

Changing Attitudes toward Homosexuality in Ghana: The Power of Attributional Discourse

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Abstract

It is overwhelmingly documented that attitudes toward homosexuals in Africa are largely negative, yet there is little exploration on interventional measures for change. This study therefore examined the effectiveness of using attributional discourse to change attitudes toward homosexuals in Ghana. In a pretest–posttest between-group design, 143 university students were randomly assigned into four experimental conditions (i.e., biological, choice, biological transgender, and choice transgender) with informative vignettes serving as the intervention. Posttest evaluation results showed a significant reduction in participants' negative attitudes toward homosexuals across all four treatment conditions. There were no significant between-group differences and no significant gender differences in attitudinal change after controlling for pretest evaluation. The findings suggest the need to encourage healthy attributional discourse over the rationality in homosexual decisions and behaviors. Particularly, educating the public on the probable reasons behind homosexuality can potentially reduce negative attitudes toward homosexuals and impact legislative policies in Ghana.

Keywords

attitude, attitudinal change, attributional information, homosexuality, Ghana

Despite Western advocacies for recognition and acceptance of homosexuality in Africa, attitudes toward lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) persons in Ghana remain negative (Anarfi & Gyasi-Gyamerah, 2014; Essien & Aderinto, 2009; Gyasi-Gyamerah & Akotia, 2016; Oti-Boadi, Agbakpe, & Dziwornu, 2014). In Ghana, homosexuality is viewed not as a human rights issue but as a form of social cancer that the entire society must vigorously combat. Essien and Aderinto indicated that the government of Ghana and religious institutions identify homosexuality as a form of “sexual colonialism” or Western imposition on Ghanaians, which must be confronted. They recounted how, in 2006, a proposal for a LGBT conference in Ghana faced an aggressive opposition and created tensions across the country. At present time, homosexuality remains a sentimental issue in Ghana largely because of cultural, moral, ethical, and religious reasons (Anarfi & Gyasi-Gyamerah, 2014; Gyasi-Gyamerah & Akotia, 2016).

According to Essien and Aderinto (2009), most African countries promote heterosexuality as a preferred sexual orientation due to their value for biological reproduction; consequently, they fiercely condemn homosexuality as “un-African.” Baisley (2015) reported on how anti and pro homosexual rights movements in Ghana framed their debate

from 2006 to 2011. According to Baisley, decolonization and human rights frames were initially adopted, then challenged, and finally dominated by opponents of homosexual rights, making their use increasingly difficult for homosexual activists. The corruption frame of the opponents overshadowed the preservation frame of homosexual activists. The activists' use of the human rights frame (comparing sexual minorities with racial minorities and with persons with disabilities) was corrupted by the opposition through an association of sexual minorities with “deviants,” persons with mental illnesses, and animals. These developments clearly spell out the contentious nature of the discourse on homosexuality in Ghana and the need for a planned social intervention.

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Attitudes toward LGBTs

In their examination of Ghanaian students' attitudes toward homosexuality, Oti-Boadi et al. (2014) found high levels of negative attitudes toward homosexuality. Attitudes toward homosexuals did not improve irrespective of the number of years of study at the university. Anarfi and Gyasi-Gyamerah (2014) recorded a significant correlation between religiosity and attitudes toward homosexuals among many Ghanaian college students ($n = 1,258$). In addition, they found a significant influence of acquaintance on attitudes toward homosexuals. Students who were acquainted with homosexuals were less negative in their attitudes toward homosexuals.

Using data from university students, Gyasi-Gyamerah and Akotia (2016) assessed prejudicial attitudes of students toward homosexuals and the moderating role of religious commitment. They further examined the significance of stereotypic beliefs, symbolic beliefs, and affect in attitudes toward homosexuals. Their study revealed higher levels of prejudicial attitudes toward homosexuals. In addition, stereotypic beliefs and affect emerged significant predictors of prejudicial attitudes. Religious commitment also emerged a significant moderator for evaluation of homosexuals and attitudinal components except for affect.

