

# Influence of Demographic Variables on the Attitude towards the Same Gender Relationships among University Students in Nairobi County, Kenya

Wambua Pius Muasa (PhD)

*Institute of Youth Studies, School of Arts and Social Sciences, Tangaza University College, Catholic University of Eastern Africa*

**Abstract:** In Africa, homosexuality has been considered morally wrong and against the African culture. Globally, studies have shown negative attitude towards the same gender relationship among the university students. However, there is lack of similar studies with among university students in Kenya and therefore, the objective this study was to establish the influence of demographic variables of age, gender, and level of education on the attitude towards the same gender relationship among university students in Nairobi County, Kenya. The study employed correlational design. Through simple random sampling the study utilized a sample size of 294 participants. The data was collected using the demographic details of the participants and attitude towards homosexuality scale. The data was analyzed using descriptive statistics and one WAY ANOVA. The results showed that all the demographic variables (age, gender and education level) had insignificant predictive relationship with attitude towards homosexuality,  $p \leq 0.05$ .

## I. INTRODUCTION

There has been a marked increase in the growth of negative attitudes toward homosexuality in African countries. Studies that have been carried out with students in Africa universities such as Ghana, Zimbabwe, Nigeria, South Africa and others have shown greater condemnation of homosexuality than in any other part of the world (Sollar & Somda, 2011). Despite the push for international laws that protect minorities from inhumane and degrading treatment, Kenya is one of the many African countries that have not signed the December 2008 UN declaration to decriminalize homosexuality (Sollar & Somda, 2011). Studies have shown that many people's negative attitude toward homosexuality is based on morality, religion, concern for procreation and culture (Sollar & Somda, 2011).

In African countries, it is believed that people are born heterosexuals and those who happen to be homosexuals are thought to have chosen to be so and therefore, they ought to be condemned and punished severely (Anderson, 2007). For instance, the national constitution of Kenya section 162 to 165 indicates very clearly that those who are found guilty of practicing homosexuality are supposed to be given a penalty of fourteen years of imprisonment (The Republic of Kenya, 2010). Homosexuality is one of the sensitive and difficult subjects to discuss and research in the African context because of the societal taboos and the fact that most religious traditions are extremely against it (Shoko, 2010). Due to the

taboos that are attached to the subject of homosexuality in Africa and Kenya in particular, many researchers have neglected the area which has created a gap in understanding attitudes of people toward the phenomenon (Shoko, 2010).

## II. LITERATURE REVIEW

### Age

Several studies found that students who had stayed long in the university had more tolerance towards LGBT people compared to those who had just joined university (Holland et., 2013; Jenkins, et al., 2009). A study by Worthen (2012) found a positive relationship between age and attitude towards bisexual men and transgender persons. On the other hand, the same study found that freshman status was negatively correlated with attitude towards bisexual women and lesbians (Worthen, 2012). Others studies found that the attitude towards gay and lesbian persons among the undergraduate students changed dramatically as a result of interacting with them and also when exposed to course materials that related to issues of gays and lesbians (Sevecke, Rhymer, Almazan, & Jacob, 2015). Though studies have found both positive and negative correlation between age and attitude towards gay and lesbian persons, there is lack of similar studies with students in Kenyan universities.

A survey study that was conducted in Japan found that young respondents had an acceptance attitude towards LGBTs compared to the older generation. However, the study showed that individual factors were not significant to attitude towards homosexuality (Zhang, 2021). A study conducted by Copp and Koehler (2017) found that there was a significant positive correlation between the age and attitude towards homosexuality. The study found that older participants had a positive attitude towards homosexuality thought they had difficulty in identified with friends who were members of LGBT.

