

Religiosity, social media, and sexual orientation as predictors of attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Nigeria

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
<p><i>Keywords:</i> LGBTQ+ religiosity sexual orientation social media Nigeria</p>	<p>Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and other diverse identities (LGBTQ+) continue to be an emerging issue in the 21st century worldwide. Studies have examined factors that predict attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community with varying results. This study focuses on investigating religiosity, social media, and sexual orientation as predictors of attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community amongst residents in Nigeria. The survey employs a cross-sectional design and uses purposive sampling to select three Local Government Areas. Data were collected from 202 participants using four validated scales. The collected data were analyzed through zero-order correlation, t-test of independent sample, and multiple regression analysis. The study tested four hypotheses at a significance level of $p < 0.05$, revealing that religiosity, social media, and sexual orientation jointly predicted attitudes towards LGBTQ+ community. The findings reveal that both religiosity and sexual orientation significantly affected attitudes toward LGBTQ+. In contrast, attitudes towards LGBTQ+ were not influenced by social media. This study's novelty lies in uncovering how people's beliefs, values, cultures, and principles center on their attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community. It is recommended that the government and various institutions increase public awareness regarding LGBTQ+ issues to guide parents, adolescents, youth, and the public towards improved societal acceptance.</p>

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Introduction

LGBTQ+ refers to group who are homosexuals. They are made up of group identified as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and other (LGBTQ+). The issue of LGBTQ+ group around the world are gaining widespread attention. The past 20 years have seen a shift in attitudes toward LGBTQ+ group and more liberal policies targeted towards the LGBTQ+ group (Charles, 2017). Before 2001, no country in European Union had allowed for same-sex marriage. However, more than 14 countries had consummated same-sex marriage before 2015 (Bonnie, 2023). This shift in attitude towards LGBTQ+ group has become one of the biggest attitudinal transformations in the 21st century (Jacob & Nicholas, 2020).

LGBTQ+ group tends to face many challenges due to their choice of sexual identity. The societies in some developing countries are against LGBTQ+ group as it contradicts their cultures. For example, in Nigeria, only 7% compared to 93% favor the legalization of LGBTQ+ group in the country (Olga, 2021, Olumide et al., 2018). Aside Nigeria, other African countries such as Uganda, Angola, Kenya, and Gabon have refused to recognize LGBTQ+ group (Martina, 2022).

Some factors have been implicated as likely predictors of attitude towards LGBTQ+ group by individuals across many countries. The first factor considered in this study as a likely predictor of attitude towards LGBTQ+ group is religiosity which is described as the strength of an individual's connection to or conviction for their religions (Stephen, 2019). It is the individual's moral values and what they hold sacrosanct to themselves here on earth and in life to come. While some religions have involved the worship of gods or no gods, it is known to be associated with moral values that can be accepted or rejected by the practitioners (The Guardian News

Website, Harriet Sherwood, 2023). Society's sexual orientation could be gauged by the level of religiosity of the people. Studies have indicated that group who scored 'very high to moderately high' on religiosity scale tend to have higher negative attitudes toward LGBTQ+ group compared individuals who scored low in religiosity scale (John, 2019; Stephen, 2019; Sue, 2022).

Beside religiosity, another factor considered in the study as a likely predictor of attitude towards LGBTQ+ group is social media which has become a robust medium for discourses on sexuality given its capacity to challenge mainstream narratives and empower personal views on self-expression (Michael et al., 2021). In Nigeria, the growing interest in LGBTQ+ group through online platforms is yet to receive significant research attention, although scholars have noted the potential influence of social media toward the dissemination of LGBTQ+ messages (Arimoro & Ukah, 2018; Michael et al., 2021). Studies have shown that group who were exposed to social media did not show negative attitude towards LGBTQ+ group (Angel & Durga, 2022; Michael et al., 2021). However, other studies have confirmed that social media influenced group attitude towards LGBTQ+ group (Dotti- Sani & Quaranta, 2020; Muhammed et al., 2019; Nwaubani, 2017).

