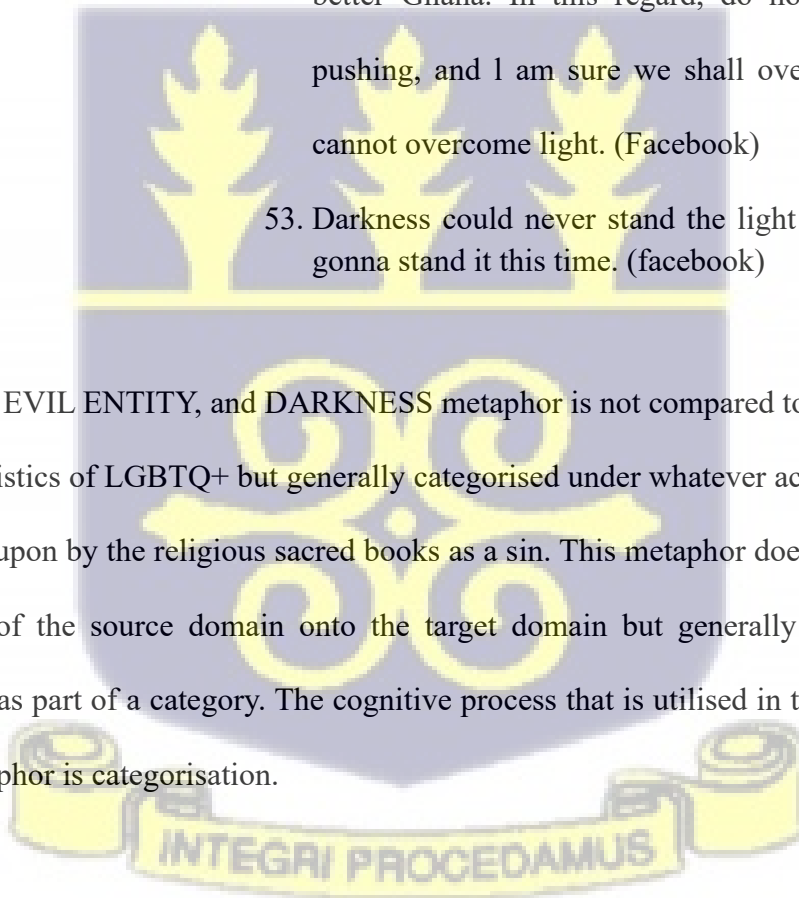
The expressions 51-53 realises the metaphor LGBTQ+ IS DARKNESS metaphor.

51. Light shall prevail over **darkness**. (X)

52. God bless the clergy. God set you over us to lead us to a better Ghana. In this regard, do not relent, keep on pushing, and I am sure we shall overcome. **Darkness** cannot overcome light. (Facebook)

53. Darkness could never stand the light and it is sure not gonna stand it this time. (facebook)

The SIN, EVIL ENTITY, and DARKNESS metaphor is not compared to any characteristics of LGBTQ+ but generally categorised under whatever act is condemned or frowned upon by the religious sacred books as a sin. This metaphor does not map specific features of the source domain onto the target domain but generally treats the source domains as part of a category. The cognitive process that is utilised in the construction of this metaphor is categorisation.



4.7 LGBTQ+ IS A CONTAINER

The LGBTQ+ IS A CONTAINER metaphor is conceptualised through the image schema of a container, grounded in the experience of viewing the human body as a container with the skin as a bounding surface and an in-out orientation. This experience is projected onto sexuality (in this case, LGBTQ+). The container schema is grounded in the ESM metaphor STATES ARE LOCATIONS. The event structure metaphor (ESM) is a schema used to understand various types of events and actions in terms of movement through space. This schema enables us to structure abstract concepts and experiences by mapping them onto more concrete, physical experiences of moving from one place to another. The ESM is a collection of metaphors that interrelate in the interpretation of utterances (Evans & Green, 2006). This metaphor is realised in only 5 instances of usage.

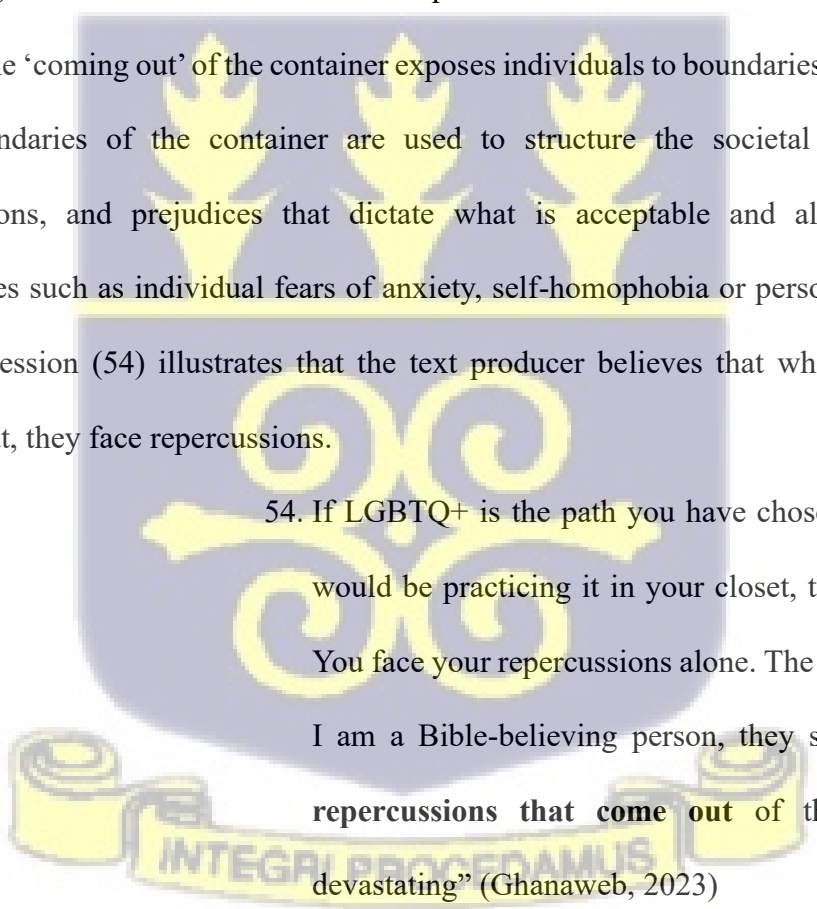
Table 4.7: Mappings of LGBTQ+ IS A CONTAINER metaphor

