

Discursive constructions of *Gay(s)*, *Homosexual(s)* and *Homosexuality* in selected Nigerian and South African Newspapers: A Corpus-Assisted Critical Discourse Analysis

Olubunmi Funmi Oyebanji

Department of Languages and Linguistics, Bamidele Olumilua University of Education, Science and Technology, Ikere-Ekiti, Nigeria

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ABSTRACT: *Same-sex relationship is a critical topic globally, especially as non-heterosexuals often get marginalized both overtly and covertly. Previous studies on same-sex sexualities in the African context have examined the discursive construction of non-heterosexuals, with little attention paid to the comparative reading of how gay people are discursively constructed in two contextually different African countries. Therefore, this study examines the usage patterns of three labels, gay, homosexual, homosexuality, that are commonly used to denote same-sex sexualities in selected Nigerian and South African newspapers. To do so, corpus-based critical discourse analysis is conducted to detect convergence and divergence of such usages since the countries have opposing laws on same-sex relationships. Similar semantic prosodies were found. However, differing prosodic features show that heteronormativity is mainly emphasized in the Nigerian corpus, while this is sometimes challenged in the South African corpus. The overall conclusion is that there could still be some homophobic tendencies in both the Nigerian and South African contexts as shown by the media representations.*

KEYWORDS: critical discourse analysis, lexicalization, representation of same-sex relationships, Nigerian newspapers, South African newspapers.

INTRODUCTION

Same-sex relationship is a crucial topic globally, especially as non-heterosexuals often get marginalized both overtly and covertly. The general notion has been that same-sex relationship is ‘un-African’ (Cock, 2003:41). Yet, South Africa is an African nation that has legalized same-sex marriage. With the enactment of the Civil Unions Bill in 2006, South Africa became the fifth country globally and the first in Africa to legalize same-sex marriage. However, according to Awondo et al. (2012), countervailing tendencies remain very strong and vocal in South Africa.

Nigeria, on the other hand, has strict legislation against LGBT people. In 2013, a fourteen-year jail term was pronounced on non-heterosexuals if found. Cox (2014) describes Nigeria as the world's least tolerant country regarding homosexuality, with approximately about 98 percent of the country's population opposing the phenomenon. Socially, non-heterosexuals are not accepted, based on ethics and morality, in Nigerian society. Consequently, same-sex identified people often suffer violent actions when found, which explains why they have mainly remained in the closet. It will be interesting to interrogate how 'un-African' the phenomenon is in the two African contexts. Media texts often articulate ways of seeing the world. Different sections of the newspaper, for example, are sites for the dissemination of personal and institutional ideology. Media sell both products and ideas, both personalities and worldviews; the notion that mass media products and cultural values are fundamentally intertwined has gained broad public acceptance (Croteau, 2002). Media sites are a battleground of ideologies because different ideological perspectives, representing different interests with unequal power, engage in a kind of struggle within media texts. The morality of same-sex relations or any other controversial issue is debated, often in very polarized terms, in the media, as cultural conservatives and cultural progressives alike use various media technologies to promote their positions. News reports and editorials, for instance, cannot be void of journalistic bias, it is expected that journalists would infuse certain ideological values into their reportage on LGBT persons. In the selected Nigerian and South African newspapers, journalists often cover the actions of queer people, how the government relates with them, and the opinions of people about same-sex relationships. To make explicit the implicit ideologies embedded in media articles, it is crucial to understand the use of language, which necessitates corpus-assisted critical discourse analysis (Baker, 2005).

Corpus-based critical discourse analysis is helpful in mapping how identity is linguistically defined and constructed. Numerous studies have demonstrated the value of such an approach when looking at sexual identities (Baker, 2005). In this study, I will be focusing on the analysis of preselected same-sex-related keywords and the close reading of concordance lines as an entry point to how gay people have been discursively constructed to discover similarities and differences. The study shows how Nigerian and South African newspapers construe non-conventional sexualities.

