

## Sexual Orientations of Students in a Nigerian University and their knowledge of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgenders (LGBTs)

Article by Kemnele, Kelechi Degbetamara Kenneth (MPH)<sup>1\*</sup>; Okon, Atai Bassey (MPH)<sup>2</sup>; Joel, Mercy Oiza (MPH)<sup>3</sup>; Beyioku Adedoyin Mary (MPH)<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1,4</sup>University Ibadan, Department of Health Promotion and Education, Faculty of Public Health, University College Hospital, Ibadan, Oyo State, Nigeria  
E-mail: [kelechikemnele@gmail.com](mailto:kelechikemnele@gmail.com)<sup>1</sup>, [okonataibassey@gmail.com](mailto:okonataibassey@gmail.com)<sup>2</sup>, [mercyoiza205@gmail.com](mailto:mercyoiza205@gmail.com)<sup>3</sup>, [beyiokumary88@gmail.com](mailto:beyiokumary88@gmail.com)<sup>4</sup>

### Abstract

**Introduction:** Lesbians, Gay, Bisexuals and Transgenders (LGBTs) are a key population for HIV risk globally with 17% of male homosexuals having HIV worldwide. Male homosexuals also account for 10% of all new HIV infections in Nigeria. The dearth of information about LGBTs in Nigeria makes it imperative to assess the sexual orientations of university students as well as their knowledge of LGBTs.

**Objectives:** To determine the sexual orientation of students of University of Ibadan

To determine students' level of knowledge about LGBTs

**Methods:** A mixed research method involving quantitative components (self-administered, semi-structured questionnaires) and qualitative components (Focus Group Discussions) was adopted using a multi-stage sampling to select undergraduate and postgraduate students of University of Ibadan.

**Results:** Students had moderate knowledge about LGBTs. Also, 96% of the respondents were identified as heterosexuals, 0.9% were bisexuals and 2.1% were uncertain about their sexual orientation. There was no statistically significant association between the socio-demographic and academic characteristics of the students and their knowledge about LGBT however there was a statistically significant association between respondent's knowledge about LGBTs and personally knowing an LGBT person ( $X^2= 16.040$ ;  $P= <0.001$ ).

### Introduction

The terms lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) describe distinct groups within the gay culture. These distinct groups are made up of individuals whose sexual orientation portrays them to be sexually attracted, sexually behave or self-identify themselves as individuals attracted to people of same sex as them or both sexes as in the case of Lesbians, Gays or Bisexuals. It also describes a group of individuals that experience a mismatch between their gender identity or gender expression and their assigned sex as in the case of transgenders<sup>1</sup>. As the world continues to grow into a global village, there is a continuous infusion of beliefs and ideas into developing countries especially from westernized and developed countries. One of such ideas is the issue of LGBT.

There is a dearth of information on the types of sexual orientation among students in Nigeria as well as the knowledge about LGBT in Nigeria and Africa as a continent, with exception of a few studies in South Africa, even though according to The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV and AIDS (UNAIDS), 17% of men who have sex with men (MSM) are infected with HIV<sup>2</sup>. This MSM population accounts for 10% of all new HIV infections in Nigeria<sup>3</sup>. It is possible that the invisibility of LGBT people in epidemiological data in Africa is related to the criminalisation of same-sex behaviour in many countries and the subsequent fear of negative repercussions from participating in such researches.

Therefore, it is important to determine what types of sexual orientations exists and to assess knowledge about LGBT especially among university students as they represent a population of educated youth who are generally more open to the new ideas influenced by globalisation and who adopt such ideas with relatively more ease<sup>4</sup> and also to determine the percentages of existing sexual orientations.

Research on LGBT-specific issues would ease the difficulty in determining which specific interventions and services are needed for this at-risk population and how to provide such services within the ambits of the law. Such researches would also serve to provide data on the type of sexual orientations that can be found in an academic setting amongst university students which would serve in explaining sexual patterns and behaviour amongst students in such academic institutions.

## **Methods**

The study adopted a mixed method of research with quantitative components made up of self-administered, semi - structured questionnaires and qualitative components made up of Focus Group Discussions (FGD). The study population was undergraduate and postgraduate students of University of Ibadan.

### **Quantitative data collection method and analysis**

Using a 52% prevalence rate in a study about knowledge and attitude of medical students towards LGBTs in the University of California<sup>5</sup>; a sample size of four hundred and twenty-two was calculated for the quantitative component. The instrument used in assessing student's sexual orientation was created by modifying an existing tool gotten from "Sexual Orientation Measures for Adolescent Health Surveys"<sup>6</sup>. Five items were created to assess student's sexual attraction, sexual behaviour and self-identification.

A 24-point scale which was a modified version of the combination of two knowledge scales namely; "Knowledge of Lesbians, Gays, Bisexuals and Transgender people (KLGBT) questionnaire pre-survey"<sup>7</sup> and "Sex Education and Knowledge about Homosexuality Questionnaire (SEKHQ)"<sup>8</sup> was used to measure students' Knowledge of LGBT.