It must be noted that expression of negative attitudes toward gays and lesbians is extended to bisexuals and transgender persons, thus implicating the entire LGBT community. According to Casazza, Ludwig, and Cohn (2015), bisexual individuals face unique stressors in comparison with gay or lesbian peers. They found the most negative attitudes toward bisexuals in rural areas and the most positive in suburban areas. Negative attitudes and discrimination against homosexuals appear pervasive. Discrimination against LGBTs is not limited to social context but extends to employment situations (Tilcsik, 2011). In the United States, Tilcsik observed significant discrimination against job applicants who pretended to be gay. Discrimination against homosexuals in employment situation can be worse in countries that adopt hostile attitudes toward homosexuals such as Ghana and many other African countries.

Gender Differences in Attitudes toward LGBTs

Some studies have compared the attitudes of males and females toward homosexuals, with women expressing less prejudice than men (Herek, 2003; Sakalli, 2002). In a meta-analytic study, Kite and Whitley (1996) explored gender differences in attitudes toward homosexual persons, homosexual behaviors, and gay people's civil rights. Consistent with their prediction, size of sex differences varied across these categories. Men were more negative than women toward homosexual persons and homosexual behavior, but both sexes viewed gay civil rights in similar terms. Ratcliff, Lassiter, Markman, and Snyder (2006) argued that motivation to respond without prejudice underlied divergent attitudes

among males and females. They noted that women displayed higher internal motivation to respond without prejudice than did men and this partially mediated the relationship between gender and attitudes toward homosexuals. In addition, Ratcliff et al. reported on how gender-role variables contributed to gender differences in motivation to respond without prejudice. Their findings provide insights into the nature of sexual prejudice in motivation to respond without prejudice. Contrary to these findings, Anarfi and Gyasi-Gyamerah (2014) and Oti-Boadi et al. (2014) did not find any significant gender differences in attitudes toward homosexuals in Ghana.

Social role theory of sex differences and similarities (Eagly, 1987; Eagly, Diekmann, Johannesen-Schmidt, & Koenig, 2004; Eagly, Wood, & Diekmann, 2000; Wood & Eagly, 2002, 2012) attempts to explain the differential attitudes of males and females toward homosexuals. The theory assumes that to the extent that men and women of a society are differently positioned in the social structure, a variety of mediating factors interact to make the sexes psychologically different in ways that facilitate performance of their typical roles. Sex-related attitudinal differences emerge both from the direct effects of sex-typed occupational and family roles on individual occupants of these roles and from culturally shared expectations that apply to women and men in general. The roles that are typically occupied substantially more by one sex than the other create these shared expectations, or gender roles and the characteristics that are required to carry out sex-typical tasks become stereotypical of women and men.

The expectation on women to be sensitive, warm, soft-hearted, and peaceable is the likely result of their overwhelming engagement in caring roles (Williams & Best, 1982). According to the social role theory, this influence arises through normative processes by which people convey expectations based on gender (Eagly et al., 2000). As women are expected to care for the vulnerable in society, such expectations may lead to differing positions on welfare and other social policy issues (Eagly et al., 2004). These gender-role expectations are instilled through socialization, elaborated in cultural products (e.g., film, advertising), and enacted in daily life (Wood & Eagly, 2012). Gender-role variables are so strong in predicting sex differences in attitudes that their effects persist even after controlling for sociodemographic variables such as household income, education, participation in labor force, and race (Eagly et al., 2004).

The persistence of women's greater domestic responsibilities and generally lower status in Ghana and many African countries relative to men sustains gender roles and influences attitudes in multilevel environments. Based on these gender stereotypical roles and expectations, coupled with sociocultural beliefs about sex-differentiated policy preferences in the domains of social compassion, morality, and the social privileges enjoyed by men, it should be expected that Ghanaian women will be less negative in their attitudes toward LGBTs than men.