Source: Container	Target: LGBTQ+
Being inside a container	keeping one's LGBTQ+ identity secret
boundaries of the container	restrictions on practicing LGBTQ+
coming out of the container	revealing one's LGBTQ+ identity/coming out

The container metaphor is explicitly invoked through the reference to the "closet," representing the secrecy and hidden nature of LGBTQ+ identities. Additionally, the idea that repercussions "come out" of the practice reinforces the container metaphor, suggesting that negative outcomes are contained within and emerge from the hidden practice. Keeping one's LGBTQ+ identity secret for the fear of societal discrimination, judgement and

personal discomfort (due to the individual's difficulty in accepting their identity) is understood in terms of being inside a container. The 'closet' or container thereby serves as a safe space for protection from external judgement (from the society) and a place of confinement that stifles one's urge to express their authentic sexuality.

On the other hand, disclosing one's LGBTQ+ identity is structured in terms of the concrete concept of coming out from a container or a bounded area. This involves moving from a hidden state, thus, from inside the container to a visible and open state (outside the container). This schema relies on the concept of VISIBILITY and OPENNESS (Dyrmo, 2023). The 'coming out' of the container exposes individuals to boundaries of the container. The boundaries of the container are used to structure the societal norms, cultural expectations, and prejudices that dictate what is acceptable and also the personal boundaries such as individual fears of anxiety, self-homophobia or personal experiences. The expression (54) illustrates that the text producer believes that when an individual comes out, they face repercussions.

The background of this section features a large, semi-transparent watermark of the University of Ghana crest. The crest is a shield with a blue field containing three golden palm trees. Below the shield is a golden banner with the Latin motto 'INTEGRUM PROCEDEMUS'.

54. If LGBTQ+ is the path you have chosen to follow and would be practicing it in your closet, that is up to you. You face your repercussions alone. The point is, because I am a Bible-believing person, they should know the repercussions that come out of this practice are devastating” (Ghanaweb, 2023)

The CONTAINER schema reflects complex societal attitudes towards LGBTQ+ identities. First, it emphasizes the hostile environment that forces people who identify as LGBTQ+ to

hide their identities and also highlights the societal discrimination that the LGBTQ+ community faces when they decide to reveal their identities. The following metaphorical expressions realise the LGBTQ+ IS A CONTAINER metaphor:

55. I believe loads of queer people are still very much **stuck** **in** the hetero normative mind space. It'll be a long road unlearning all that, but it's very possible. These people just have to be open to change, and realize that trans men/women are still very much men/women! (X)

56. It has shown that if you openly discriminate against MSM (males having sex with males), people move **into the closet** and that have many ramifications (Ghanaweb, 2011)

57. I reckon August 24, 2006 to be the great day of “**coming out**” for the Gay and Lesbian community in Ghana- Prince McDonald (president of GALAG) on Joy FM’s super morning show. (Ghanaweb, 2006. opinion)

58. How would you feel when, taflatse, in your 60s, one of your children **comes out of the closet** & announces to be gay as has happened to former US VP Dick Cheney & many other ultra-right Republican Conservatives? Would you incinerate him/her like the way JJ’s boys did Yeyeboy? (X)

59. Much as they accept that their choice of sex is immoral.

Nobody is prohibiting them from doing so **in their closet**, national acceptance is not by force (X)

4.8. LGBTQ+ IS A JOURNEY

One of the metaphors also used to conceptualise LGBTQ+ from the data gathered is LGBTQ+ IS A JOURNEY. This metaphor is also structured by the EVENT STRUCTURE METAPHOR and the SOURCE-PATH-GOAL schema. This conceptualisation is understood through the ESM components: LONG-TERM PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES ARE JOURNEYS; STATES ARE LOCATIONS, and DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS. The LONG-TERM PURPOSEFUL ACTIVITIES ARE JOURNEYS metaphor frames the sustained efforts to unlearn the notion that heterosexual orientations are the norm in terms of a JOURNEY. The process is seen as a long-term, purposeful activity similar to embarking on a journey with a clear objective. The expression in (60) below reflects this schema.

The STATES ARE LOCATIONS concept structures the acceptance of one's LGBTQ+ identity as a location. This is reflected in the expression;

60. I believe loads of queer people are still very much stuck in the hetero normative mind space. It'll be a long road unlearning all that, but it's very possible. These people just have to be open to change, and realize that trans men/women are still very much men/women! (X)

61. Finally, I came to the “**I was born this way**” junction.

This tends to be a **breaking point** for many who struggle with same-sex tendencies and more so those with a Christian inclination like Prince’s and mine. Beyond this point, God has taken me through a painfully slow process of recovery but it has been well worth the effort. There have been many relapses but things are pretty stable now. (Ghanaweb, 2006, opinion)

In this expression, the text producer conceptualises his STATE of acceptance of his sexuality as a LOCATION. In his own words, “a junction”. In the text producer’s journey to accepting his sexual orientation, there are difficulties which were the impediments encountered during his journey to acceptance. The DIFFICULTIES ARE IMPEDIMENTS concept of the event structure metaphor is therefore reflected in the expression (61); *this tends to be a breaking point for many who struggle with same-sex tendencies*. The SOURCE-PATH-GOAL is reflected in the mappings below;

Table 4.8: Mappings for LGBTQ+ IS A JOURNEY metaphor

SOURCE: JOURNEY		TARGET: LGBTQ+ ACCEPTANCE
Start point of the journey	————→	noticing same-sex (LGBTQ+) tendencies
Travelers	————→	people who identify as LGBTQ+
Path/road	————→	the process of living as a LGBTQ+
Impediments on the way	————→	societal discrimination/self-denial
Destination	————→	acceptance of sexual orientation

Table 4.8 shows the correspondence in the LGBTQ+ IS A JOURNEY metaphor. The people who identify as LGBTQ+ are construed as travellers on a journey of discovering and accepting their identities. The start of their journey is when they notice LGBTQ+ tendencies. The path on which they are travelling is the process of living as LGBTQ+ people. Societal discrimination and even internal homophobia (difficulty in accepting oneself) are understood in terms of the impediments one encounters during a journey. The final acceptance of one's sexual orientation is conceptualised as the destination of a traveller.