Content validity of the instruments was ensured. Also, adequate training for research assistants on the research procedure and handling of instrument for data collection and pre-testing the instrument in an independent higher institution in the same locality was carried out to ensure that all questions and statements distinctly and collectively measured what they set out to measure and were adequately understood by students. A Cronbach's Alpha statistic score of 0.78 ensured that the knowledge scale was reliable.

Generated data from the quantitative component of the study were analyzed using the IBM's SPSS<sup>®</sup> version 21. The level of significance ( $\alpha$ ) for all statistical procedures carried out was set at 95% confidence level.

### **Qualitative data collection method and analysis**

Four sessions of Focus Group Discussions were held involving a total of twenty-four students. These participants were randomly invited and represented all faculties in the University. Twelve of the students were undergraduates and the rest postgraduates. Also, twelve were females and the rest males.

The FGD which adopted a 3-itemed Focus Group Discussion (FGD) guide with relevant questions that served as prompts under each item. These were used to extract information related to the objectives of the research namely: sexual orientation of students and their knowledge about LGBTs.

Qualitative data was collected in the form of audio scripts which were transcribed word-for-word and analysed using Atlas Ti.

In the process of analysis, a systematic and inductive method of theme identification was carried out. Segments representing responses were systematically codified, openly and then selectively, to aid in rigorous content analysis of the data.

### **Ethical considerations**

Ethical approval was obtained from University of Ibadan/University College Hospital Ethical Review Committee. Given the sensitive nature of the research, the researcher ensured that the consent of all students was obtained before they were recruited into the study for the qualitative and quantitative components of the study.

## Results

### Quantitative data

The mean age of participants in the quantitative study was  $25 \pm 5$  years. Most of the students were aged between 21 to 25 years of age. 86.3% of the students declared they were not married. Only 14.7% of the students were Muslims, the rest were Christians. 54.7% of the students were postgraduate, the rest were undergraduates.

### Sexual orientation

In this study, 23.3% of the students stated that they knew at least one LGBT person. 51.2% have had sexual intercourse in their life. Of this population, 0.9% stated that they have had sexual intercourse with both males and females. Over 90% stated that they were sexually attracted to members of the opposite sex, while 0.7% said that they were sexually attracted to members of the same sex as them. An equal percentage reported being sexually attracted to members of both the opposite and same sex. Also 5.7% claimed not to have any sexual attraction while 1.2% stated that they were unsure about who they were sexually attracted to.

In accordance with the percentage of sexual attraction for both males and females, 0.7% of the students stated that they thought about both men and women whenever they thought or daydreamed about sex. 69.7% thought about either men or women, 24.2% admitted to not thinking or daydreaming about sex while 5.5% were uncertain about whom they daydreamed about.

As high as 95% of the students stated that sexual relationships with the opposite sex appealed to them the most while 0.7% then stated that sexual relationships with both same and opposite sex appealed to them the most. However, 1.9% and 2.4% claimed that they had no appeal for sexual relationships or that they were uncertain about which appealed to them the most respectively.

There was a statistically significant association between the sexual orientation of students and their experience of sexual intercourse ( $X^2=6.312$ ;  $P=0.015$ ). It can be noted that 3.3% of the students who reported to not have had sexual intercourse ever in their life, claimed to be non-heterosexuals.

There were more non- heterosexual females than there were males (1.7%). All married students reported that they were heterosexuals. 16% of the Christians reported that their sexual orientation was other than that of heterosexuals, while 0.5% of the Muslims laid the same claim.

There was also no linear relationship between student's knowledge of LGBT and their sexual orientations. ( $r_s=0.031$ ;  $p=0.727$ ).

### Knowledge about LGBT

As high as 69.4% had moderate knowledge about LGBTs while 22.0% showed poor knowledge. The mean knowledge score of students was  $5.89 \pm 2.013$  which fell under the domain of moderate level of knowledge of LGBT. 20.1% of the students who had poor knowledge about LGBTs reported that they did not know any LGBT person. Nonetheless, there was a statistically significant association between student's knowledge about LGBTs and their knowing an LGBT person ( $X^2= 16.040$ ;  $P=<0.001$ ). There was no statistically significant association between the sexual orientation of students and their knowledge about LGBTs.

### Qualitative data

Most of the participants that took part in the FGD were between the ages of 21 and 30 years. There were equal numbers of males and females' participants. 76.9% of the students were Christians while 23.1% were Muslims.

### Sexual orientation

Discussion on sexual orientation had two sub-themes which are concerned with looking at participants understanding of sexual orientation as well as their understanding of sexuality by giving clear-cut definitions and differentiations between sex and gender.

In starting the discourse, participants stated their views on what sexual orientations meant to them. These views varied across board. Some group of participants perceived sexual orientation to be some form of sexual education as described by a male undergraduate (UG) student...

*"A way of trying to let people know the meaning of and maybe the aftermath of the process of sexual intercourse"*

A male postgraduate (PG) bore the same ideology...