And the third factor taken in this study as a possible predictor of attitude towards LGBTQ+ group is sexual orientation which is an individual's identity in relation to the gender an individual is sexually attracted to and want to have relationships with as a result of what the individual has learnt over time (Bankole, 2023). Because of an individual sexual orientation, there is lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and others. The American Psychological Association Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation (2023) considered sexual orientation as a physiological

predisposition toward patterns of sexual and romantic thoughts, affiliations, affections, or desires with members of one's sex, the other sex, both sexes and neither sex. Studies have shown that group with LGBTQ+ sexual identity tends to receive negative experience where there is high religious involvement by the group (Martina, 2022; Nwaubani, 2017). Also, studies have shown that they are not well accepted in many societies (Ukah, 2018; Okanlawon, 2020).

According to studies in the United States of America, about 30 percent of LGBTQ+ youths have been physically abused by family members because of their gender identity or sexual expression (Fetner, 2016; Theodore et al., 2020; Wilson, 2020). This discrimination has denied LGBTQ+ group equal access to key social opportunities, marginalizes them in the society and also makes them one of the vulnerable groups who are at risk of becoming socially excluded (Martina, 2022). There is a need to examine the attitude of people towards the LGBTQ+ group in the African settings such as Nigeria.

Therefore, the overall objective of this study was to determine whether religiosity, social media and sexual orientation would predict attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria. The specific objectives of the study were: (1) to determine whether religiosity would significantly influence attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria; (2) to investigate whether sexual orientation would significantly influence attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria; (3) to explore whether social media would significantly influence attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria; and (4) to established whether religiosity, social media and sexual orientation would jointly and independently predict attitude towards

LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria.

The results of this study would bring fresh perspectives on the contributions of religiosity, social media, and sexual orientation on the attitudes toward LGBTQ+ group among residents in Nigeria. Also, the results from this study would be useful to design programs and policies on issues concerning LGBTQ+ group in the country.

The following hypotheses were tested in this study:

- H1: Religiosity would significantly influence attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria.
- H2: Social media would significantly influence attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria.
- H3: Sexual orientation would significantly influence attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria.
- H4: Religiosity, social media, and sexual orientation would jointly and independently predict attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria.

Method

This study was designed to look at how religiosity, social media and sexual orientation would predict attitudes towards LGBTQ+ group using residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria. The study utilized cross-sectional survey design using validated questionnaires for data collection. The study was conducted in three Local Government Areas (LGAs) within Ibadan metropolis namely: Ibadan North-West, Ibadan South-

West and Ibadan-North. These three LGAs were selected based on the heterogeneity and cultural heritage of the Greater Ibadan Municipality. The study used both purposive and convenience sampling techniques. The three LGAs were purposively selected while the participants for the distribution of the questionnaires for data collection were conveniently sampled.

Aside collecting demographic data that include the age of the participants, religious affiliations, gender and marital status of the participants, the study also used validated questionnaires to collect data on Attitude towards Lesbian and Gay (ATLG). This was measured using Attitude towards Lesbian and Gay scale developed by Herek (2000). The scale consisted of 20 items with two subscales: Reference gay men (10-item) and Reference lesbians (10-item) in which participants responded to each item on a 5-point Likert's scale format ranging from 1 = Strongly disagree to 5 = Strongly agree). Sample items include: "Female homosexuality is bad for society because it breaks down the natural division between the sexes", "Lesbians just cannot fit into our society" and "A woman's homosexuality should not be a cause for job discrimination in any situation" The scale Cronbach's alpha reported by the author was 0.85 for subscale and for the full scale as 0.90 while for the present study, Cronbach's alpha of 0.84 was calculated.