4.9 LGBTQ+ IS A FORCE

The LGBTQ+ IS A FORCE metaphor occurs only twice in the data. This metaphor is grounded in Talmy's (2000) force dynamics system. Force dynamics deals with "the ways that objects are conceived to interrelate with respect to the exertion of force, resistance to force, the overcoming of the resistance to force, the overcoming of the resistance, barriers to the exertion of force, and the removal of such barriers" (2000: 219). The force dynamics system comes from our bodily experiences of using muscle effort or motion (kinaesthesia), as well as from sensations like pressure and pain (somesthesia). Though the force dynamics theory tilts more to the grammar 'end' of the semantic structure continuum (Evans & Green, 2006), it is relevant to the discussion of the Event Structure Metaphor (ESM) as both the force dynamics theory and the ESM are deeply rooted in our grasp of physical concepts like force and movement including our senses of touch and body movement. It therefore helps to expatiate the ESM beyond just stating mappings between states and locations, change or action and motion (Amarinthukrowh, 2020). The theory is also relevant to this discussion

as it supports the cognitive linguistic notion that language reflects conceptual structure, which in turn reflects embodied experience.

In the force dynamics theory, two interacting force-exerting entities are involved: the Agonist, whose situation is the focus, and the Antagonist, which opposes the Agonist. Each has an intrinsic force tendency toward action or inaction. The outcome of their interaction depends on their relative strengths, determining whether the Agonist's force tendency prevails. The expressions which realise the LGBTQ+ IS A FORCE metaphor are the following;

62. An immoral private bedroom affair is now being **forced down** our throats (X).

63. At first, they wanted people to tolerate and accept them but now they want **to push it down everyone's throat**.
If you don't align with them then sanction. (X)

64. 23. Do you understand the whole matter being discuss on the globe?? You can be your gay, lesbian or animal but **don't force it on people's neck**. Why is the Western world **forcing it on** people's neck?? (X)

The expressions (62) - (64) are responses to a tweet that said that “in under 10 years, they (LGBTQ+ people) went from they just want to get married to flying their flags everywhere in America”. From the expressions, the phrases *forced down our throats* and *to push it down everyone's throat* are used to construe LGBTQ+ as a physical force that is aggressive and intrusive and causes movement. The agonist in this construal is the LGBTQ+ community

which exerts force on the antagonist (homophobes) who are likely to resist this force. The construal evokes a sense of compulsion or coercion suggesting that people are being forcefully made to accept or conform to LGBTQ+ perspectives or rights. The concept of ‘sanction’ is also connected to force as a consequence of resistance. This indicates that failure to comply with the forceful push will result in actions like how opposing a physical force might result in damage or harm. The LGBTQ+ IS A FORCE metaphor is also grounded in the ESM schema PURPOSIVE ACTION IS GOAL-ORIENTED DIRECTED MOTION. In the linguistic expressions above, the goal of the LGBTQ+ community is to force the homophobes (PURPOSIVE ACTION) by causing a movement (GOAL-ORIENTED DIRECTED MOTION) from their state of homophobia to acceptance of the LGBTQ+ perspective. What this study uniquely contributes is the identification of CONTAINER metaphors—such as the idea that LGBTQ+ has “entered” Ghana—which offer a deeper cognitive structure to the foreignness narrative. Previous studies did not identify these cognitive patterns because they did not employ a conceptual metaphor framework.

Table 4.9 Mappings for LGBTQ+ IS A FORCE

Source: FORCE		Target: LGBTQ+
Agonist (the person exerting force)	————→	LGBTQ+ supporters
Antagonist	————→	Homophobes
Force/purposive action	————→	LGBTQ+ orientation
Resistance	————→	sanctions against LGBTQ+ individuals

4.10 PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ+ ARE ANIMALS

The metaphor, PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ+ ARE ANIMALS has been used in 13 instances making up 7.0 percent of the data. This metaphor is grounded in a bodily experience that draws on the human perception of hierarchy and the difference between humans and animals. This metaphor taps into several fundamental bodily experiences and cultural perceptions. One of the most physiological experiences is the sense of difference between humans and animals. Because of our biological differences from other species, humans frequently feel superior to them. Using this deeply rooted feeling of difference, the metaphor implies that LGBTQ+ people are somehow "less human" or "other," comparable to animals, who are frequently seen as inferior to humans in many cultures.

The metaphor also evokes bodily feelings of disgust or revulsion, which is triggered by things that are perceived as unclean, unnatural, or outside social norms. Comparing LGBTQ+ people to animals taps into these deep-seated emotional responses, reinforcing the idea that these identities are undesirable. The linguistic expressions which realise this metaphor are;

65. We are in full support. Let disregard those **animals** period ! (Facebook)

66. When the bill is passed that **animal** of yours will be eliminated from our society. We don't know how to call it either she/he or IT. (facebook)

67. I would rather be jobless and save the anus of my son and nephews from **horny dogs** who are lurking and waiting for an opportunity to pounce. **Mmoa!** (X)

68. Do you understand the whole matter being discuss on the globe?? You can be your gay, lesbian or **animal** but don't force it on people's neck. Why is the Western world forcing it on people's neck?? (X)

Table 4.10: Mapping for PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ+ ARE ANIMALS

Source: ANIMAL	Target: LGBTQ+ INDIVIDUALS	instinctual behavior perceived
unnaturalness of LGBTQ+	—————→	sexuality or behavior
Lack of civilization	—————→	deviation from social norms
non-humans	—————→	stripping of dignity and human rights