*"A person understanding about sex, the information a person has about sex and the knowledge a person has about his or her personality as a sexual being, about the opposite sex and sex generally"*

Other participants had more correct and relatable definitions including that of a male UG who said...

*"A person's preference in terms of the gender of whoever your partner should be. The kind of person an individual is attracted to in terms of gender".*

Yet another male UG defined sexual orientation as...

*"The sexual preferences and practices a person choose over others - from a list of abundant options".*

Other definitions of sexual orientation given by PG participants; a male and a female respectively are ...

*"How a person feels when it comes to sex, whether a person is homosexual, heterosexual, bisexual. Basically, if a person is straight or bent..."*

*"Sexuality is about being comfortable with who you are, being able to express your innate desires and emotions, thus sexual orientation is a person's perception towards sexuality, relating with people especially the opposite sex".*

There was a need to understand if and how participants had varying views about the difference(s) between sex and gender, as this would help in understanding their perception of sexuality and sexual orientations.

A female UG student stated simply that...

*"Sex is biological [while] gender is social..."*

Another female UG, expanding on the statement was quoted saying that ...

*"...Sex is based on a person physical features while gender is based on the expectations of the society as pertaining to what a person practice as that gender".*

A related idea was also voiced by two male participants; a UG and PG participant respectively...

*"Sex is a sort of differentiation between males and females while gender has to do with societal responsibilities - how the society sees people of different genders".*

*"Gender are socio-cultural construct being determined by the society".*

Other differing views were those of a female UG participant who said that...

*"...We try to shorten the word sexual intercourse for sex. That is the major difference".*

And a female PG who said that...

*"...It depends on the context being used. Sex can refer to sexual intercourse"*

A male PG participant also pointed out that...

*"Sex can be used as a noun as well as a verb while gender can only be used as a noun. To make generalizations; we use gender".*

## **Knowledge of LGBT**

The theme on knowledge of LGBT had 10 sub-themes which explored student's definitions of the member bodies of LGBT. It also clarified the views of students on identifying markers for LGBT persons as well as determined the views students had regarding the existence and reasons for existences of LGBTs in different climes.

Participants described individual members under the LGBT umbrella. Some descriptions given include that of a male UG participant who described a lesbian as...

*"...A female is that is actually doing or colliding together with another female".*

Other definitions given by other male participants, an UG and a PG respectively were...

*"These are persons who are sexually attracted to females and they equally engage in sexual practices with these females".*

*"...she is also someone who is not sexually aroused by a guy".*

A female UG as such defined a lesbian as...

*"A female who is sexually aroused by other females but not necessarily into the act[sex]"*

Gay men were also described by participants. In such regards, a male UG participant succinctly

defined gay men as...

*"The opposite of lesbians..."*

While a male PG participant defined them as...

*"Males who have sexual attraction for other males and or have sexual intercourse with them"*

Bisexuals were also simply defined by a female UG participant as ...

*"[Persons having] sexual attraction to both genders".*

While a female PG participant expanded on that and was quoted saying that bisexuality is the...

*"Sexual attraction to both genders...when a female likes both females and guys and she can have sex with both a female and a guy".*

A male PG participant, also defined it from the aspect of males, when he said...

*"A male who is equally attracted to males as much as females and vice versa and engages in sexual practices with such people".*

Most participants spoke extensively about transgenders. Also, peculiar to most responses was commonly shared declaration that transgenders were people of low esteem. A male UG participant was quoted saying that...

*"Transgenders are people who are not comfortable with their sexuality so they change it. They are not comfortable with the body they are in so they change it to fit into the role of the sexuality that they feel comfortable in..."*

A male PG said that...

*"These are people who do not like their gender and they have issues being who they are as per male or female and they want to do something to switch their gender to the opposite sex"*

While another said...

*"These are group of confused people who are not comfortable with their anatomy and try as much as possible to switch to the other side. Where clothes and all that cannot do it for them, they actually go as far as having their sexual organs changed in a way"*

And then a female PG participant said...

*"These are low self-esteem people who have a particular love for the gender which they aren't and would go to any length to change to that gender"*

Another male PG participant stated that...

*"These are people that feel like they are males physically but mentally or psychologically, they feel more inclined to a female and feel more like a female and tries to fit into and makes his body fit into that psychological mindset he has about himself and vice-versa... "*

Other definitions for transgenders include that of a female UG participant who said...

*"They are people who prefer to be females when they are naturally males and perhaps attempt to change their sexual organs and vice versa..."*

While a female PG participant said...

*"These are people who feel more comfortable in playing the roles of the opposite gender and think that they have the wrong physical organs"*

And a male PG participant that said that a transgender is...

*"A person who does some morphological changes to his body because he is not comfortable with his body to become a lady..."*

To decipher when exactly a person can be said to be a Lesbian, Gay man, Bisexual or Transgender, a female UG participant posited that...

*"A person can be said to be gay when the person has not even had sex with someone of the same sex so long as the person already finds him/herself sexually attracted to people of the same sex"*

This view was also maintained by a female PG participant who said that...