Attributional Inference and Attitudes toward LGBTs

The attribution theory of controllability (Weiner, 1985; Weiner, Perry, & Magnusson, 1988) suggests that stigmatized behaviors that are believed to have biological origins are perceived more positively than those believed to be the result of individual choice. In other words, individuals who are believed to have caused their stigma are evaluated more negatively than those who are stigmatized through circumstances beyond their control. Applications of the attribution theory of controllability to research on attitudes toward homosexuals have yielded supportive evidence (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008; Whitley, 1990). Using data from 366 heterosexual college students, Whitley found more negative attitudes toward homosexuals among heterosexuals who attributed homosexuality to controllable causes than those who attributed homosexuality to uncontrollable causes. Similarly, Haider-Markel and Joslyn's study confirmed less negative attitude associated with biological attribution of homosexuality than attribution to controllable factors such as individual choice or learned behavior.

Closely related to the attribution theory of controllability is the attribution-value model of prejudice (Crandall et al., 2001), which proposes that it is just and deserving for minorities with undesirable traits to be socially stigmatized and be made to assume personal responsibility for the outcome of their situation. In other words, negative characterizations of stigmatized individuals predispose them to prejudicial social reaction. Lerner (1980) argued that people who believe in a *just world* treat others in accordance with the value of their outcomes. Consequently, they would punish, avoid, and stigmatize individuals with negative characteristics because such people deserve such treatments (Feather, 1996). The idea that the stigmatized should be blamed for their condition causes negative emotional reactions toward them (Weiner, 1995).

Sakalli (2002) found the attribution-value model of prejudice more useful in explaining attitudes toward homosexuals based on the assumption that attributions of controllability are not the only causes of prejudice, but that the interrelationship between attributions of controllability and cultural value is also crucial (Crandall et al., 2001). According to Sakalli, as prejudice is understood as negative affect toward minorities, prejudice against homosexuals may arise from both personal responsibility and negative cultural attitudes. Sakalli tested the attribution-value model of prejudice against homosexuality with data from Turkish undergraduates and found a high level of negative attitudes toward homosexuals. Attributions of controllability and negative cultural value regarding homosexuality together accounted for 39% variance in homophobia. Participants who perceived homosexuality as controllable had more negative attitudes toward homosexuals than those who perceived it as uncontrollable.

Planned Intervention to Improve Attitudes toward LGBTs

According to Casazza et al. (2015), members of sexual minority groups continue to face discrimination and harassment. Although researchers have examined the experiences of sexual minority groups generally, less research is available that focuses on social interventions aimed at improving public attitudes and opinion toward members of the LGBT community in Africa. It is therefore increasingly compelling to divert research attention to factors that can potentially change or reduce the highly negatively charged attitudes toward LGBTs in Ghana and other African countries. It is only by this means that government institutions and laws in Africa can be brought to terms with the contentious issue of homosexuality.

As earlier revealed, the government of Ghana and religious institutions do not view homosexuality as a human rights issue but as "un-African" and a Western imposition (Essien & Aderinto, 2009). This has rendered campaign for legal rights for LGBTs in Ghana and many other African countries ineffective. The advocacy for legal rights for LGBTs would be most effective and operational after reduction in public tension and hostility toward homosexuality. In this way, diverting effort toward interventions to reduce negative attitudes toward homosexuality should be prioritized over legal advocacy, at least in the present Ghanaian situation.

Given that attitudes toward homosexuals are deeply rooted in attributional inference, the present study sought to test a social intervention based on the two dominant attributional inferences, namely, choice and biology. Moreover, based on the social role theory of sex differences and similarities, the study also sought to test differences in gender responsiveness to the planned social intervention. In line with these objectives, three hypotheses were tested. First, it was predicted that participants will evaluate homosexuals more favorably in the aftermath of the intervention. Second, it was predicted that participants in biological and biological transgender conditions will evaluate homosexuals more favorably than participants in choice and choice transgender conditions. Finally, based on overwhelming evidence in the literature that females have a more positive expression of attitudes toward homosexuals than males, it was predicted that females will be more responsive to the intervention than males.