In other to assess religiosity of the participants, the study used Santa Clara Strength of Religious Faith Questionnaire (SCSRFQ) developed by Plante (2002). The scale has 10 items presented on a 4 point Likert's format that has strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (4). The 10 items are scored from 1 to 4 such that total scores range from 10 (low strength of faith) to 40 (strong strength of faith). Sample items include: "My religious faith is extremely important to me", "I pray daily" and "I look

to my faith as a source of inspiration". The author reported Cronbach's alpha as 0.90 while in the current study, Cronbach's alpha reported was 0.85. Besides, social media use was evaluated using Social Networking Usage Questionnaire (SNUG) by Bolar (2009). The scale has 28 items presented on 5-point Likert's format that has Always = 5, Often = 4, Neutral = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1). Some items in this scale include: "I use social networking sites to become more sociable", "I use social networking sites to keep in touch with my relatives", and "I use social networking sites to seek help from my teachers". The scale Cronbach's alpha by the author was 0.83 while for the current study, it was calculated as 0.81.

Finally, sexual orientation was determined utilizing Sexual Orientation Scale (SOS) by Sagayaraj and Gopal (2020). The scale has 32 items presented on a 4-point Likert's format which ranges from Always = 4, Sometimes = 3, Rarely = 2 and Never = 1). The scale has four subscales: Heterosexual, Homosexual, Bisexual and Asexual. A higher score in each subscale indicates a higher sexual orientation of the individual. Sample items include: "I want to try an intimate kissing experience with both men and women", "I am not sexually attracted to anyone" and "I find myself attracted to women". The author reported the scale Cronbach's alpha as 0.88 while for the present study, it was 0.71.

Permission for this study was sought for and obtained from the initial Letter of Introduction collected from the Department of Psychology, University of Ibadan, Nigeria as a mean to introduce the researchers to the potential participants. Potential participants were approached by the researchers where the purpose of the study was explained to them, and their consent sought for. Potential participants who agreed to participate in the study were assured of the confidentiality of their responses. They were told that

participation in the study was voluntary. They were then given questionnaires to complete which took less than 12 minutes. No financial incentive was offered to any participant. A total of 210 questionnaires were distributed from which 206 questionnaires were retrieved (i.e., 98% response rate), four questionnaires were not properly filled and were removed thus left with 202 valid questionnaires used for the analysis.

The descriptive statistics of demographic variables revealed that the study participants were 202 comprising 86 (43%) males and 116 (57%) females. In terms of their educational levels, 51 (25%) were undergraduates while 151 (75%) were graduates. Participants' religious orientation showed that 139 (69%) were Christians while 63 (31%) were Muslims. Also, 149 (69%) of the participants were single, 23 (11%) were engaged while 30 (15%) were married. Finally, data collected was analyzed using SPSS version 23. The study used descriptive statistics to summarize demographic data while the hypotheses were tested with inferential statistics. Hypotheses 1, 2, and 3 were assessed with t-test of independence means, hypothesis 4 was evaluated with multiple regressions analysis. The hypotheses were accepted at a 0.05 level of significance.

Results and Discussion

The study was anchored on the theory of diffusion of innovation developed by Rogers which has undergone several revisions (Roger, 1961 as cited by Dearing & Cox; 2018). The theory describes diffusion as the way innovation is communicated through different media among members of a social system over time. It describes how an idea or product gains momentum and spreads through a specific population or social system. Five steps are involved in diffusion process. These are knowledge which is awareness of the innovation, persuasion

which is the interest in the innovation rises and a person begins to research it further, then decision, that is, a person or group evaluates the pros and cons of the innovation, that is the decision to adopt or reject the innovation, the implementation in which the leaders introduce the innovation to the social system and evaluate its usefulness and finally, confirmation in which those in charge decide to continue using the ideas or product.