*"...Transgenders do not need the action before they know what they are. Once they start nurturing it, a mental process begins.*

A male PG participant of the same view added his voice saying that...

*"...Legally when a person engages in the act, the person can be said to be a lesbian. That is from a legal point of view. Looking at it from another point of view, just being aroused is enough because a lesbian has to be aroused before she engages in the act. Once the basic instincts for being attracted to a female is there, a lady is definitely a lesbian. The same thing applies to other orientations"*

A contrary view was held by some other participants including a male PG participant who said that...

*"It is the sexual act that proves or makes a person an LGBT..." "...There has to be substantial evidence to show that a person is an LGBT not just a person's sexual attraction..."*

And a male UG participant that said.

*"... It is only when a person acts on his/her feelings and it is established that this is what excites a person sexually, that is when one can say that a person is an LGBT"*

A female PG participant also added that...

*"... Admiration is okay, but when a person starts deriving pleasure from the admiration, that's when a sexual orientation can be defined"*

While another female PG participant shared this...

*"I was hearing about this thing that is coming up now, in abroad mostly, that when a child is born, let's say it was a boy, you don't say a bouncing baby boy, you don't define their gender at their birth. What they are clamoring for now is that once a child grows up to the age of emancipation and is able to take decision for himself, at that point they let him define who he is, if he is a man or a woman, a male or a female..."*

There are always reservations before marking a person as an Lesbians, Gay men, Bisexual or Transgenders. These reservations can be cleared up by telltale signs used to identify LGBTs. However, some participants were of contrary opinion including a female UG participant who said...

*" I don't think there are markers until the individual makes his sexuality known..."*

In the same vein, a male UG participant said that...

*" As much as there can be markers, there are not always markers and the few markers one might see might not be enough..."*

And another female PG participant said that...

*"...It is hard to point out any strong characteristic for lesbians and gay. Some people are very physical and always 'touchy' this doesn't make them gay or lesbians.*

A male UG participant, agreeing to what they said bluntly stated that...

*"...If they are markers without substantial proofs, it would be a case of witch-hunting"*

Another female PG agreed saying that...

*"...It is difficult to identify bisexuals as because they 'roll' with both guys and girls*

Disagreeing to the above opinions, other participants including a female PG participant mentioned that...

*"Females tend to be more comfortable with other females to an extent, that kind of a thing does not necessarily mean that that person is a lesbian but in the case of men, it is usually more suspicious when a guy wears a lot of bright colours..."*

Two male UG participants mentioned that...

*"It has been conventional to say that a lady is a lesbian when you see the lady wearing an anklets..."*

*"...When I was much younger, when I see ladies wearing anklets, I used to believe that they were Lesbians..."*

This can be supported by three different female PG participants who affixed markers for gay men to be...

*"A guy that wears coloured shoes and belts to match is a marker that a guy is gay"*

*"A guy wearing skinny jeans"*

*"The walking steps of a guy"*

Another female PG participant shared her experience in a bid to reveal identifying markers for lesbians. She said...

*"I went to an all-girls secondary school and the way we use to mark lesbian is...they usually like to keep their corners private. They call it tents or 'ashawo curtains'. They are also more involved in sports than other females so they tend to wear canvas a lot, short knickers and they 'bounce' and they are the ones that usually have a lot of provisions which they use to lure other girls"*

A male PG participant added his voice to the discourse, saying that...

*"...Talking about identifiers, the way of dressing comes to mind. Some ladies would pose as tom boys and their mannerism too would make one think that they are lesbians..."*

To differentiate between markers for gay men and those of lesbians, a male PG participant said that...

*"...the actions of a guy make it easy to identify him as a gay. Generally, guys are not soft on other guys so when you see one who acts that way, it is a good marker. It is easier to identify a gay guy than to identify a lesbian"*

The above statement can serve as a template upon which this statement by a female UG participant can be made. She said...

*"...ladies are more bisexual in nature than men. It is because they seem to be more comfortable in their sexuality so they are more bisexual in nature than men. It disgusts about 20% of men to be touched by a fellow man but ladies would feel more comfortable, they can observe themselves when taking their baths, they can touch and all that. So they have a higher tendency of being bisexual than men"*

Speaking on the existence of LGBTs in Nigeria, a male UG participant had this to say...

*"...Of course, they are many"*

Another male UG participant logically stated that...

*"In a nation of over 150 million, they are sure to be existing"*

Other male UGs said...

*"It is most certain that they are around. The only problem is identifying them"*

*"I wouldn't know of Ibadan but from all the stories I have heard, I am sure that they exist"*

This is supported by a female PG participant who said...

*"There are. They are so many in Nigeria"*

Other statements supporting the existence are those of a female UG participant;

*"There is no society where they do not exist"*

*"...based on record of conviction so far, I believe that they exist"*

Two participants had contrary views about the existence of transgenders in Nigeria. A male UG participant said...

*"...As for transgenders, I don't think they can thrive in Nigeria so I don't think we have those types while as for lesbians, gay guys and bisexuals, I think those ones abound"*

While a male PG participant said...