Method

Population and Sample

Undergraduate university students constituted the population for this study. A total of 143 students participated in the study with males constituting 58% of the sample ($n = 83$) while females constituted 41.9% ($n = 60$). Their ages ranged from 17 to 35 years ($M = 21.30$, $SD = 2.57$). In terms of academic

Table 1. Summary of Experimental Design, Content of Vignettes, and Number of Participants.

Experimental groups/ conditions	Conditions			
	Pretest	Intervention	Posttest	<i>n</i>
1. Biological	ET	Vignette 1, titled “Life is Good” shows homosexuality as part of person’s biological make-up using scientific evidence.	ET	34
2. Choice	ET	Vignette 2, titled “My Life is Mine to Live” shows homosexuality as a person’s chosen way of life.	ET	36
3. Biological transgender	ET	Vignette 3, titled “A New Lease on Life” shows homosexuality as due to a biological aberration necessitating a person’s transgender state.	ET	37
4. Choice transgender	ET	Vignette 4, titled “Life is Comfortable” shows homosexuality as due to a person’s chosen transgender state.	ET	36

Note. ET = Evaluation Thermometer.

levels, 17.5% of the participants were first-year students ($n = 25$), 28.7% were in their second year ($n = 41$), 27.9% were in the third year ($n = 40$), and 25.9% were final-year students ($n = 37$). As many as 91.6% of the participants ($n = 131$) were Christians, 7.7% were Muslims ($n = 11$), and only 0.7% reported being in other religion ($n = 1$).

Instruments

The instruments used in collecting data for this study included a demographic questionnaire, the evaluation thermometer measure for assessing attitudes toward gay men, and four vignettes with different titles and contents. The demographic questionnaire was self-authored and dealt with the personal characteristics of participants (gender, age, academic level, religion). The Evaluation Thermometer developed by Haddock and Zanna (1998) is a single-item attitude measure that requires participants to provide a rating score between 0° and 100° to indicate their overall evaluation of gay men and other target groups. It has a test–retest reliability coefficient of .77 and a validity coefficient of .91 (Haddock & Zanna, 1998). A graphical depiction of a thermometer that is color-coded from dark red (0°) to light pink (100°) was also used for this study (Gyasi-Gyamerah & Akotia, 2016). By nature of the measure, no computations were required to create an attitude score as the number provided by each participant to indicate his or her overall evaluation of homosexuals constituted the attitude score. The Evaluation Thermometer was used for both pretest and posttest evaluation of participants’ attitudes toward homosexuals and it had a reliability value of .74 ($N = 143$).

The vignettes were self-authored and carried short stories on dominant attributional inferences on the lives of certain fictional homosexual persons. Based on the attribution theory of controllability, the stories were constructed to depict a character as homosexual either due to genetics or due to

choice. The vignettes were constructed to test whether, as noted by Weiner (1985), participants would not express negative attitudes toward a person if he or she was proven to be homosexual due to a biological predisposition. The experimental design and contents of the vignettes are summarized in Table 1.

Procedure

The data collection for this study was done as part of a larger study for which ethical clearance had already been obtained. As the Evaluation Thermometer had already been used with the Ghanaian population (Gyasi-Gyamerah & Akotia, 2016), only the vignettes were pretested to determine their reliability using 12 participants. The participants were randomly divided into four groups of three. The members of each group were assigned a vignette to read, after which they were interviewed to assess their understanding of the contents. This involved asking each participant to describe the person they had been introduced to within the vignette. They each were also asked to respond to this simple question, “Imagine that you know the person you just read about in the vignette personally. Using the space provided, please write out how you are likely to behave towards the person and why.” Analyses of the data revealed that participants in each of the four groups gave consistent responses that reflected their attitudes toward the character in the specific vignette they had read.

The selection of participants for the actual data collection exercise was done in undergraduate psychology classes. The students were informed about the study and those who volunteered to be part of it were asked to meet at a set venue on a set date. Although 200 volunteers were pre-informed, on the set date, only 143 of them reported for the experimentation. They were asked to group themselves according to gender (male and female). Each was asked to pick a number out

Table 2. Participants' Evaluation of Homosexuals in Pretest and Posttest Conditions.