Same-sex marriage in Nigeria and South Africa

In Nigeria, the LGBT community is under attack and is not protected by the government or their fellow civilians (Okanlawon 2017, White 2013). LGBT people are purportedly facing varying degrees of judicial and extrajudicial violence which includes: arbitrary arrests, detentions, fines, torture and harassment, as well as extreme cases of lynching and mob violence across Nigeria. Giwa, et al. (2020) note, human-rights violations and abuse rose by 214 percent after the passage of the anti-gay bill in Nigeria. In a survey undertaken in 2016 by the Bisi Alimi Foundation, 55% of respondents claimed that they had experienced physical/verbal abuse. Many added that they did not report the incidents for various reasons, including shame and fear of reprisal. A regional report by Carroll & Itaborahy (2015) for the International Lesbian Gay Association (ILGA) listed 73

nations with anti-gay legislation and revealed an increasing trend in state-sponsored homophobia globally. However, Nigeria and Uganda ranked as the two among the 34 African nations with the most stringent anti-gay laws.

Nigeria's Same-Sex Marriage (Prohibition) Act was signed into law in January 2014. The law stipulates that:

There shall be a prison term of 14 years for anyone who enters into same-sex marriage, and 10-year jail term for anyone who either registers, operates or participate in gay clubs, organizations and societies, or even directly or indirectly makes a public show of same-sex amorous relationship. There shall be a jail term of 10 years for any person or group of persons that either witnesses, administers, abets or aids any same-sex marriage; supports the operation, registration and the sustenance of gay clubs, organizations, societies, meetings or processions anywhere in Nigeria.

Also, conservative views held by the main religions – Christianity and Islam – are generally opposed to same-sex relations, contributing to discrimination against same-sex identified people. As a result of societal expectations, LGBT persons may conceal their sexual orientation or gender identity and feel pressured to conform to gender (heterosexual) norms. Discrimination may be greater in northern states, particularly where Sharia law is implemented.

South Africa, on the other hand, sets an international precedent being the first country to formally recognize LGBT human rights, codified in its constitution in 1996. For some years, South Africa has continued to serve as a model for LGBT rights globally. In 2011, South Africa initiated a resolution in the United Nations (UN) Human Rights Council that resulted in the first-ever UN declaration supporting LGBT human rights. Prominent national figures in South Africa have also taken a stand for LGBT rights. For example, Nobel Peace Laureate Desmond Tutu publically stated, "...the persecution of people because of their sexual orientation...is every bit as unjust as that crime against humanity, apartheid. The South African constitution forbids discrimination based on race, gender, or sexual orientation, and same-sex marriage is legal in South Africa" (Judge, Manion, and de Waal, 2008). South Africa has therefore been a productive ground for the articulation and promotion of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and intersex (LGBTI) activism. However, according to a 2013 PEW Research Center report, only 32% of South Africans believe that "homosexuality should be accepted by society." Such a negative attitude contributes directly to pervasive violence and discrimination experienced by the LGBT communities. Many LGBT South Africans continue to face grave threats to their well-being, ranging from violent harassment and poor access to health care to weak public support for LGBTI rights. There is also a rise in conservative evangelical forces that openly propagate anti-LGBTI beliefs (Abaver & Cishe, 2018). It is, therefore, vital to see how these non-conforming sexualities are discursively constructed in the South African media. This study provides insights into whether LGBT human rights are only

on paper and not practiced while comparing the results with that of the Nigerian context with strict legislation against same-sex sexualities.