*"...based on record of conviction so far, I believe that there are"*

*"There are gay men in Nigeria. I am not sure of lesbians, or bisexuals or transgenders"*

A male UG concluded thus...

*"There are transgenders in Nigeria but because of how religious our society is, it is hard for them to come out fully. They do it in the privacy of their rooms"*

Since it is believed that they exist, and as it is said that isn't a 'norm' in Africa, participants gave reasons as to the likelihood for the 'increasing' existence of LGBTs. A male UG participant stated that...

*"...Its increase has to do with how people are exposed to the west, where it is coming from..."*

In the same light, another male UG participant simply said...

*"What promotes it in Nigeria is westernization"*

This notion was also supported by a female participant who said...

*"...They are increasing for the fact that most movies we watch nowadays, they always including a scene of gays or lesbians and the likes. It is because they are increasing that they are becoming more acceptable especially in the western countries"*

A female UG participants blamed it on role models. In her words...

*"Looking up to role models who happen to be LGBT people for example Queen Latifah"*

The social media was also said to be cause of the existence of LGBTs. In the words of two male PG participants...

*"...Unlimited access to the internet - continuous exposure to LGBT related things increases their chances for people to adopt such tendencies"*

*"...Number one is social media"*

This view was also supported by a male PG participant

*"The media is a great influence. The way they glamorize LGBTs it makes it quite attractive for*

people to join in"

And yet, others blamed it on poverty including two male UG participants who said...

*"...They are pumping more money into it. If a person is ready to associate with them, they would change the person's life for good. This promote the acts..."*

*"Some people go into this because of the money involved. That is why gay clubs flourish"*

And a male PG participant who said...

*"...Money is another factor for the existence of LGBT people are having it easier nowadays, especially rich kids, that is why they can allow themselves to lead such confusing lives"*

A female PG said it was due to peers. In her words...

*"Peer pressure can also be a reason. Curiosity among teenagers and with a little pressure from their peers, they could easily give in..."*

Other reasons are...

*"The fact that there is a law restricting them, they are sure to exist. When a law is put in place to stop something, people who want to flout the rule would actually increase"* by a male PG participant

*"There is no sensible reason except they say that the person is possessed or they are not in the right state of mind"* female PG participant

*"...It is complicated. Mostly as a result of a dysfunctional society we find ourselves. For instance, you have two gay men who decide to marry and who want a child and then adopts one or uses a surrogate mother, the child grows up having two fathers and the complications set in..."* female PG participant

A notable reason given by a male UG participant was...

*"There is also the effect of rejection for instance some people do not have luck with the opposite sex so they go for what is easier for them..."*

And a female UG participant who said...

*"Hatred for opposite sex e.g. when girls get raped. They can start to hate men and prefer women.*

Other reasons still given are

*"...Another thing is the society. The society frowns at premarital pregnancy, so to avoid it they decide to take a safer route, one which they would get all the pleasure and stay safe from pregnancy"* male UG participant

*"...When conditions become more favourable, the population increases. More countries are legalizing LGBT marriages, as such their population should grow"* female UG participant

*"...Decaying of moral fibre especially family ties are a strong reason for the existence and increase in the population of LGBT. The upbringing and the society play a role"* male PG participant

A female PG participant blamed it on freedom saying...

*" The problem we have is too much freedom. People are trying to propagate the right for LGBT people. Whether it is against the law of nature, we no longer care"*

Joining the argument by pro and anti-LGBTs about the tendencies of individuals to be born with LGBT traits or not, a male UG participant vehemently stated that...

*"I greatly oppose that belief. I would argue it to a standstill because it is against the natural law for same to attract. It has always been that opposite attracts. Also, the union of a male and a female is the way to give birth or bring forth, or comfortably indulge in the reproductive process"*

A female PG also said...

*"People can't be born that way. It is a psychological thing"*

Other male PG participants said...

*"Nobody is born that way. They choose to be who they are or what they are.*

*"The information is planted in a person. It could be subconsciously but nobody is born that way"*

Though not completely certain, a female UG explain thus...

*"I have heard that during conception, everybody first forms as a female and then maybe later, as development kicks in, we either start developing male organs or you continue to develop female organs but because I am not in that satiation, I wouldn't say if it is true or not but I think it is because people have conceived it in their mind that the LGBT lifestyle is possible, so they would look for such reasons to back up their belief"*



## Discussion

### Sexual orientation

The sexual orientation of an individual can be ascertained using three domains of human sexuality which are an individual's sexual attraction, sexual behaviour and self-identification of belonging to a particular sexual stance. This study disclosed some disparities in the assessment of an individual's sexual orientation across all three domains given the sensitive nature of sexuality and the criminalization of non-heterosexual acts, in Nigeria as well as the negative cultural and religious beliefs about non-heterosexuality in Nigeria. This is evident as there were students who admitted to be sexually attracted in a non-heterosexual way, who however claimed not to display non-heterosexual behaviours or do not self-identify as non-heterosexuals and vice-versa. These disparities were also reported by Sexual Minority Assessment Research Team of the Williams Institute<sup>9</sup>.