		<i>n</i>	<i>M</i> rank	<i>df</i>	<i>W</i>	Sig.
Posttest–pretest	Negative ranks	11 ^a	34.59	1	–4.72	.000
	Positive ranks	55 ^b	33.28			
	Ties	77 ^c				

^aPosttest < pretest.

^bPosttest > pretest.

^cPosttest = pretest.

of a bowl containing paper chips with numerical inscriptions (1, 2, 3, or 4) which was used to randomly assign them to four experimental groups. Table 1 shows the distribution of participants within the experimental groups.

Before the start of the actual data collection process, participants were each given a serial code and two consent forms to read and sign, after which they returned one and kept the other. The pretest condition was the same for all participants in the four experimental groups. After filling in their demographic information on the demographic questionnaire, they were given the Evaluation Thermometer and asked to rate their overall evaluation of homosexuals. Participants were asked to first indicate their serial codes on the questionnaires before completing them. After this, the appropriate vignette for each group, which served as the intervention, was given to them to read (see Table 1). They had 10 minutes to read the vignettes followed by the posttest that involved completing another Evaluation Thermometer. The version used for pretest was numbered 1 while the posttest version was numbered 2. Nevertheless, their contents remained the same for all participants in both pretest and posttest conditions. Participants had to indicate their serial codes on their Evaluation Thermometers for easy identification and matching. The whole experimental session lasted about an hour.

Results

Effect of Attributional Discourse on Participants' Evaluation of Homosexuals

The Wilcoxon signed-rank test was used to test the first hypothesis that predicted that attributional discourse will significantly reduce negative attitudes toward homosexuals. The test compared pretest evaluation scores of participants to their posttest evaluation scores (see Table 2). The results show that attributional discourse led to a significant change in evaluation of homosexuals ($W = -4.72, p = .000$).

After the intervention (posttest), as many as 55 participants had a significant positive change in attitude toward homosexuals, 11 participants had a significant negative change in attitude, and as many as 77 participants recorded no significant change in attitude. Generally, the participants evaluated homosexuals significantly more favorably in the

posttest condition (M rank = 34.59) than in the pretest condition (M rank = 33.28), although attitudes under both conditions lingered in the negative degrees when plotted on the evaluation thermometer (see Figure 1).

In more specific terms, there was a consistent pattern of change in attitude across all four treatment conditions (see Table 3). After the intervention, the number of participants who provided negative ratings decreased from 25 to 19 in the biological group, from 27 to 21 in the choice group, from 28 to 17 in the biological transgender group, and from 29 to 23 in the choice transgender group. These results confirm the first hypothesis.

Effect of Attributional Type on Participants' Evaluation of Homosexuals

The second prediction that biological attributional inference will reduce negative attitudes toward homosexuals significantly more than choice attributional inference was tested using the Kruskal–Wallis H test (see Table 3). The Kruskal–Wallis H test was used to compare the evaluation of four experimental groups consisting of two levels of biological attributional inference (i.e., biological, and biological transgender) and two levels of choice attributional inference (i.e., choice, and choice transgender). The analyses revealed no significant differences in evaluation of homosexuals among the various treatment groups in both the pretest condition, $H_{(3)} = 0.82, p > .05$, and the posttest condition, $H_{(3)} = 2.93, p > .05$. This refutes the second hypothesis.

Gender Differences in Participants' Evaluation of Homosexuals

It was also predicted that females will be more responsive to the intervention than males. In testing this hypothesis, the Mann–Whitney U test was employed to compare the evaluation scores of male and female participants under both pretest and posttest conditions (see Table 4). The results showed that there were no significant gender differences in evaluation of homosexuals in pretest condition ($U = 2,467.00, p > .05$) and in posttest condition ($U = 2,139.50, p > .05$), implying that both male and female participants had similar attitudes toward homosexuals before the intervention and