### Gender

A study conducted by Zhang (2021) revealed that there was a significant difference between gender and attitude towards male homosexuality. The result showed that women have a positive attitude towards male homosexuality compared to men. However, there were less significant differences between gender and stereotypes indicating that

gender were less correlated to stereotypes towards gay men. Several studies (Holland, Matthews, & Schott, 2013; Rutledge, Siebert, Siebert, & Chonody, 2012; Woodford, Silverschanz, Swank, Scherrer, & Raiz, 2012) with university students have reported male students to have more negative attitude towards homosexuality compared to female students. Moreover, a study by Weaver, Caswell and Burnaford (2011) revealed that heterosexual men with feminine characteristics and were weak in demonstrating their heterosexuality tended to have a negative attitude against gay compared to heterosexual men who were in a position to assert their sexuality and were accepted by others on regard to heterosexuality.

A study conducted by Copp and Koehler (2017) showed that men had poor negative attitude towards LGBT people compared to their female counterparts. Similarly, a study by PEW Global Research (2013) showed a big gender difference on homosexuality among the men and women in Japan. Also, a study by Yamamoto, Okura, and Shigemoto (2012) showed that men had more negative attitude towards male homosexuals compared to women. In another study Gray, Robinson, Coleman, and Bockting (2013) men scored higher in homophobia scale towards gay men and lesbian women compared to the women.

#### *Level of education*

Based on the perspective of integration theory, educational systems can be viewed as socializing agents (Van de Meerendonk & Scheepers, 2014; Van de Akker et al., 2013) which contribute to development of attitudes and values among university students (Bracke, Pattyn, & Von dem Knesebeck, 2013). It has been shown that educational systems enhance liberal attitudes toward homosexuality because it teaches support for human rights (Van de Meerendonk & Scheepers, 2014; Van de Akker et al., 2013). It affects the attitude toward homosexuality because sometimes it teaches support for non-conformity and also it enhances cognitive capabilities to question and evaluate new beliefs (Ohlander et al., 2005). The author went further to claim that education is associated with support for civil liberties and that it enhances cognitive abilities.

A study conducted by the PEW Research Centre (2011) on attitude towards homosexuality in United States showed that people who had attained college degree had a positive attitude towards homosexuality compared to people with lower education. Furthermore, a study conducted by American Enterprise Institute (2014) with people in gay marriage and living in urban areas and with high levels of education and income was having positive attitude compared to those who had living in rural areas and had low levels of education.

A study by Zhang (2021) revealed parents' to influence their children attitude towards homosexuality. The result showed that mothers, level of education influences young people to have a positive attitude towards male

homosexuals. The participants whom their mothers had high levels of education had a positive attitude towards homosexuality. On the other hand, the participants whom their father had higher levels of education, had a negative attitude towards homosexuality in relation to the norms of the family. Also, the same study revealed that the participant' area of specialization influences their attitude towards homosexuality. The participants who are studying the humanities were more tolerant towards LGBT people compared to those who were studying sciences.

### III. METHODOLOGY

#### *Research Design*

According to Orodho (2003) a research design is defined as the scheme, outline or plan that is used to generate answers to research problems. The study employed correlational research design. The design was suitable for this study because it sought to determine the influence of demographic variables of age, gender, and level of education on attitude towards the same gender relationship among university students in Nairobi County, Kenya.

#### *Location of the Study*

The study was carried out in Christian universities within Nairobi County Kenya. The Christian universities were chosen because university students were accessible to the researcher. Nairobi is a capital city in Kenya and also the largest metropolitan area in east and central Africa.

#### *Population of the Study*

The term population means the total number or aggregate of individuals, objects, or any other subject of concern which by virtue of common characteristics is of interest to the researcher and may lead to obtaining relevant information regarding the phenomenon under study (McLeod, 2019). The study target population was 1600 university students who were studying within Universities in Nairobi County, Kenya. The University students were drawn from the school of theology.

#### *Sampling Procedures*

Orodho and Kombo (2002) define sampling as the process of selecting a number of individuals or objects from a population such that the selected group contains elements representative of the characteristics found in the entire group. The study employed simple random sampling. The sampling was suitable because it gives the participants equal chance to participate in the study. Through simple random sampling, a sample size of 310 university students was selected to participate in the study.