Animals are perceived to be instinctual and thus act based on instincts rather than learned or culturally conditioned behavior and this makes people consider them as ‘wild’. The metaphor maps this perception onto LGBTQ+ identities, suggesting that they are acting on instinctual or unnatural urges. Animals are frequently associated with nature, instinct, and behaviors that are outside the norms of human civilization. They are often depicted as being driven by primal urges and not governed by the rules of human society. This perception is mapped onto LGBTQ+ individuals implying that they are uncivilized or driven by

unnatural or primal instincts. This mapping suggests that LGBTQ+ behaviors are outside the bounds of socially accepted norms. Lastly, animals by their definition are no humans. They are used metaphorically to strip away the human qualities of a person or group, reducing them to something less than human. LGBTQ+ individuals are dehumanised through this mapping, being seen as less worthy of human rights, dignity, or respect. This reinforces harmful stereotypes and justifies discrimination. This is exemplified in (66) and (67), where the text producers call for the disregard of LGBTQ+ individuals and seek their possible elimination, respectively.

The metaphor, PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ ARE ANIMALS, mainly involves categorisation as a cognitive process. LGBTQ+ people are categorised as "animals," a term that has dehumanising and condescending undertones. This classification affects how people view LGBTQ+ individuals, encouraging exclusion and feeding prejudices. Although an implicit comparison—that is, the idea that LGBTQ+ people are like animals—may exist, the main mechanism at play here is categorisation, which is the act of placing LGBTQ+ persons into a particular, unfavourable group.

4.11 LGBTQ+ IS CONFINEMENT/SLAVERY

The metaphor LGBTQ IS CONFINEMENT/SLAVERY appears in four instances in the data. This metaphor is grounded in bodily experiences related to physical confinement, loss of autonomy, and the emotional distress associated with being trapped or controlled. These experiences provide a physical and sensory foundation for the conceptualisation of LGBTQ+. In the expression (69), the phrase, *break out* directly invokes the schema of

escape, as if the young girl is trapped in a situation from which she needs to be freed. This language is closely associated with the metaphor of enslavement, where individuals seek to break free from their bonds or confinement. Also, the lexicon *struggle* suggests that her identity is something difficult and oppressive, similar to how an enslaved person might struggle against their conditions of confinement.

69. I recently, was told first hand of a young girl who had a **struggle** with lesbianism. Realizing there was something wrong, she consulted the clergy in her school. Believe it or not, he gave her out to the school authorities and she was expelled. RIDICULOUS! Will anyone else who truly wants to **break out** trust their parents, chaplains or school authorities? (Ghanaweb, 2006, opinion)

70. Prince, for me, represents the archetype **struggler** with homosexuality. For on-lookers, the drug addict, rapists, thieves, gays, etc have a “problem” and need to be “put away”. That’s all well and good when you are not the one **caught in its clutches**. If we look closer, we’ll find that there are deeper issues that need to be addressed.

(Ghanaweb, 2006, opinion)

The expression, *caught in its clutches* in the data (70) suggests entrapment, as if homosexuality has trapped the individual and won't let go, much like being caught in the clutches of something that restricts freedom. The text producer conceptualises homosexuality as a controlling entity who has power beyond the homosexual and this

directly aligns with the metaphor of enslavement, where a person is held captive by something beyond their control. The idea of enslavement or entrapment is further reinforced when the text producer implies that homosexuality, like addiction or criminal behavior, has a controlling, almost imprisoning effect on the individual. The direct use of the expression *enslave* in data (71) deepens the conceptualisation of LGBTQ+ as enslavement. The text producer implies that homosexuals are controlled by their identities against their will just as someone who is entrapped or enslaved against their will.

71. A statement in Accra signed by the Reverend Steve

Mensah Chairman of NACC, said it viewed

homosexuality and lesbianism as a social vice that clearly contravenes Ghana's constitution and an affront to the moral and cultural values of Ghanaians. The statement condemned homosexuality and lesbianism as sexual perversions that should not be tolerated. It went further to say that NACC sympathized with persons, who had found themselves **enslaved** by this unnatural sexual desire (Ghanaweb, 2011).

In this metaphor, the idea that in enslavement, individuals are controlled by others, and their freedom is severely restricted is used to perceive LGBTQ+ individual's lack of autonomy over their identities either as a result of societal pressures or internal struggles. By the use of this metaphor, the text producers conceptualise LGBTQ+ individuals as trapped or oppressed by their "unnatural" desires. It suggests that these identities are not freely chosen but instead, homosexual identities hold individuals in a state of captivity or

moral degradation. Their freedom to express themselves is seen as restricted by societal norms or by their own identity.

Table 4.11. Mappings for LGBTQ+ IS A CONFINEMENT/SLAVERY

Source: Confinement	Target: LGBTQ+
Captivity	lack of control over s exual desires/restrictions of societal norms
Captive/slave	LGBTQ+ individuals
Slave master	desire for same-gender sex

The cognitive process underlying the metaphor, LGBTQ IS /ENTRAPMENT/SLAVERY is rooted in categorisation, where LGBTQ+ identities are categorised as a form of enslavement, confinement or entrapment, leading to an understanding of these identities through the lens of the oppressive and restrictive nature of enslavement.

4.12 LGBTQ+ IS POLLUTION/DIRT

The POLLUTION/DIRT metaphor appears in six (6) instances in the data making 3.2 percent. The metaphor is grounded in the sensory experience of smell or something unclean, the cultural associations of pollution with moral impurity and danger. This metaphor suggests that LGBTQ+ identities are unclean, undesirable and need to be cleaned or removed. The metaphor is derived from the following linguistic expressions;

72. Are u proud of what u does to your bodies? Damn!

Everything about this community **stinks!** Y'all too weird

(X)

73. Yeah this man is right the media is complicit and silence they should show these stuff to deter people from engaging in this **dirty** LGBTQ (X)

74. **Like the plastic filth** in which the nation is engulfed, homosexuality is here and increasing daily. (Ghanaweb, 2006,)

75. 192. They come in Africa and change our culture and taboo with the bible. We take the bible and follows the rules and become better soul, little ignorant, but better soul. Now they are bringing their immoral values to take us down. **Pollute** the land and steal our riches. What the hell is wrong the black skin exactly. What have we done in the deepest forgotten past to become such stupid people wondering the hearth with no aim and no sense? (facebook)

In extract 74, the simile '*Like the plastic filth*' symbolises environmental degradation, representing something that is harmful, spreading uncontrollably, and difficult to manage or eradicate. Filth is seen as a major problem in Ghana so much so that aspiring presidents use it as a major issue in their election campaigns, promising to eradicate it. But the issue of filth continues to linger. The simile suggests that just as the country struggles to combat plastic pollution, it will similarly face difficulties in fighting against homosexuality.