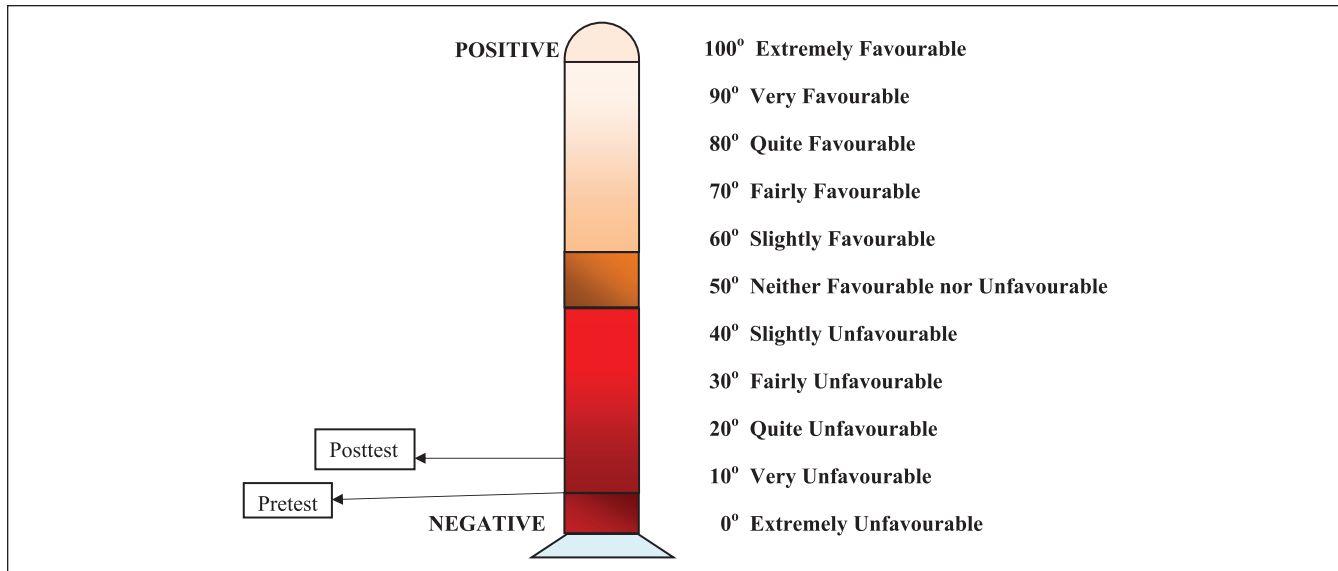


Figure 1. Evaluation thermometer showing points corresponding with participants' mean evaluation scores in the pretest and posttest conditions.

Table 3. Group Differences in Participants' Evaluation of Homosexuals.

		Experimental groups				<i>df</i>	<i>H</i>	Sig.
		Biological	Choice	Biological transgender	Choice transgender			
Pretest	>median	10	9	9	7	3	0.82	.845
	≤median	25	27	28	29			
Posttest	>median	15	15	21	13	3	2.93	.403
	≤median	19	21	17	23			

that both groups were equally responsive to the intervention. This does not support the third research hypothesis.

Discussion

The aim of the study was to test the effect of attribution intervention on attitudes toward homosexuals in Ghana and to examine gender responsiveness to the intervention. Drawing from the attribution theory of controllability (Weiner, 1985; Weiner et al., 1988), a social intervention was designed that spelled out plausible reasons behind homosexuality—either due to choice or due to biology. In testing for the effectiveness of the planned intervention, three predictions were made. The first prediction tested the general effectiveness of the intervention, the second tested the attribution theory in relation to homosexuality, and the third evaluated gender responsiveness to the intervention.

Consistent with the first prediction, participants evaluated homosexuals more favorably in the posttest condition than in the pretest condition. As noted previously, there is intense hostility against homosexuality in the Ghanaian society

(Dankwa, 2009; Essien & Aderinto, 2009; Gyasi-Gyamrah & Akotia, 2016; Oti-Boadi et al., 2014). Given the entrenched nature of participants' negative attitudes toward homosexuality in Ghana, the intervention could not reverse but did significantly reduce the negativity in participants' attitudes. The improvement in participants' attitudes reflects the power of discourse over the rationality in individuals' decision and behavior. Public discourse or discussions over probable reasons behind homosexuality—such as rational choice and biological dictation—can reduce negative attitudes toward homosexuals.