#### *Instruments of Measure*

The study utilized a questionnaire in collecting data. The questionnaire contained two sections. The first part of the questionnaire collected data on the demographic variables of age; gender; and level of education. The second part collected

on attitude towards homosexuality using homosexuality attitude scale which contains 20 statements. Ten of the items are meant to assess attitude toward lesbians while the other 10 items are assessing the attitude toward gay men. The tool was appropriate for the study because previous studies have found differences in the attitudes of male and female heterosexuals toward homosexuality in relation to the gender of the respondents. Similar studies have also shown differences in the attitudes of heterosexuals toward gay men and lesbians in relation to the gender of target (Herek, 1988). The questionnaire was in the form of a 5-point Likert Scale, with scores ranging from 1 (“Strongly Agree”) to 5 (“strongly disagree”). The score was analyzed using the total score. Seven items which are reversed required an inverse scoring. The higher scores meant that the participant had a more negative attitude toward homosexuality. The homosexuality attitude scale was developed by Herek (1988). It is a likert scale that assesses people’s stereotypes, misconceptions, and anxieties about homosexuals. The measure contains a uni-dimensional factor representing a favorable or unfavorable evaluation of homosexuals. The scale has excellent internal consistency ( $\alpha > .92$ ). The scale has a good test-retest reliability ( $r = .71$ ).

#### Data Collection Procedure

The data was collected within a period of one month. The researcher with the help of researcher assistants, who were knowledgeable on data collection but blind to the objective of the study, met with the participants in their respective universities explained to them the purpose of the study and how it was of significant importance. The participants were given a consent form attached to the questionnaire to sign before filling it. The researcher with the assistants was available to the participants in case they wanted more clarification. The participants were given 15 minutes to fill the questionnaire and then were collected by the researcher assistants.

#### Data Analysis

The data was analyzed using descriptive analysis, univariate analysis, One Way ANOVA Analysis and regression analysis. Descriptive analysis was used to attain the means, standard deviation, frequencies, multiple imputation method, and factor analysis), one way ANOVA, and regression analysis with software package for social sciences (SPSS). Univariate analysis of variance and One Way ANOVA Analysis was conducted to check the influence of demographic variables such as age, gender, and level of education on attitude towards homosexuality.

#### Ethical Considerations

Schurink (2005) refers to ethical issues as concerns and dilemmas that arise over the right way to execute research, more specifically not to create harmful conditions for the participants of inquiry. The study ensured all the necessary ethical considerations were adhered to.

Authorization to carry out the research was obtained from the universities the data was collected. In addition, authorization to carry out the study was obtained from the National Commission for Science and Technology (NACOST). The participants were informed that there were no physical or psychological risks involved and that their participation in this study was voluntary. They participants were requested to read and sign the informed consent letter before engaging in the study and they were given freedom to decline or withdraw from the study at any time they deemed fit. They were also assured of confidentiality of their responses and they were not required to write their names on the research instrument used in data collection. Finally, participants were assured that the data collected were to be used for academic purposes only.

## IV. RESULTS

The study was based on testing hypothesis that there is a positive statistical significant influence of demographic variables such as age, gender, and level of education on attitude towards the gender relationships among the university students in Nairobi County, Kenya. First, the study presents results on the demographic variables of the participants followed by results on the hypothesis of the study.

#### Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

The demographic variables of age, gender, and educational level of participants were taken into account in this study. Table 1 shows the results of the age distribution of the participants in the current study.

Table 1. Demographic variables of the participants

Variable		Frequency	Percent
Age	20-30 yrs.	139	47.3
	31-40 yrs.	103	35.0
	41-50 yrs.	40	13.6
	51-60 yrs.	7	2.4
	Above 61 yrs.	5	1.7
Gender	Male	170	57.8
	Female	124	42.2
Education level	Certificate	31	10.5
	Diploma	67	22.8
	Bachelors’ degree	164	55.8
	Masters’ degree	27	9.2
	PhD	5	1.7

Note<sup>2</sup>: N=294.