Table 4.12 Mappings for LGBTQ+ IS POLLUTION/DIRT

Source: POLLUTION/DIRT		Target: LGBTQ+
Incinerator/refuse dump site	—————→	bodies of LGBTQ+ people
Pollutant/filth	—————→	LGBTQ+ tendencies/practice
cleansing dirt	—————→	societal discrimination

The metaphor, LGBTQ+ IS POLLUTION/DIRT/FILTH is cognitively processed through categorisation, where LGBTQ+ identities are understood in terms of something unclean or morally impure and capable of corrupting others. This categorisation process allows the speaker to communicate disapproval and reinforce social stigma in a way that is both impactful and easily understood within the cultural context.

4.13 LGBTQ+ IS A DESTRUCTIVE ENTITY/A DANGEROUS THING

The metaphor appears in nine (9) instances of use, thus, 4.9 percent of the data. It is grounded in embodied experiences of physical threats, territorial defence, and the fear of loss or harm. These deeply rooted bodily experiences shape the perception of LGBTQ+ influence as a hostile and dangerous force that threatens societal values, culture, and heritage. The metaphor draws on the natural human instincts to protect oneself, defend territory, and preserve what is valuable, leading to an instinctive, defensive response to LGBTQ+ identities and behaviors. In the expression (76), LGBTQ+ is conceptualised as an entity that can cause destruction to the country and Africa at large. This

conceptualisation invokes the need for the text producer and others to show hostility to people who identify as LGBTQ+.

76. Very Important that the evil, **destructive influence** of sodomite dominance is kept out of Ghana and all Africa. It is a way of bringing us down and dismantling every good thing that we have. That is why the Enemy is pushing so hard to introduce a gradual takeover as they have done elsewhere. Look at the news about decent people being fired, losing their children, homes, institutions and hope by the wicked attacks on our culture, our heritage and our morals by these devil followers (FACEBOOK).

77. They shouldn't be given any chances. If you look at other countries they started with one request and another followed and now you can't even talk about them which means others also lost their rights to speak freely cos of something which is **threat** to our nature and existence. (X)

Extract 77 is a response to a tweet which asks why the LGBTQI community cannot engage in a discourse devoid of emotional outbursts, plain insults and unbridled intolerance. The text producer perceives LGBTQ as dangerous and likely to cause destruction to the “natural” makeup of the human. In extract 78, the text producer conceptualises LGBTQ+ as a natural disaster which is capable of destroying every physical infrastructure or

destroying the moral life that the country holds so dear. Extract (78) responds to a comment that suggests that discussing LGBTQ is irrelevant as it does not contribute to the development of the nation. Instead, it suggested that discussions should be centered on infrastructure.

78. What is the use of that social infrastructure and all those

u are talking about when there is a **tsunami coming**.

What is ur definition of education when something bad

is coming even **destroy** the already tattered education we

have that we are managing. Look I don't really see how

u feel about this whole thing and I am sorry about how u

feel about it but trust me we will fight this even if it

means starting all over again as a country. (facebook)

Table 4.13 Mapping of LGBTQ+ IS A DESTRUCTIVE ENTITY metaphor

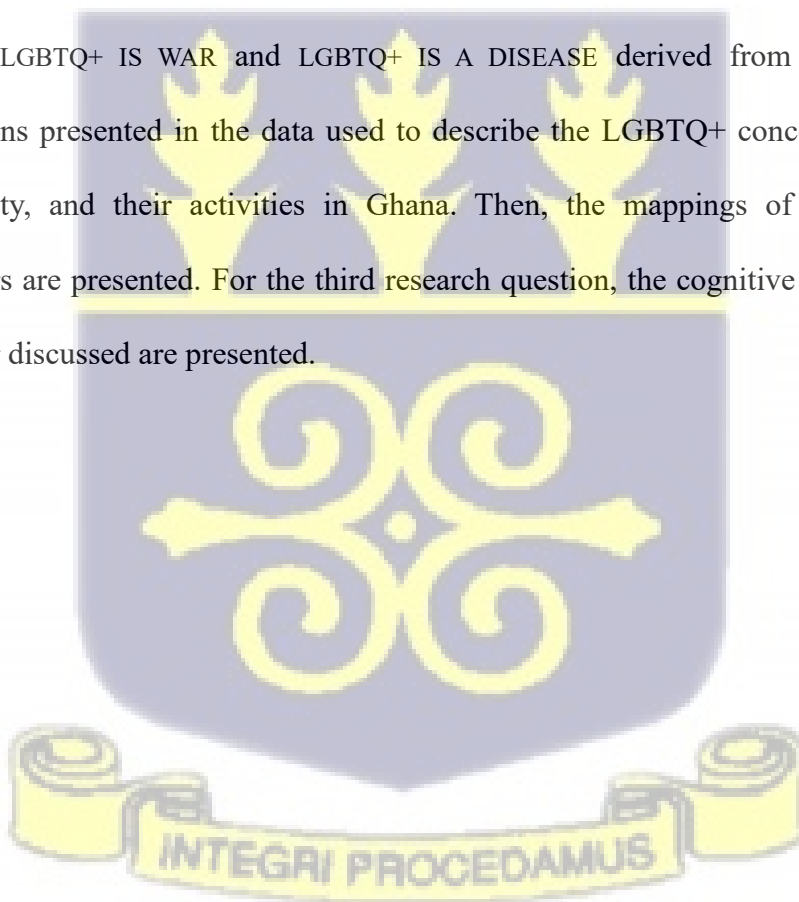
Source: A DESTRUCTIVE ENTITY	Target: LGBTQ+
Destructive force	LGBTQ+ existence or rights
vulnerable atmosphere	weak societal norms
recovery from destruction	need to fight LGBTQ+

The brain categorises LGBTQ+ identities and behaviors into the broader category of "dangerous" or "destructive" entity. In this process, LGBTQ+ people are grouped alongside other things that are seen to pose a threat to society's well-being, such as disease, crime, or moral decay. The metaphor reduces the complexity of LGBTQ+ identities and behaviors

by classifying them as harmful or destructive. This makes it possible for people to apply pre-existing attitudes and responses that are linked to danger or harm.