The second prediction tested the relative effectiveness of the four kinds of the planned intervention—namely, choice, choice transgender, biological, and biological transgender—based on the attribution theory of controllability (Weiner, 1985; Weiner et al., 1988), which suggests that behaviors believed to have biological origins are more likely to be perceived positively than those believed to result from individuals' choice. Following this tenet, it was predicted that participants in biological and biological transgender conditions will evaluate homosexuals more favorably than

Table 4. Gender Differences in Participants' Evaluation of Homosexuals.

		Gender		df	U	Sig.
		Male	Female			
Pretest	>median	20	15	1	2,467.00	.775
	≤median	64	45			
Posttest	>median	43	21	1	2,139.50	.081
	≤median	40	40			

participants in choice and choice transgender conditions. However, the analysis of data revealed no significant difference in the relative effectiveness of the four types of intervention. The level of attitudinal change in biological conditions (i.e., biological, and biological transgender) was very much the same as that of choice conditions (i.e., choice and choice transgender). This finding does not support the position of the attribution theory of controllability (Weiner, 1985; Weiner et al., 1988). It is also not consistent with earlier research findings that revealed greater negative attitudes toward homosexuals among respondents who perceived homosexuality as arising from controllable factors compared with those who perceived it as arising from uncontrollable factors (Haider-Markel & Joslyn, 2008; Sakalli, 2002; Whitley, 1990).

Although the present study did not support the assumptions of the attribution theory of controllability, it has an important implication for the attribution-value model of prejudice (Crandall et al., 2001), which considers not only attributions of controllability as causes of prejudice, but also the cultural value of the larger society. In a society that values heterosexuality and considers children in a union as a blessing from God and fulfillment of life, attribution of controllability would not significantly impact on prejudicial attitudes toward homosexuality, but a redefinition of the sociocultural value would. Reasonably, what accounted for the effectiveness of the intervention is not the attributional inference (i.e., attribution of homosexuality to choice or biological factors) but the attributional discourse (i.e., the mere provision of information regarding the causes of homosexuality)—both attributions of controllability and uncontrollability yielded equal results on attitude. This underscores the prominence of the *value factor* in attitude formation and reformation, thus strengthening the propositions in the attribution-value model of prejudice (Crandall et al., 2001). In this regard, the most effective means to change attitudes toward homosexuality in Ghana is to redefine societal value through discourse to embrace the inevitable transformation of social institutions, including the marriage institution.

Finally, based on existing evidence that females have less negative attitudes toward homosexuals than males (Herek, 2003; Kite & Whitley, 1996; Sakalli, 2002) and in line with the social role theory of sex differences and similarities

(Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 2004; Eagly et al., 2000; Wood & Eagly, 2002), it was predicted that females will be more responsive to the planned intervention than males. Contrary to this prediction, the study revealed no significant gender difference in attitudes toward homosexuals in both pretest and posttest conditions, implying that there was no preexisting gender difference in attitude toward homosexuals prior to the intervention and no difference in gender responsiveness to the intervention. While this finding stands in contrast to the preponderance of evidence on gender differences in attitudes toward homosexuality, it buttresses the findings of Anarfi and Gyasi-Gyamerah (2014) and Oti-Boadi et al. (2014) who did not find any significant gender difference in attitudes toward homosexuality in Ghana.

The lack of gender differences in attitudes toward homosexuals before and after the planned social intervention is perhaps due to the fact that in Ghana, both males and females have been socialized to equally perceive homosexuality as a societal canker that must be addressed with concerted effort (Essien & Aderinto, 2009; Gyasi-Gyamerah & Akotia, 2016). Under such circumstance, gender-role variables fail to contribute to gender differences in motivation to respond without prejudice as suggested by Ratcliff et al. (2006) and the social role theory of sex differences and similarities (Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 2004; Eagly et al., 2000; Wood & Eagly, 2002). Perhaps, gender differences in attitudes toward homosexuals are only obvious in cultural environments that embrace homosexuality and absent in cultures that adopt hostile attitudes toward homosexuality.