In the domain of sexual attraction

While assessing sexual behaviour, there was an equal percentage of sexual behaviour among males and females (0.7%) who stated that they thought about both men and women whenever they were thinking or daydreaming about sex (bisexuals). The percentage of students who admitted to heterosexual behaviours (60.7%) was reduced when compared to those who admitted to thinking about either men or women when they thought or daydreamed about sex. There was also an increase in the percentage who admitted to not thinking or daydreaming about sex and those who were uncertain about which person(s), male, female or both they thought about when they find themselves thinking or daydreaming about sex. Also, when asked about ever experiencing sexual intercourse ever in their lives, nearly 50% of the students were in denial. Of the percentage that admitted to sexual intercourse, less than 1% stated that they had been involved in bisexual relationships. There was no mention of solely homosexual relationships. The existence of these disparities can be said to be present because sexual behaviour can be seen to be a very definitive criterion in assigning a person to a sexual orientation and as such, it might be easier to admit a sexual attraction but not admit a sexual behaviour or act.

Findings on the self-identification of sexual orientations showed that 95% of the students self-identified themselves as heterosexuals which are higher than the percentage admitting to heterosexual attraction and heterosexual behaviours. Still, less than 1% self-identified as bisexuals while lower percentages; 1.9% and 2.4% respectively self-identified to either belong to no sexual orientation or were uncertain about their status.

Assessing the students based on all three domains, this study posits that over 95% of the students were heterosexuals. Generally, the percentage non-heterosexuals were low as less than 1% could be identified as bisexuals. In a British Columbian study<sup>10</sup>, 2.6% of the students were identified as non-heterosexuals while Garofalo *et al*<sup>11</sup> found 2.5% of their adolescent sample self-identified as non-heterosexuals. The reasons for the low percentage of self-identified non-heterosexuals in this study can be assumed to be as a result of Nigerian factors described earlier.

All the students that claimed to be a bisexual were females. This finding was supported in a study carried out among students of Obafemi Awolowo University, Ife<sup>12</sup>. No respondent could clearly be identified as homosexuals using all three domains of sexual orientation to assess them. The absence of homosexuals in this study could be because bisexuality involves a notch of homosexuality, and homosexuality among females wasn't strongly frowned at as compared to homosexuality among men and the later might be seen as a form of emasculation.

It can be assumed that it is somewhat safer to declare having "No Sexual Orientation" or being unsure of the sexual orientation a person belongs as lesser number of students stated that they had no sexual preference than those that declared that they were uncertain of their sexual orientation. This study also found out that all married students reported that they were heterosexuals. 16% of the Christian students were reported to have a non-heterosexual orientation while 0.5% of the Muslims were of the same disposition.

More undergraduate students subscribed to other sexual orientations other than heterosexuality than post graduates. This might be related to the age differences between both groups of students as there were higher number of older students who are heterosexuals than there are younger ones.

There was no statistically significant association between the sexual characteristics of students and their sexual orientations. However, 1.4% of the students who reported to not have had sexual intercourse ever in their life, were found to be non-heterosexuals meaning that their sexuality depended on their choice of sexual attraction and self-identification of sexual orientation status.

### **Knowledge of LGBT**

Generally, students in this study exhibited a moderate level of knowledge about LGBT as there were gaps in their knowledge. Gaps were also reported in a research on Swedish medical and nursing students' who were examined to determine their knowledge of the unique health care needs of LGBT patients<sup>13</sup>. However, in another study among medical students, they demonstrated higher knowledge scores<sup>14</sup>. Some of these gaps include discrepancies in determining the point of inception of LGBT by an individual. A participant in the focus group discussion stated that *"A person can be said to be gay when the person has not even had sex with someone of the same sex so long as the person already finds him/herself sexually attracted to people of the same sex"* while other participants opposed by positing that *"It is the sexual act that proves or makes a person an LGBT..." "...There has to be substantial evidence to show that a person is an LGBT not just a person's sexual attraction..."*

There were more female students with good knowledge of LGBT than males though the margin (2%) for the differentiation wasn't much and might be as a result of other confounders. This study also discovered that there were more undergraduates with good knowledge about LGBTs than post graduates. The marginal difference (2%) here too wasn't also high and might be considered nearly insignificant.

In comparing the sexuality of students and their knowledge of LGBT, 20.1% of the students who had poor knowledge of LGBTs reported that they did not know any LGBT person, however as high as 51.2% of the students who still reported that they did not know any LGBT person had moderate knowledge about LGBTs.

However, there were no statistically significant association between the socio-demographic and academic characteristics of students and their knowledge of LGBT. This was similar to the findings in the research among medical students<sup>14</sup> where there were no significant correlations or differences in knowledge based on demographic background, training level, gender, race/ethnicity, or religious identity.

It suffices to state that there was a statistically significant association between students' knowledge about LGBTs and their knowing an LGBT person ( $\chi^2= 16.040$ ;  $P= <0.001$ ). There was however no statistically significant association between the sexual orientation of students and their knowledge about LGBTs. There was also no linear relationship between student's knowledge of LGBT and their sexual orientations.