The Nigerian/South African print media

There are 43 daily newspapers in circulation in Nigeria, according to Aina (2002) in Fadairo et al. (2014:55), most of which are small state-based media companies owned by local politicians and not nationally circulated. According to the Nigerian Association of Advertisers, only ten newspapers account for over 95 percent of daily circulation. They are: *This Day*, *The Punch*, *Daily Trust*, *Vanguard*, *Guardian*, *The Nation*, *Business Day*, *Nigerian Compass*, *The Sun*, and *Nigerian Tribune* and are all privately-owned and circulated nationally. With the pressure to stay in business, privately-owned media houses in Nigeria operate by the laws of “he who pays the piper dictates the tune” (Jibo and Okoosi-Simbine, 2003:182). Hence, they also cannot scrutinize the government too closely as they need its patronage to survive. So, political and entrepreneurial elites easily co-opt the media into fighting their battles and confronting each other. Media houses play along to make sure advertisements and sponsorships keep rolling in (Oso, 2013), so the Nigerian “media are tied into a nexus of market relations” (McQuail, 2005:163) and have settled for the notion that media is indeed first a business.

South Africa has a vibrant and diverse print media industry with a number of daily and weekly newspapers. South Africa has 23 daily and 14 weekly major urban newspapers, most of which are published in English. Some 12.4-million South Africans buy the metropolitan dailies, while community newspapers have a circulation of 5.5-million (Media Club South Africa, 2010). Benefiting from a strong Constitutional guarantee of freedom of expression and vibrant civil society, the South African media have contributed to a culture of democratic debate while playing a watchdog role to keep political power to account through investigative reporting into corruption and misconduct. The print media have been accused of mainly serving elite audiences and, by implication, more likely to produce a news agenda of interest to those who can afford commercial media access or attractive consumers for advertisers. Media organizations do not exist in isolation; they are equally influenced by public opinion. “It is an established fact in the study of the mass media that although the core function of mass media is to disseminate information to the general public, it also reproduces certain ideologies and discourses that support specific relations of power” (Smith, 2008: 2).

Studies on same-sex sexualities

Several scholarly works in the Euro-American context have addressed discourses surrounding same-sex relationships, especially from the corpus linguistics perspective. For instance, Baker (2004) carried out a corpus-based keywords analysis of the debate on equalizing the age of consent for anal sex in the House of Lords. He uncovered the main lexical differences between oppositional stances and shed light on how the Lords constructed same-sex sexualities. In the debates, the word *homosexual* was associated with acts, while *gay* was linked to identities. Those who argued in

favor of law reform focused on a discourse of equality and tolerance. In contrast, those against law reform constructed gay male sex in terms of criminality, ill health, unnaturalness, and danger to society.

Also, using the corpus linguistic tool, Love and Baker (2015) explore how British Parliamentary arguments against LGBT equality have changed in response to decreasing social acceptability of discriminatory language against minority groups. A comparison of the language of opposition to the equalization of the age of consent for anal sex (1998–2000) is made to the oppositional language in debates to allow same-sex marriage (2013). Keyword, collocation and concordance analyses were used to identify differences in overall argumentation strategies, assessing the extent to which previously explicit homophobic speech (e.g., homosexuality as unnatural) has been replaced by more indirect strategy (e.g., less use of personalized argumentation via the pronoun *I*). Motschenbacher (2020) presents a contrastive corpus linguistic analysis of language use before and after Stonewall, using theoretical insights on normativity from the field of language and sexuality to investigate how the shifting normativities are associated with the Stonewall Riots (1969) and have shaped the conceptualization of sexuality. Drawing on two corpora of gay men's pre-Stonewall narratives dating from two time periods (before and after Stonewall, called PRE and POST), the analysis combines quantitative (keyword analysis, collocation analysis) and qualitative (concordance analysis) corpus linguistic methods to examine discursive shifts as evident from narrators' language use. The study identifies the terms *homosexual* and *normal* as central contrastive labels in PRE, and *gay* and *straight* as corresponding terms in POST.

Essentially, media discourses are sites for homophobia, which could be detected by an investigation into the use of language. An example of such analysis is shown in Baker's (2005) corpus-based study of two newspapers, indicating a number of frequently cited discourse prosodies around the words *gay* and *homosexual*, including representations of 'homosexuality' as a behavior rather than an identity, gay relationships as transient, and gay men as promiscuous, involved in crime, shameless or shameful, politically militant, and proselytizing children. Morrish (2002) also notes how broadsheet newspapers have used coded references to negatively represent gay men, indicating that coverage of the government minister Peter Mandelson included references to homosexual acts. Further to that, van der Bom, et al. (2015) examine the role of implicit homophobia in discussions on same-sex marriage in the media.