4.14 Chapter Summary

This chapter presented the analysis of the data, guided mainly by the Conceptual Metaphor Theory alongside the Career of metaphor theory. The three research questions that the study seeks to address are answered. The metaphorical expressions such as ‘fight’ ‘destroy’ ‘epidemic’ ‘sanitize’, and many others presented answers to the first research question. Then, the second question is answered by identifying and discussing conceptual metaphors such as LGBTQ+ IS WAR and LGBTQ+ IS A DISEASE derived from the metaphorical expressions presented in the data used to describe the LGBTQ+ concept, the LGBTQ+ community, and their activities in Ghana. Then, the mappings of these conceptual metaphors are presented. For the third research question, the cognitive processes of each metaphor discussed are presented.



CHAPTER FIVE

SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter concludes the study. It summarises the findings of the study and makes conclusions based on the findings. It also explores possible implications of the findings.

Finally, the chapter makes recommendations for further research.

5.2 Summary of the study

Guided mainly by the conceptual metaphor theory (Lakoff & Johnson, 1980) and supported by the career of metaphor theory (Bowdle & Gentner, 2005), the study used linguistic data from two social media platforms and a news media platform to investigate how LGBTQ+ is represented cognitively by Ghanaians. Chapter One introduced the background of the study, a background to the LGBTQ+ situation in Ghana, the problem statement, the research objectives and questions and finally, the significance of the study. Chapter two reviewed literature on cognitive linguistics, specifically, conceptual metaphor theory and its tenets, which established the notion that metaphors can be used to study human cognition, therefore, justifying the current study. The chapter also reviewed empirical studies that employed CMT in studying people's conceptualisations of various social phenomena, especially LGBTQ+. The chapter further reviewed the literature on cognitive processes used in creating or processing metaphors. The study argued for the adoption of the career of metaphor theory in analysing cognitive processes as it proposes the adoption of both the comparison and categorisation theories in processing metaphors as it gives an

in-depth understanding of cognitive processes instead of only the comparison theory which is mainly used in CMT.

The third chapter discussed the methodological approaches that guide the study. It discussed the kinds of data, sources of data, the theoretical approaches that guided the collection of data and how data was analysed. The fourth chapter presented the analysis and discussions of the findings which are summarised below.

5.3 Conclusion

The study sought to answer three questions, which are repeated and answered below.

5.3.1 Question 1: **What linguistic/metaphorical expressions are used to describe the LGBTQ+ community and activities in Ghana?**

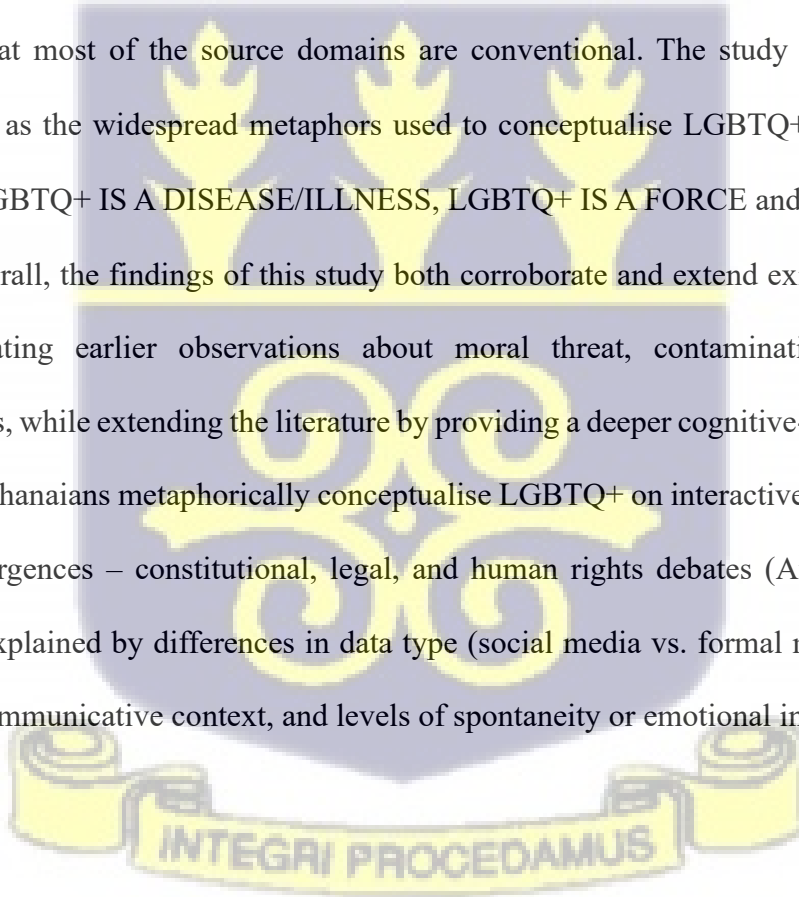
The data revealed several linguistic or metaphorical expressions that underlie the conceptualisation of the LGBTQ+ community and its activities in Ghana. These expressions include *fight, battle, enemy, opponent, conquer, defenders, disease, epidemic, relapse, recovery, pathology, contagious, sanitize, insanity, mental illness, sin, righteousness, evil, demon, evil spirit, darkness, light, coming out, stuck in, in the closet, road, path, junction, animal, struggle, breakout, enslaved, filth, pollute, plastic filth, threat, tsunami*, amongst several others. The analysis of these expressions revealed that they are motivated by text producers' cognition and are underlaid by certain conceptual metaphors.