Out of 310 respondents, 294 filled the questionnaires. The majority (47.3%) of the participants who filled the questionnaires were between 20-30 years, 35.0% between 31-40 years, 13.1% between 41-50 years whereas 4.1% were 50 years as shown in Table 1. The sample consisted of more than 57.8% males and 42.2% females showing a high level gender disparity of university students. Table 1 also indicates that the

majority of the participants, 55.8% of the respondents had Bachelor's degrees, 33.3% had Diploma and Certificates education levels whereas 10.9% had Post-graduate degrees.

#### Research Hypothesis Testing

#### Effect of Demographic Variables Such As Age, Gender and Level of Education on the Attitude of University Students towards the Same Gender Relationships

To test the influence of demographic variables of age, gender, and educational level, descriptive and One Way ANOVA analysis was conducted and the results are presented in table 2.

Table 2. Descriptive Analysis and One-Way ANOVA Showing the Influence of Demographic Variables on the Attitudes towards Homosexuality

		M	SD	F	p-value	Effect size ( $\eta^2$ )
Age	20-30 yrs.	73.8	10.1			
	31-40 yrs.	71.0	12.9			
	41-50 yrs.	74.7	11.5	1.53	0.19	0.027
	51-60 yrs.	70.3	11.1			
	Above 61 yrs.	70.8	15.8			
Gender	Male	73.9	10.4	0.83	0.36	0.004
	Female	71.3	12.7			
Education level	Certificate	70.7	11.9			
	Diploma	72.7	12.8			
	Bachelors	72.6	10.8	0.15	0.96	0.003
	Masters	75.5	12.2			
	PhD	76.4	8.4			

Note<sup>5</sup>: N=294; Significance at  $p < .05$ ; F-Fisher's statistic used to test if there is a significant difference between the demographic variables and attitudes toward homosexuality; M-Mean, SD-Standard Deviation. Dependent variable: attitudes toward homosexuality. According to West & Aiken (2003, p95), the effect sizes in ANOVA and regression are distributed as .001 (very small), .01 (small), .06 (middle) and .14+ (large).

The One-Way ANOVA results in table 2 indicate that all the four demographic variables had insignificant influence on the attitude towards homosexuality,  $p > .05$ . Effect size of the variables was measured accordingly. Age for instance portrayed some small effect ( $\eta^2 = .027$ ) on the attitude towards homosexuality with under 50's showing insignificantly better attitude ( $M = 73.1$ ,  $SD = 11.5$ ) than over 50s ( $M = 70.6$ ,  $SD = 13.5$ ) at 95% confidence level. All the other demographic variables (gender and education level) had very low effect size ( $\eta^2 \approx .001$ ). The hypothesis that there is a positive statistical significant influence of demographic variables such as age, gender, and level of education on university students towards the same gender relationships was rejected at 95% confidence.

## V. DISCUSSION

The study was based on testing the hypothesis that there is a positive statistical significant influence of demographic variables of age, gender, and level of education on attitude towards the same gender relationships among university students in Nairobi County Kenya. The results indicated that all the demographic variables of age, gender and level of education had insignificant predictive influence on the attitude towards homosexuality among the university students. The results on the insignificant relationship between age and attitude to homosexuality was in disagreement with a survey study conducted in Japan by Zhang (2021) who found significant difference between age and attitude towards homosexuality. The study found that young respondents had an acceptance attitude towards LGBTs compared to the older generation. In addition, the findings contradicted the findings of Copp and Koehler (2017) who found that there was a significant positive correlation between the age and attitude towards homosexuality. The study found that older participants had a positive attitude towards homosexuality thought they had difficulty to identify with friends who were members of LGBT. Likewise, the findings were in disagreement with findings of Worthen (2012) who found a positive relationship between age and attitude towards bisexual men and transgender persons.