In Africa, studies on the construction of the LGBT community especially using corpus linguistic tools are relatively few. In Nigeria, for instance, while more studies on same-sex sexualities have focused on the cultural, religious and legal implications of the phenomenon, adequate attention has not been paid to the use of language in relation to this phenomenon in public discourses as we have in the Euro-American context. Howbeit, some of the explorations on the linguistic aspect have considered the ideological implications of the use of language in discourses on same-sex relations. Gaudio (2014), for instance, draws on various texts (interactional, literary, journalistic

and cinematographic, among others) by and about the *yan daudu*, (a term for ‘gay men’ in Hausa Language) as well as the broader political, historical, economic and religious discourses in which their lives are imbricated, paying particular attention to the ways they use grammatical and rhetorical resources to claim, attribute, mitigate, or deny different kinds of agency with respect to sex and economic exchange. Adegbola (2019) explores the sociolinguistic study of points of view on same-sex sexualities in selected Nigerian newspapers, using Fairclough’s approach to Critical Discourse Analysis and Halliday’s Systemic Functional Linguistics. The study reveals that arguments and counter-arguments on same-sex sexualities centered on culture, religion, morality, law and health at the period of study.

More recently, attention has been paid to the representation of same-sex sexualities in the discussions of Nigerians on social media platforms. Onanuga and Schmeid (2021), for instance, explore the linguistic representations of the government and other discourse actors/agents in Tweets of Nigerians on the subject of homosexuality, using Anthony’s (2019) AntConc software and discussed under the purview of Critical Discourse Analysis. The concordance analysis reveals that the government bears the brunt of the ideological blame game as it is at the receiving end of both positive and negative attributions. In the same vein, Ajadi (2021) examined the role of digital media in pushing the knowledge of homosexuality and other sexual orientations to the domain of global or public discourse in Nigeria. Ajadi particularly focused on how language is used in the discourse of sexual diversity and homophobic orientation. He identified linguistic negativity, agentivity, affectivity and silence as the major linguistic features in the discourse of homosexuality in Nigeria. Ajadi concluded that homosexuality is not only objectified but represented as an alien practice in the Nigerian digital media.

Generally, linguistic studies on same-sex sexualities in the Nigerian context have highlighted that same-sex sexualities have ultimately been framed either for or against same-sex relations within the contexts of religion, history, culture, law and the government have been blamed in both pro- and anti-gay arguments.

Again, while a review of the literature reveals a noteworthy paucity of studies that examine the portrayal of same-sex attraction in the South African media, what has been written (Walter 2006; Cilliers 2007; Nel and Judge 2008; Mongie 2013, 2015, 2016) suggests that the media has achieved little in countering homophobia in traditional contexts. As is the case with many powerless minority groups, media coverage of LGBT South Africans has largely been characterized by silence, sensationalism, and the perpetuation of stereotypes (Cilliers 2007:334). Mongie (2016) investigates the discursive (re)production of religiously motivated arguments in favor of and against LGBT equality in two letters to the editor in the *City Press* newspaper. The paper illustrates how religiously framed pro- and anti-LGBT-equality arguments are discursively constructed in public discourses. The study reveals that both the pro- and anti-LGBT-equality letters frame their religious arguments in ways that echo that which is predicted in the literature by making strategic

use of lexical items, modifiers, implicature, presupposition, rhetorical devices, and attributive strategies; and that these discursive devices enable the realization of the core framing tasks that are necessary for social mobilization to varying extents.