5.3.2 What conceptual metaphors underlie these linguistic/metaphorical expressions?

The data revealed thirteen (13) conceptual metaphors. The linguistic or metaphorical expressions in 5.3.1 are systematically linked to the following conceptual metaphors;

LGBTQ+ IS WAR, LGBTQ+ IS INSANITY, LGBTQ+ IS A SIN, LGBTQ+ IS AN EVIL ENTITY, LGBTQ+ IS A DISEASE, PEOPLE WHO IDENTIFY AS LGBTQ+ ARE ANIMALS, LGBTQ+ IS DARKNESS, LGBTQ+ IS A CONFINEMENT, LGBTQ+ IS A DESTRUCTIVE ENTITY/DANGER, LGBTQ+ IS A CONTAINER, LGBTQ+ IS POLLUTION/DIRT, LGBTQ+ IS A JOURNEY, LGBTQ+ IS A FORCE. This study

confirms the idea that language and cognition are significantly connected. The analysis shows that most of the source domains are conventional. The study also confirms the literature as the widespread metaphors used to conceptualise LGBTQ+ are LGBTQ+ IS WAR, LGBTQ+ IS A DISEASE/ILLNESS, LGBTQ+ IS A FORCE and LGBTQ+ IS A SIN. Overall, the findings of this study both corroborate and extend existing scholarship: corroborating earlier observations about moral threat, contamination, and conflict narratives, while extending the literature by providing a deeper cognitive-linguistic account of how Ghanaians metaphorically conceptualise LGBTQ+ on interactive digital platforms. The divergences – constitutional, legal, and human rights debates (Atuguba, 2019) are largely explained by differences in data type (social media vs. formal media/government texts), communicative context, and levels of spontaneity or emotional intensity.



5.3.3 What cognitive processes are used in the creation of these conceptual metaphors?

The findings reveal that Ghanaians dominantly used conceptual projection (conceptual metaphors) in processing the LGBTQ+ concept. Specifically, conceptual mapping is used where abstract concepts related to LGBTQ+ identities are understood through more concrete domains. For instance, people's stance on LGBTQ+ is conceptualised in terms of WAR since the war schema (frame) is more familiar due to the experiences from war or knowledge of war. Also, the internal struggle that some LGBTQ+ individuals go through in accepting their orientation is understood through the projection of the structure of WAR. The findings also revealed that embodied experiences play a role in understanding LGBTQ+, with metaphors often grounded in physical and sensory experiences. For example, the physical experience of the body as a container with the body as a bounded space allows the processing of the acceptance of one's LGBTQ+ orientation as 'coming out' of the container, a hidden place.

The study confirms Lakoff's (1987, 1990, 1993) and Johnson's (1987) argument that embodied concepts derived from our conceptual experiences can be systemically extended to provide meaning to more abstract concepts and conceptual domains.

Aside from projecting the similarities (through comparison) of pre-conceptual experiences in processing LGBTQ+, the data also revealed the use of categorisation in processing LGBTQ+. The data revealed that not only is LGBTQ+ understood through the comparison of similarities of familiar concepts with LGBTQ+, but LGBTQ+ is also processed by

categorising it under certain concepts. For instance, LGBTQ+ is categorised as a sin. That is anything that violates divine laws. In this sense, there is no comparison between the features of SIN. Instead, the base concept, SIN is used to reach or create an abstract metaphoric category where it serves as a prototypical member and the target concept, LGBTQ+ is then placed in this category. The findings of this study disagree with Bowdle and Gentner's (2005) claim that conventional metaphors are processed as categorisations rather than as comparisons. This study reveals that regardless of a metaphor's conventionality, it can be processed through comparison or categorisation. For instance, the metaphor LGBTQ+ IS WAR is a conventional metaphor. However, from its analysis in this study, it is revealed that the struggle of accepting one's LGBTQ+ orientation is understood through the comparison of the features of WAR.

5.4 Implications for the study

By examining the cognitive processes behind these metaphors, the study shows how language reveals people's perceptions about issues of the society – underlying values and conflicts in Ghanaian society, reflecting the tension between local values and global discourses concerning LGBTQ+. The findings reinforce the idea that metaphor and cognition are closely linked, as the metaphors used reflect the cultural and social cognition surrounding LGBTQ+ issues in Ghana.

The study's findings may inform policy-makers and advocacy groups about the role metaphor plays in shaping social attitudes toward LGBTQ+ people. Understanding the power of metaphor in reinforcing negative or hostile attitudes could inspire advocacy

campaigns that aim to reshape public discourse by promoting more inclusive and positive metaphors.

The findings of this study open up further directions for scholarly inquiry into how metaphor shapes public understanding of gender and sexuality in African contexts. While existing research on LGBTQ+ discourse has largely focused on legal rights, morality debates, or media representation at a macro level, this study demonstrates that the metaphorical framing within everyday discourse functions as a patterned mechanism of ideological meaning-making. Future studies could therefore explore how these metaphors vary across different digital platforms, generational cohorts, political affiliations, or linguistic communities. Additionally, this research establishes a baseline metaphor taxonomy for Ghana which can be compared to other national contexts to trace regional specificities and cross-cultural similarities in moral framing. In this sense, the work advances the empirical evidence base for discourse-oriented LGBTQ+ studies in Africa.

Methodologically, this study shows the value of combining MIPVU with qualitative content analysis within metaphor research in socio-political contexts. While MIPVU has traditionally been used in controlled linguistic datasets, this work demonstrates that when applied to naturalistic public discourse, and when supplemented with interpretive coding, it can successfully uncover latent evaluative structures and ideological intensities behind linguistic choices. This integrated methodological approach provides a replicable blueprint for future qualitative metaphor studies — especially those working with contested identities and polarised cultural debates. Furthermore, the study

demonstrates that quantifying metaphor frequency but interpreting metaphor qualitatively allows researchers to capture both the magnitude and meaning of discursive patterns, strengthening the validity and transparency of interpretive discourse analysis.