The current study also found gender to insignificantly influence attitude towards homosexuality. The results of the current study were not supported by the findings of Zhang (2021) who revealed that there was a significant difference between gender and attitude towards male homosexuality. The result showed that women have a positive attitude towards male homosexuality compared to men. Furthermore, the findings of this study contradicted with several findings which reported male students to have negative attitude towards homosexuality compared to the female students (Holland, Matthews, & Schott, 2013; Rutledge, Siebert, Siebert, & Chonody, 2012; Woodford, Silverschanz, Swank, Scherrer, & Raiz, 2012). Moreover, the findings were not in agreement with findings of Weaver, Caswell and Burnaford (2011) who revealed that heterosexual men with feminine characteristics and weak in demonstrating their heterosexuality tended to have a negative attitude against gay compared to heterosexual men who were in a position to assert their sexuality and were accepted by others on regard to their heterosexuality. Also, the findings of this study was not supported by study of Copp and Koehler (2017) which showed that men had poor negative attitude towards LGBT people compared to their female counterparts. Similarly, the findings were in disagreement with the findings of Yamamoto, Okura, and Shigemoto (2012) which showed that men had more negative attitude towards male homosexuals compared to women.

The study found education to have insignificant association with attitude towards homosexuality. The findings were contrarily to earlier studies that showed that students



with high levels of education have a positive attitude towards LGBT persons compared to the students with low levels of education. The findings of this study contradicted several studies that found educational systems enhance liberal attitudes toward homosexuality because it teaches support for human rights (Van de Meerendonk & Scheepers, 2014; Van de Akker et al., 2013). It affects the attitude toward homosexuality because sometimes it teaches support for non-conformity and also it enhances cognitive capabilities to question and evaluate new beliefs (Ohlander et al., 2005). Furthermore, findings showed that education is associated with support for civil liberties and that it enhances cognitive abilities. In addition, the findings of this study was not supported by findings of PEW Research Centre (2011) in United States which showed that people who had attained college degree had a positive attitude towards homosexuality compared to people with lower education. Also, the findings were not in line with findings of a study that was conducted by American Enterprise Institute (2014) and found that people living in urban areas and with high levels of education and income were having positive attitude towards homosexuality compared to those who were living in rural areas and had low levels of education.

## VI. CONCLUSION

The study concludes that the demographic variables of age, gender, level of education have no influence on attitude towards the same gender relationships among university students in Nairobi County Kenya. The study recommends the future studies to employ qualitative or mixed method approaches to understand better the attitude towards the same gender relationships among the university students in Kenya and Africa in large.