Another important feature of this theory is that the people who adopt the innovations. They are the innovators. They are people who want to be the first to develop new ideas and to be the first to try innovation. They are interested in new ideas and are willing to take risks. The second group is the early adopters. These are people who represent opinion leaders. They enjoy leadership roles and embrace change opportunities. They are always aware of the need to change and are comfortable adopting new ideas. The third category is the early majority. These people are rarely leaders. They adopt new ideas before the average person. They need to see evidence that the innovation works before they adopt it. The fourth category is the late majority. They are skeptical of change and would only adopt an innovation after it has been tried by the majority. The last category is the laggards. They are people that are bound by traditions, conservative, skeptical of change and the last group to adopt innovation.

When this theory is applied to this study, LGBTQ+ came to be because of diffusion, it started as a thought, idea and behavior, it was practiced by some individuals and it was communicated through certain channels (such as the family, media, schools and so on) over time. The basic idea of the theory is that the number of people adopting behavior (LGBTQ+) increases over time. However, attitude towards LGBTQ+ depends on the categories of adopters and the factors that

influence their adoption. Individuals who have adopted and have positive attitudes towards LGBTQ+ are less conservative, less dogmatic. It means that they are not bound by religion and tradition. They have seen evidence of other people doing it through the media, family, school, and other communication channels. They probably think the innovation (LGBTQ+) meets their needs and is better than the way it used to be (relationship with the opposite sex). While individuals who have not adopted the behavior and have a negative attitude towards LGBTQ+ are highly uncertain, very conservative and are bound by tradition and religion even though they have seen evidence of other people doing it around them. The strength of an individual’s characteristics tends to determine the rate at which they adopt the behavior.

This study investigated religiosity, social media, and sexual orientation as predictors of attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan, Nigeria. A preliminary analysis was to determine the relationships among the study variables.

Table 1 presents results on the relationship between attitude towards LGBTQ+, religiosity, social media use and sexual orientation. The result revealed that attitude towards LGBTQ+ group has significant and positive relationship with religiosity ($r = -.60, p < .05$). This implies that the more religious individuals are the more negative their attitudes toward LGBTQ+ group would be. Also, the result revealed a significant and positive relationship between attitude towards LGBTQ+ and sexual orientation ($r = .26, p < .05$). This connotes that group who are heterosexuals would have higher negative attitude towards LGBTQ+ than group who are homosexuals. However, attitude towards LGBTQ+ group was found to have no significant relationship with social media use ($r = .02, p > .05$). Based on the good psychometric properties of the variables, the study tested the following hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Participants with high level of religiosity would significantly report higher negative attitude towards LGBTQ+ group compared to participants with low level

Table 1. Inter-correlation among variables

SN	Variables	Mean	SD	1	2	3	4
1	Attitude to LGBTQ+	58.08	14.77	-			
2	Religiosity	40.01	9.65	.60*	-		
3	Social media use	45.32	15.63	.02	-.23*	-	
4	Sexual orientation	55.45	14.32	.26*	.12	.21*	-

*Significant at 0.05

Source: Field work (2023)

Table 2. T-test for independent samples on the influence of religiosity and attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria

Religiosity	N	Mean	SD	t	Df	p
High	31	69.87	12.93	5.10	202	< .05
Low	171	55.95	14.17			

Source: Field work (2023)

of religiosity. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and the result is presented in Table 2.

Table 2 presents results on the influence of religiosity on attitude towards LGBTQ+ group. The result revealed that religiosity had significant influence on attitude towards LGBTQ+ [$t(202) = 5.10, p < .05$]. Furthermore, participants with high level of religiosity reported higher negative attitude towards LGBTQ+ group ($M = 69.87, SD = 12.93$) compared to participants with low level of religiosity ($M = 55.95, SD = 14.17$). That is, the more students attend church for religious purposes, the less positive the attitudes they have towards LGBTQ+ group. Individuals' Church attendance, therefore, had the strongest influence on attitudes toward LGBTQ+ group. This finding corroborated with result by Kuptsevych (2014) on the attitudes of college students towards LGBTQ+ group. The extent to which an individual attended church had significant influence on their attitudes toward LGBTQ+ group. Similarly, the study lent credence to Anarfi (2019) finding among Ghanaian university students' attitude towards LGBTQ+ group that those highly religious students had higher negative attitudes toward LGBTQ+ group than moderately religious students and non-religious students. Moreover, the present study supported finding by Sarac (2018) that students who reported higher levels of religiosity had more negative attitudes towards LGBTQ+ group. Also, the study finding supported Srivastava (2021)

result who found a negative correlation between attitude towards homosexuality and religiosity. Finally, the finding supported Lilith et al.'s (2015) study who found a consistent relationship between religious involvement and negative attitudes towards homosexuals.