Msibi and Rudwick (2015) study men who have sex with other men, using an ethnographic methodology. The authors reveal how these men's linguistic practices simultaneously speak back to homophobia *and* reproduce a heteronormative gender order. According to the authors, this not only serves as a testimony to "the dominance of patriarchy in a transformed, 'equal' post-apartheid South Africa but also highlights the extent to which fixed binary systems inform gender practices". Using a different methodological technique, Mongie (2015) offers quantitative evidence of the discursive means employed by the newspapers *City Press* and the *Mail & Guardian* in framing South Africa's "gay liberation movement" over 25 years (1982-2006). Drawing upon van Dijk's (1993) approach to critical discourse analysis, Mongie demonstrates how liberation, rights, victimization, religion, morality and nature occurred over and over again in the newspaper corpora as the frames employed by both publications. The difference, however, lies in how *City Press* used these frames to express anti-gay sentiments, while the *Mail & Guardian* primarily deployed the same frames to express pro-gay sentiments.

The overall trend in the literature shows a dearth in the literature on the comparative reading of articles on same-sex sexualities from different contexts, especially the South African and Nigerian. This paper, therefore, advances a comparative analysis of media texts from two contextually different African countries, with different laws on same-sex sexualities. This study examines how words are tactically used to portray same-sex identified people in certain ways in the media. The understanding of this provides insights into the bias or otherwise on the representations of LGBT persons in the Nigerian and South African contexts. This study extends existing studies on non-heterosexual relationships in Africa and globally.

Theoretical framework

In this study, I employ a combination of Corpus Linguistic (CL) methods and Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). The advantage of such a combination has been ascertained by scholars such as Hardt-Mautner (1995), Baker et al. (2008), Baker 2012, Baker 2014; Boeva 2015). Corpus linguistics is a methodology that can be used to study several different linguistic phenomena through large samples (corpora) of language use. Its main benefit is that it allows researchers to consider sizeable empirical data sets and make objective claims about language (McEnery & Wilson 1996: 87). However, it is essential to recognize that even though a corpus might be representative, it is still a finite sample of language (McEnery & Wilson 1996: 61). The data obtained from a corpus still requires human processing, analysis, and interpretation (Baker et al. 2008: 277), hence the use of CDA.

CDA is a type of discourse analysis that moves beyond just describing discourse and tries to explain it in terms of social structure and power relations. Power and control are central notions in CDA, and van Dijk (2008: 89) argues that power can be described as “access to or control over public discourse and communication”. By extension, the people who control more influential discourse are more powerful. Van Dijk claims that mass media “are most pervasive, if not most influential when judged by the power criteria of recipient scope” and that, furthermore, the audience generally perceives newspapers as being more reliable and of higher quality than other types of news sources (2008: 55). Therefore, newspapers are powerful both because they have access to and control over a large part of the public discourse. People tend to view them as a reliable source of information. Sometimes within CDA, this type of power is called “mind control” (van Dijk 2008: 11). CDA is most often performed by analyzing text samples and relating them to the producer of the text, society, power structures, etc. Most criticisms of CDA have been towards the data used in the studies. Researchers have been accused of cherry-picking data to prove their point instead of using representative data and there has been criticism about generalizing results from small datasets (Baker et al. 2008: 281–283). CDA thus benefits from the “more objective, quantitative CL approaches, as quantification can reveal the degree of generality of, or confidence in, the study findings and conclusions” (Baker et al. 2008: 297). This allows for identifying patterns within the discourse that is being analyzed.