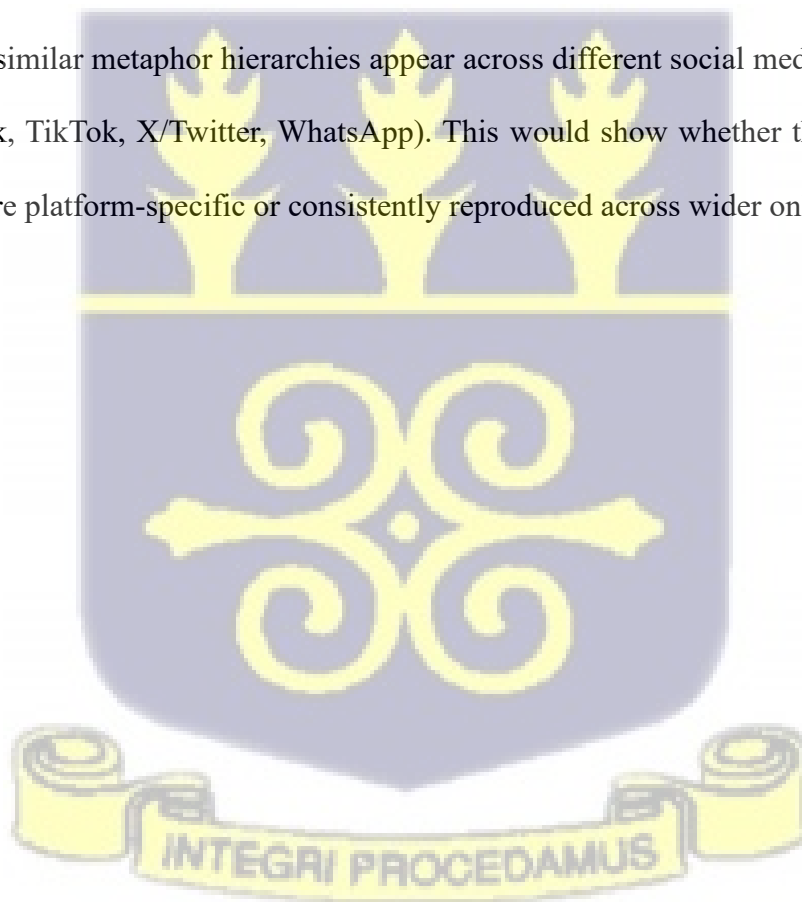
Theoretically, the study reinforces the claim within Conceptual Metaphor Theory that metaphor does not merely reflect pre-existing attitudes — it actively constructs them. The metaphors identified here show how discursive framings are used to moralise, pathologise and dehumanise LGBTQ+ identities, demonstrating metaphor's central role in the cognitive organisation of cultural threat and moral panic. This supports a view of metaphor as a socio-cognitive resource through which ideological boundaries are negotiated, legitimised and defended. The analysis therefore contributes to ongoing theoretical debates around metaphor as a mechanism of ideological production within socio-cognitive linguistics and critical discourse studies, and underscores the relevance of metaphor theory to understanding power, normativity and identity at cultural margins.

5.5 Recommendations for future research

Since the dominant metaphors identified in this study emerged from online public discourse, future research could purposively investigate metaphor use in indigenous communities that are less exposed to social media. This would help determine whether similar adversarial metaphors occur in more traditional settings or whether different, culturally specific metaphorical framings exist. While such work would require access negotiation, ethical clearance and collaboration with local gatekeepers, it remains feasible through partnerships with regional research centers and cultural authorities.

Given that the metaphors identified here reflect strong ideological evaluations rather than neutral descriptions, further studies could combine MIP-based metaphor identification with interviews or focus groups to explore how speakers themselves justify, interpret, or resist these metaphors. This approach would deepen understanding of the underlying reasoning behind the negative metaphorical constructions identified in this study.

Since this research found that aggressive metaphors such as WAR, DISEASE and INSANITY dominate discourse within the dataset used, future research could examine whether similar metaphor hierarchies appear across different social media platforms (e.g., Facebook, TikTok, X/Twitter, WhatsApp). This would show whether these metaphorical frames are platform-specific or consistently reproduced across wider online publics.



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1. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Use-the-same-approach-in-fighting-galamsey-on-LGBTQI-Prez-told-1273249>
2. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/religion/LGBTQ-We-can-t-change-scripture-for-somebody-rsquo-s-feeling-ndash-Rev-Appiagyei-1908224>
3. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/How-US-Embassy-delayed-my-visa-for-three-months-ndash-Sam-George-recounts-1898861>
4. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Fa-wo-to-begye-sika-syndrome-rises-115434>
5. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/I-find-it-disappointing-that-people-are-opposed-to-the-anti-gay-bill-Lawrence-Tetteh-1906781>
6. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/We-cannot-bless-same-sex-marriage-ndash-Ghana-Catholic-Bishops-Conference-1902488>
7. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/It-s-neither-a-sin-nor-a-crime-to-be-gay-ndash-Catholic-bishops-1896758>
8. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/entertainment/Deborah-Vanessa-went-to-my-child-rsquo-s-school-to-do-LGBTQ-advocacy-ndash-Sam-George-1899482>
9. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/entertainment/Arnold-Asamoah-Baidoo-quotes-Bible-verse-to-reveal-repercussions-of-LGBTQ-practice-1903646>
10. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/entertainment/Arnold-Asamoah-Baidoo-quotes-Bible-verse-to-reveal-repercussions-of-LGBTQ-practice-1903646>
11. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/LGBT-bill-is-the-best-thing-to-happen-to-Ghana-ndash-Sam-George-1899032>

12. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/Use-the-same-approach-in-fighting-galamsey-on-LGBTQI-Prez-told-1273249>
13. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/religion/LGBTQ-We-can-t-change-scripture-for-somebody-rsquo-s-feeling-ndash-Rev-Appiagyei-1908224>
14. <https://www.ghanaweb.com/GhanaHomePage/NewsArchive/How-US-Embassy-delayed-my-visa-for-three-months-ndash-Sam-George-recounts-1898861>