Hypothesis 2: Participants with high level of social media significantly would report higher negative attitude towards LGBTQ+ group compared to participants with low level of social media use. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and the result is presented in Table 3.

Table 3 presents results on the influence of social media use on attitude towards LGBTQ+ group. The result indicated that social media had no significant influence on attitude towards LGBTQ+ group [$t(202) = .76, p > .05$]. This negates the hypothesis. That whether an individual is exposed to social media or not has no effect on their attitude toward LGBTQ+ group. The result supported Angel and Durga (2022) finding that social media did not influence attitude towards LGBTQ+ among Science and Liberal Arts students. The same result was obtained by Winkler (2019) that radio and television have no significant effects on pro-gay attitudes. This means that whether individuals read newspapers, or Internet, or social media, or not were marginally significant to their support of LGBTQ+ group.

Table 3. *T-test for independent samples on the influence of social media use on attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria*

Social media	N	M	SD	t	Df	p
High	97	57.26	16.29			
				.76	202	> .05
Low	105	58.85	13.39			

Source: *Field work* (2023)

Table 4. *T-test for independent samples on the influence of sexual orientation on attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria*

Sexual orientation	N	M	SD	t	Df	p
Heterosexual	109	64.62	12.62	7.69	202	< .05
Homosexual	93	50.43	13.57			

Source: Field work (2023)

Hypothesis 3: Participants who have heterosexual orientation would significantly report higher negative attitude towards LGBTQ+ group compared to participants who have homosexual orientation. This was tested using t-test for independent samples and the result is presented in Table 4.

Table 4 presents result of the influence of sexual orientation on attitude towards LGBTQ+ group. The result indicated that sexual orientation had significant influence on attitude towards LGBTQ+ group [$t(202) = 7.69, p < .05$]. Furthermore, participants who are heterosexuals reported higher negative attitude towards LGBTQ+ group ($M = 64.62, SD = 12.62$) compared to participants who are homosexuals ($M = 50.43, SD = 13.57$).

This implies that self-perception of individual’s identity has implication on how the individual perceives another person in terms of their LGBTQ+ identity. This finding supported Eric’s (2017) result that sexual orientation has implication on group attitude towards homosexual people. LGBTQ+ group tend to hold more liberal views regarding themselves compared to their heterosexual peers. The finding confirmed the role of hetero normative socialization in shaping

heterosexuals’ and sexual minorities’ attitude which cannot be overlooked. It further confirmed that a small minority of LGBTQ+ group reported unfavorable or conservative attitudes towards themselves and cold feelings towards gays and lesbians.

Hypothesis 4: Religiosity, social media and sexual orientation jointly and independently predict attitudes toward LGBTQ+ individuals. This was tested using multiple regression analysis and the result is presented in Table 5.

Table 5 presents results on the joint and independent prediction of religiosity, social media, and sexual orientation on attitude towards LGBTQ+ group. The result showed that religiosity, social media, and sexual orientation were significant joint predictors of attitude towards LGBTQ+ group [$R^2 = .40, F(3, 198) = 44.54, p < .05$]. Collectively, religiosity, social media and sexual orientation accounted for about 40% of variance in attitude towards LGBTQ+ group. Also, religiosity ($\beta = .60, t = 10.54, p < .05$), social media ($\beta = .12, t = 2.13, p < .05$) and sexual orientation ($\beta = .16, t = 2.81, p < .05$) independently predicted attitude towards