METHODOLOGY

The study focuses on newspaper articles on same-sex relations in two Nigerian newspapers (*Vanguard and The Punch*) and two South African newspapers (*Mail & Guardian* and *The Times*) for a period of seven years (January 2014 – December 2020). *Vanguard* is one of the leading Newspapers in Nigeria today. It has developed a rich heritage as the most entertaining, refreshing, authoritative, detailed and reader-friendly newspaper. *Vanguard* is a family-oriented newspaper that also appeals to the upwardly Mobile Executive and Captains of Industry. The paper circulates a total of 120,000 copies with a Print Run of 130,000 copies daily. *The Punch* is a daily newspaper and one of the most widely read newspapers in Nigeria. *The Punch* was founded in 1970 by James Aboderin, an accountant, and Sam Amuka, a columnist and editor at the Daily Times of Nigeria. *The Punch* emphasizes equity and equality for all. The *Mail & Guardian* (1985), a South African newspaper, is privately owned by Mail & Guardian Media (Pty) Ltd. It provides quality investigative and comment news publication based on a culture of editorial independence and excellence. It aims to create space for debate and diversity, defend freedom of expression, and combat racial, political, and religious prejudice, standing in solidarity with the powerless. M&G has Unique Online users of 1000723 and an Average Daily Users of 50673. The number of readerships is 459000. *The Times* is also a South African newspaper, launched in 2007 as a sister paper to Times Media’s *Sunday Times*. The newspaper has limited street sales but is distributed free of charge to the Sunday Times’ subscribers, from Monday to Friday. In tabloid format, it

prides itself on being a quick and easy read. Ties heavily into the Times LIVE website, providing additional content such as blogs, podcasts and video.

The newspapers were selected for their popularity in their different contexts, which is reflected in the number of readers they command as stipulated in the table below. The newspapers have also given considerable space to the discourses on same-sex relationships when compared with other newspapers. These publications were more accessible as their archives can be found on their online database. The years 2014 to 2015 are significant in the discourse on same-sex relationships, especially in the Nigerian context. During this period, the anti-gay marriage bill was passed, which led to various controversies.

Table 1. Corpus metadata

Newspaper	Type of newspaper	Period	Number of readership	No of texts	Word tokens	Total
<i>Mail and Guardian</i>	National/Johannesburg	2013-2020	459000	87	42475	51341
<i>The Times</i>	National/cape town	2013-2020	3,436,000	24	8866	
<i>Punch</i>	National/Lagos	2013-2020	200000	30	19336	78335
<i>Vanguard</i>	National/lagos/delta	2013-2020	130000	98	58999	

As shown in Table 1, there was a significant size difference between the four corpora created because the search words appeared more often in the Nigerian newspapers than in the South African newspapers during the period of study. This might be so because the South African context is somewhat settled and more favorable, especially legally, towards same-sex relationships. Conversely, it is still a very contentious struggle in the Nigerian context. While same-sex identified people try to assert their rights, especially on social media platforms (Onanuga, 2020), the government attempts to subdue them.

This study combines corpus linguistics and critical discourse analysis. Corpus linguistics is a very efficient methodology for examining actual language use; it encourages one to go beyond intuition and minimizes researcher bias (McEnery and Wilson 1996). Furthermore, it embraces both qualitative and quantitative approaches to data analyses, which may be combined to produce a more exhaustive discussion of the findings. That is why this paper uses the corpus-linguistics approach to CDA (Baker et al., 2008).

The four corpora, saved as separate .txt files, were uploaded to the corpus analysis tool AntConc (Anthony, 2019) for the subsequent corpus-based analysis. This is a freely available piece of

software that allows, among other features, the automatic generation of concordances, collocations, and keywords. I used AntConc's default settings which carry out log-likelihood tests for keyness to analyze preselected same-sex-related keywords central to the framing of same-sex identified people. The keywords are also analyzed via concordance analyses which involve viewing all the citations of a particular word in a corpus within its immediate context.