LGBT is considered to be illegal in many African countries, especially Nigeria with severe punishments for LGBT persons in various climes. There is also an acute awareness that LGBT persons are also predisposed to sexual health issues as well as social and psychological abuses which have long-lasting, negative health effects which accentuated the importance of this research.

Student's knowledge of LGBTs does not in any way influence their choice or practice of sexual orientation. This explains the high percentage of students that claim to be heterosexuals despite the also high percentage of knowledge of LGBTs.

Therefore, knowledge of LGBT cannot directly translate into practice. Other factors therefore have to be at work, before the adoption of other sexual orientations other than heterosexuality comes into play.

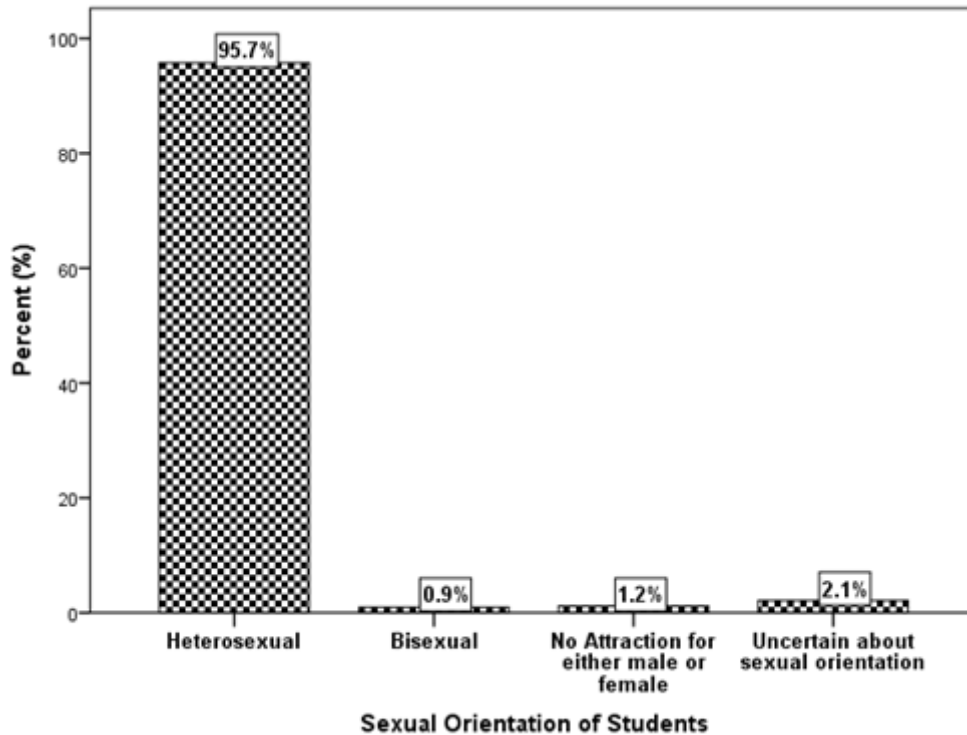
It is without doubt that other sexual orientations apart from heterosexuality exists in Nigeria; even though the existence is if often termed to be barbaric and inhumane, the fact remains that they exist, although mostly hidden or overlooked as a new form of modernization and awakening of social consciousness.

There is a moderate increase in the knowledge of LGBT especially among young people as compared what it has been in the past. This increase can be associated with an increase in the rate of acceptable of such groups of people and the promotion as can be found in western countries.

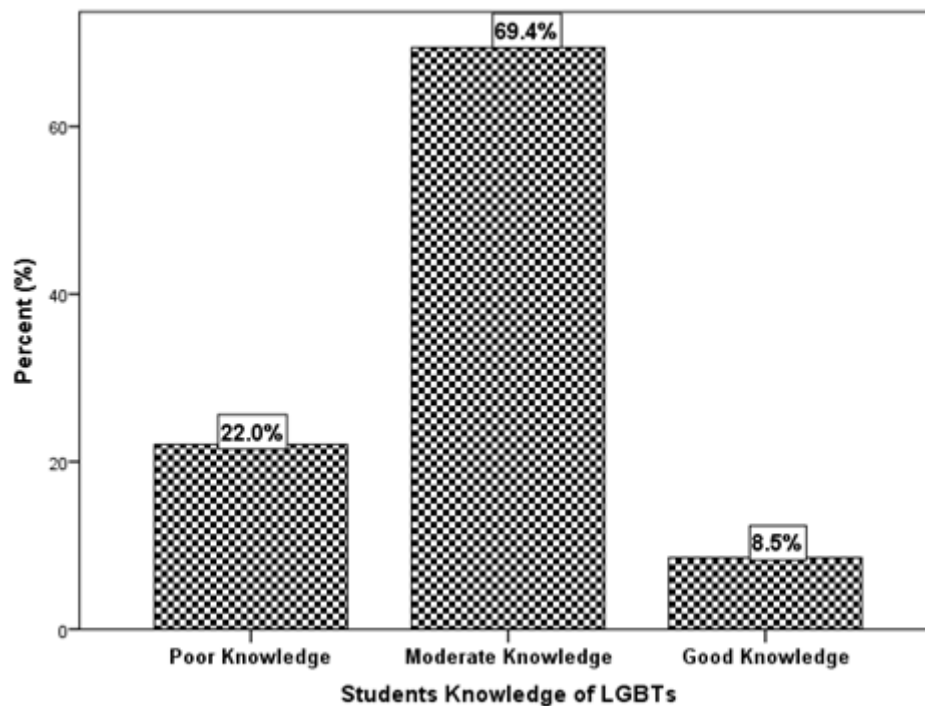
As such, this study reveals that the more knowledgeable people are about LGBT persons, the more they are likely to be more accepting of them.