Table 5. *Multiple regression analysis of religiosity, social media, and sexual orientation as predictors of attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Ibadan metropolis, Nigeria*

Predictors	β	t	p	R	R ²	F	p
Religiosity	.60	10.54	< .05				
Social media	.12	2.13	< .05	.64	.40	44.54	< .05
Sexual orientation	.16	2.81	< .05				

Source: Field work (2023)

LGBTQ+ group. This finding suggests that when religiosity, social media and sexual orientation combined it would lead to stronger negative attitudes toward LGBTQ+ group among the study participants. This finding corroborated with previous results on the individual and collective factors of religiosity, social media and sexual orientation that strongly influenced attitudes toward LGBTQ+ group as reported by the study participants. For example, the study supported Srivastava's (2021) finding that religiosity has a positive influence on attitude towards LGBTQ+ group. This was also case in the finding by Anarfi (2019) among Ghanaian university students that students who scored high in religiosity scale showed more negative attitudes toward LGBTQ+ group than students who were moderately religious and non-religious participants. Furthermore, the affective component of attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among university freshmen revealed that students who reported higher feelings of religiosity had a more negative attitude towards LGBTQ+ group.

Interestingly, when discussing social media influence on attitude towards LGBTQ+ group, the present finding is in line with Angel and Durga's (2022) who found that social media use did not influence attitude towards individuals with LGBTQ+ among Science and Liberal Arts Students. What individuals in Nigerian see in social media did not influence their perception and attitudes toward LGBTQ+ group. Substantive evidence was also found in the study by Jiang and Yuang (2022) who examined the relationship between Internet-based social media and LGBTQ+ group in China where nearly 70% of the participants considered LGBTQ+ group to be 'a wrong behavior' which they did not accept in their society. Finally, the result of Winkler (2019) on the influence of social media on LGBTQ+ support across Africa supported the present

finding that radio and television had no significant effects on pro-gay attitudes. Group who read more newspapers, Internet or social media were marginally significance (by approximately 2 to 4 percent) in support of LGBTQ+ group.

Conclusion

The novelty of the finding in this study is that it is the first time a study is conducted to empirically establish that religiosity more than any other factors contributed significantly to the negative attitude towards LGBTQ+ group among residents in Nigeria. This speaks forcefully of the importance of religious faiths towards what seem abnormal to the heterogeneous population in Nigeria. This study has demonstrated that people's attitude is highly centered on their beliefs, values, cultures, and principles as found in the case of the LGBTQ+ group in Nigeria.

The implications of these findings are that religious group, families, countries, and societies would continue to oppose LGBTQ+ group thereby decreasing its spread in areas, communities and societies that are highly religious. Also, group who are properly sexually oriented knowing who they are and who they should be attracted to would equally disapprove of LGBTQ+ group.

The limitations of these findings were unwillingness of residents to participate in the study and lack of literature on LGBTQ+ issues in Nigeria. Also, the findings of this study suffered from generalization due to the small sample size of the participants. Further studies should seek and encourage more participants to participate and complete questionnaires. Finally, many potential participants had little or no knowledge about LGBTQ+ group; hence there is a need to create more awareness about the activity of LGBTQ+ group in Nigeria.

It is recommended that more studies should be carried out on LGBTQ+ especially

in Nigeria to provide more insight, knowledge, and literature on this new trending societal issue. Also, further studies should include social support, learned helplessness and self-esteem to predict attitudes toward LGBTQ+ group. Lastly, it is recommended that public awareness should be created by the government and various institutions of learning on LGBTQ+ to guide parents, teenagers, youths, and public.

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Conflict of Interest

There is no conflict of interest in this study as all the authors unanimously agreed on the content of this paper for publication.

Ethical Clearance

Ethical approval was obtained from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Ethics Committee (SSHREC), University of Ibadan, Nigeria. Also, the rules regarding the use of human subjects were duly followed such as protection, dignity, right, confidentiality, and well-being of participants during the research.

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