## REFERENCES

- [1] Anderson, B. (2007). The politics of homosexuality in Africa. *Africana*, 1(1), 123-136 antigay behaviors: The harmful effects of asserting heterosexuality. *Group Process & Intergroup Relations*, 15(4), 471-486.
- [2] Bosson, J. K., Weaver, J. R., Caswell, A. T., & Burnaford, R. M. (2011). Gender threats and men's gender differences. *Journal of Sex Research*, 25(4), 451-477. doi:10.1080/00224498809551476
- [3] Bracke, P., Pattyn, E., & Von dem Knesebeck, O. (2013). Overeducation and depressive symptoms: Diminishing mental health returns to education. *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 35(8), 1242-1259.
- [4] Grey, J. A., Robinson, B. E., Coleman, E., & Walter, O. B. (2013). A systematic review of instruments that measure attitudes toward homosexual men. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 50(3-4), 329-352. doi:10.1080/00224499.2012.746279
- [5] Herek, G. M. (1988). Homosexuals' attitudes toward lesbians and gay men: Correlates and instruments that measure attitudes toward homosexual men. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 50(3-4), 329-352. doi:10.1080/00224499.2012.746279
- [6] Hilary L. Copp & William J. Koehler (2017) Peer attitudes toward LGBT identified university students as mediated by demographic factors, *Journal of Gay & Lesbian Mental Health*, 21, 4, 277-291, DOI: 10.1080/19359705.2017.1320697
- [7] Holland, L., Matthews, T. L., & Schott, M. R. (2013). "That's so gay!" Exploring college students' attitudes toward the LGBT population. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 60(4), 575-595. homosexuals]. *Tokushima Bunri-Daigaku Kenkyu-ukiy~o [Tokushima Bunri University Research Bulletin]*, 84, 85-91.
- [8] Jenkins, M., Lambert, E. G., & Baker, D. N. (2009). The attitudes of Black and White college students toward gays and lesbians. *Journal of Black Studies*, 39(4), 589-613.
- [9] McLeod, S. A. (2019). Sampling methods. *Simply Psychology*. <http://www.simplypsychology.org/sampling.html> Herek, G. M. (1984). Attitudes toward lesbian and gay men: A factor-analytic study. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 10(1-2), 39-51. doi:10.1300/J082v10n01\_03
- [10] Ohlander, J., Batalova, J., & Treas, J. (2005). Explaining educational influences on attitudes toward homosexual relations. *Social Science Research*, 34(4), 781-799.
- [11] Orodho, A. J. (2003). *Essentials of educational and social sciences research methods*. Nairobi: Masola Publisher.
- [12] Orodho, A.J., & Kombo, D.K. (2000). *Research methods*. Nairobi: Kenyatta University.
- [13] Pew Research Center. (2013). The global divide on homosexuality. Retrieved from <http://www.pewglobal.org/2013/06/04/the-global-divide-on-homosexuality>
- [14] Rutledge, S. E., Siebert, D. C., Siebert, C., & Chonody, J. (2012). Attitudes toward gays and lesbians: A latent class analysis of university students. *Journal of Social Service Research*, 38, 18-28.
- [15] Sallar, A.M. & Somda, D.A.K. (2011). Homosexuality and HIV in Africa. An essay on using entertainment education as a vehicle for stigma reduction. *Sexuality and Culture*, 15, 279-307.
- [16] Schurink, W.J. (2005). Lecture thirteen: evaluating qualitative research. Johannesburg: Department of Human Resource Management, University of Johannesburg.
- [17] Sevecke, J. R., Rhymer, K. N., Almazan, E. P., & Jacob, S. (2015). Effects of interaction experiences and undergraduate coursework on attitudes toward gay and lesbian issues. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 62, 821-840.
- [18] Shoko, T. (2010). "Worse than dogs and pigs" Attitude towards homosexual practice in Zimbabwe. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 57, 634-649.
- [19] The republic of Kenya. (2010). *The constitution of Kenya*. Nairobi: Government printers.
- [20] Tianqi Zhang (2021) Male homosexuality in Japan from the perspective of the younger generation: a case study of students at a National University, *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 18, 4, 360-393, DOI: 10.1080/19361653.2019.1684415
- [21] Van den Akker, H., Van der Ploeg, R., & Scheepers, P. (2013). Disapproval of homosexuality: Comparative research on individual and national determinants of disapproval of homosexuality in 20 European countries. *International Journal of Public Opinion Research*, 25(1), 64-86.
- [22] Woodford, M. R., Silverschanz, P., Swank, E., Scherrer, K. S., & Raiz, L. (2012). Predictors of heterosexual college students' attitudes toward LGBT people. *Journal of LGBT Youth*, 9, 297-320.
- [23] Worthen, M. G. F. (2012). Understanding college student attitudes toward LGBT individuals. *Sociological Focus*, 45(4), 285-305.
- [24] Yamamoto, A., Okura, M., & Shigemoto, T. (2012). Paasonaritei to imeeji ga d~oseiaisha ni students' attitudes toward the LGBT population. *Journal of Homosexuality*, 60(4), 575-595.