Notwithstanding the findings, it is important to mention that the effectiveness of the intervention could have been a function of the characteristics of the participants in the study and that a different sample might yield different results. One needs to understand that participants in the present study were college students within the ages of 17 and 35 years ($M = 21.30$, $SD = 2.57$) whose attitudes are flexible and open to change in the presence of new information. In contrast, older adults in the Ghanaian society may be deeply entrenched in traditional views and less susceptible to change, even in the presence of contrary evidence. Under such a situation, it is likely that the effectiveness of the planned social intervention will be minimal. Given this probability, it is crucial to replicate the present study using older adults.

Recommendations

Based on the effectiveness of the intervention in reducing negative attitudes toward homosexuality, healthy discourse on the rationale behind people's decisions, choices, and biological inclinations toward homosexuality is recommended. If such discourse is conducted in a neutral and healthy atmosphere, individuals are more likely to open up for change in entrenched views and opinions. Also, given that the proposition of legal rights of LGBTs has failed in Ghana (Baisley, 2015), it is recommended that proponents of LGBT rights instead focus on creating awareness and promoting greater understanding of the probable reasons behind homosexuality. This can be a more effective means to reducing negative attitudes toward homosexuals in Ghana. While this might seem a daunting task, a graduated interventional discourse may prove effective eventually. Advocacy for legal rights for LGBTs can and should only be pursued then.

Finally, while laws and policies are ideal in driving advocacies for LGBT rights, their institution is difficult to achieve in an environment where heightened tensions and hostilities toward homosexuality persist. In such situations, the effective means to achieve relevant legal backing and institution of policies is changing public attitudes toward homosexuality. This is due to the common view that public opinion is associated with, and sometimes drives, laws and policies. Adamczyk (2017) confirmed a significant correlation between attitudes and laws across different countries. With the issue of homosexuality, Adamczyk reported that 73% of nations with unsupportive residents have illegalized homosexuality and nearly all nations with unsupportive residents prohibit same-sex marriage. Conversely, 83% of societies that are supportive of homosexuality allow for same-sex marriage. In this sense, changing public attitudes toward homosexuality in Ghana can potentially impact on the enactment of laws and policies that will guarantee the enjoyment of fundamental human rights and freedom of LGBTs.

Conclusion

In an environment of sheer hostility toward homosexuality, it is worth advancing a planned social intervention that could effectively reduce tension and create enabling conditions for the pursuit of the institution of laws and policies for the protection of the fundamental rights of LGBTs in Ghana. Drawing from the attribution theory, this study advanced a planned intervention based on two dominant attribution themes—choice and genetic predisposition. The intervention was designed in four different levels, namely, choice, choice transgender, biological, and biological transgender. All four levels of the intervention proved effective, significantly reducing participants' negative attitudes toward homosexuals. A comparative analysis revealed no significant differences in their relative levels of effectiveness. This was in contrast to the general expectation based on the attribution theory of controllability (Weiner, 1985; Weiner et al., 1988).

A test on gender responsiveness to the intervention showed no significant gender difference in attitudes toward homosexuality before and after the intervention, suggesting that both males and females were equally responsive to the treatment. This finding was not supportive of the social role theory of sex differences and similarities (Eagly, 1987; Eagly et al., 2004; Eagly et al., 2000; Wood & Eagly, 2002). The absence of gender differences in attitudes toward homosexuals in the Ghanaian context suggests that gender-role variables may only be functional in specific cultural contexts and situations. Given the sensitive nature of the issue of homosexuality in Ghana, it is not surprising that both males and females would confront it with the same level of hostility and become equally responsive to planned intervention. The effectiveness of the planned social intervention and the failure of the human rights frame in Ghana suggest the need for a shift in focus from legal argument for LGBT rights to planned social interventions that seek to reduce tensions and hostilities among the public. Legal rights for LGBTs should only be pursued in an atmosphere of understanding and acceptance of the issue of homosexuality.

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Supplemental Material

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