It might not be advisable for LGBT persons to form coalitions and fight for what they would claim to be rights, there is however a need for non-governmental arms of the health sector to continue to promote researches that would decipher more astute methods to carry out evidence-driven researches on the plights of LGBTs especially as regards their health status.

In trying to win the war against the scourge of HIV and other sexually transmittable infections, there is also the need to explore the mitigation of the disease by becoming more involved in LGBT issues as they are known to be a hidden group of persons who are always at potential risks of contracting the aforementioned diseases.



**Figure. 1.** Report of sexual orientation of students



**Figure 1.** Report of students' knowledge about LGBTs

## References

- [1]. Cochran, S.D; Bandiera, F.C; Mays, V.M. 2013. "Sexual Orientation–Related Differences in Tobacco Use and Secondhand Smoke Exposure Among US Adults Aged 20 to 59 Years: 2003–2010 National Health and Nutrition Examination Surveys". *American Journal of Public Health* 103 (10): 1837–1844.
- [2]. UNAIDS 2014. AIDSinfo Online Database. Accessed from <http://www.aidsinfoonline.org/devinfo/libraries.aspx/Home.aspx#&panel1-6> on 12th February, 2016.
- [3]. National Agency for the Control of AIDS. Country Progress Report 2014. Accessed from [www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/NGA\\_narrative\\_report\\_2014.pdf](http://www.unaids.org/sites/default/files/country/documents/NGA_narrative_report_2014.pdf). on 14th August, 2015.
- [4]. Jobson GA, Theron LB, Kagwa JK, Kim HJ. 2012. Transgender in Africa: invisible, inaccessible, or ignored? *Sahara J.* 2012;9(3):160-3
- [5]. Kelley L, Chou CL, Dibble SL, Robertson P.A. 2008. A critical intervention in lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender health: knowledge and attitude outcomes among second-year medical students. *Teach Learn Med.* ;20(3):248-53.
- [6]. Saewyc, E. M., Bauer, G.R., Skay, C.L., Bearinger, L.H., Resnick, M.D., Reis, E. and Murphy, E. 2004. Measuring Sexual Orientation in Adolescent Health Surveys: Evaluation of Eight School-based Surveys. *Journal of Adolescent Health* 2004; 35:345
- [7]. Strong, K. L., "Assessing Undergraduate Nursing Students' Knowledge, Attitudes and Cultural Competence in Caring for LGBT Patients" (2013). Honors Projects. Paper 42.
- [8]. Alderson, K.G., Orzeck, T.L. and McEwen S.C. 2009. Alberta High School Counselors' Knowledge of Homosexuality and Their Attitudes Toward Gay Males. *Canadian Journal of Education* 32, 1 (2009): 87-117.
- [9]. The Williams Institute; 2009. Sexual Minority Assessment Research Team (SMART), Best Practices for Asking Questions about Sexual Orientation on Surveys.
- [10]. Elizabeth Saewyc, Carol Skay, Kimberly Richens, Elizabeth Reis, Colleen Poon, Aileen Murphy. Sexual Orientation, Sexual Abuse, and HIV-Risk Behaviors Among Adolescents in the Pacific Northwest. *Am J Public Health.* 2006 June; 96(6): 1104–1110.
- [11]. Garofalo R, Wolf RC, Kessel S, Palfrey SJ, DuRant RH. The association between health risk behaviors and sexual orientation among a school-based sample of adolescents. *Pediatrics.* 1998; 101:895–902.

- [12]. Mapayi Boladale, Oginni Olakunle, Aloba Olutayo, and Akinsulore Adesanmi<sup>1,2</sup>Sexual orientation and quality of life among students of Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU), Nigeria. *Afr Health Sci.* 2015;15(4):1065-73.
- [13]. Cornelius, J. B.; Carrick, J. 2015. A Survey of Nursing Students' Knowledge of and Attitudes toward LGBT Health Care Concerns. *Nursing Education Perspectives.* Vol. 36, No. 3
- [14]. Sanchez, N. F.; Rabatin, J.; Sanchez, J. P.; Hubbard, S.; Kalet, A. 2006. Medical Students' Ability to Care for Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgendered Patients. *Fam Med* 2006;38(1):21-7