Corpus-assisted analysis of *gay*, *homosexual*, *homosexuality* and *same-sex* in the selected newspapers

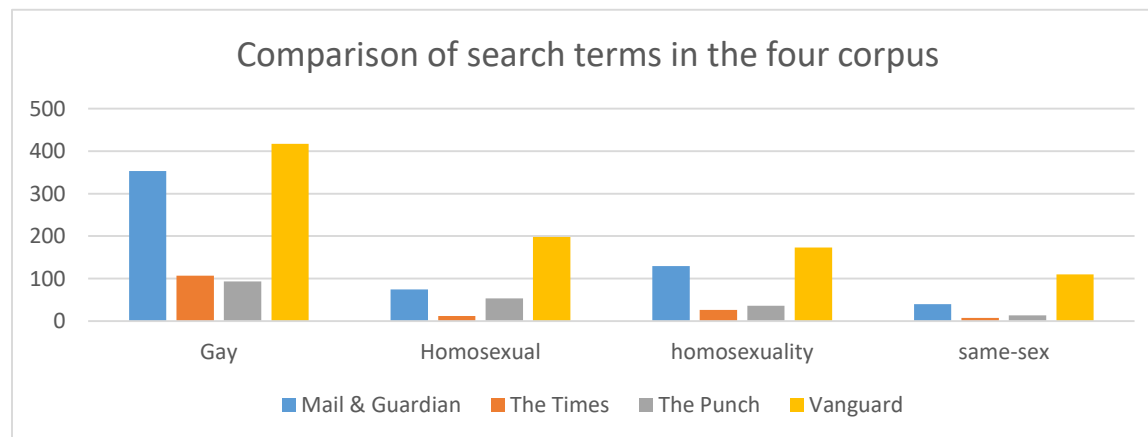
To examine and compare how discourses on same-sex sexualities are discursively constructed in South African and Nigerian newspapers, I consider a small set of preselected words explicitly related to same-sex sexualities. They are *gay*, *homosexual*, *homosexuality* and *same-sex*. *Homosexual* is realized by *homosexual* (adjective), *homosexuals*, and *homosexual* (noun). *Gay* is realized by *gay* (adjective), *gay* (noun) and *gays*. It seems appropriate to search these terms because they are salient to the topic/discourse. It is, therefore, essential to compare their usages in the two contexts. Table 2 presents the frequency of the search terms.

Table 2 Frequency of search terms

Search terms	South African newspapers			Nigeria newspapers	
	<i>Mail Guardian</i>	<i>& The Times</i>		<i>The Punch</i>	<i>Vanguard</i>
<i>Gay(s)</i>	353	107		93	417
<i>Homosexual(s)</i>	74	20		53	198
<i>Homosexuality</i>	129	26		36	173
<i>Same-sex</i>	40	7		13	110

A more visual representation of table 2 is represented in the chart below.

Relative frequency comparison of search terms in the four corpora



The first aspect to note is the use of the four terms *gay*, *homosexual*, *homosexuality* and *same-sex* in the two contexts. The lemma *gay* seems to have gained more popularity than the term *homosexual* in the four newspapers. *Gay* is used almost ten times more frequently than *homosexual* in the *Mail & Guardian* corpus (353 times vs. 74 times). In *The Times*, *gay* has 107 hits, while *homosexual* appears only 20 times. This indicates that the former is the preferred term in the South African context, which is not surprising given the medical connotations of the latter and the legal acceptance of same-sex relationships. Likewise, in the Nigerian newspapers, *gay* seems to be a preferred term as it appears 417 times, while *homosexual* appears 198 times in the *Vanguard*. In *The Punch*, *gay* occurred 93 times, while *homosexual* occurred 53 times. The Nigerian situation is somewhat surprising considering the strict legislation against same-sex sexualities and the negative attitude of many Nigerians towards same-sex identified people. Many Nigerians are either ignorant of the implication of using either of the terms *gay* and *homosexual* or most prefer the term *gay*, knowing that *homosexual* has a pathological connotation. If the latter is the case, this might signal hope of acceptance for the LGBT community in Nigeria, who may see this as a positive change towards acceptance.

Another critical point to note here is that while the occurrence of the term *homosexual* is low in the South African corpus, it is still high in the Nigerian corpus. This marks out South Africa as being more tolerant to same-sex relationships than Nigeria. Also, the term *homosexuality* appears frequently in the two contexts, with Nigeria just a bit higher than South Africa. Talking about a person's "homosexuality" can, in some cases, reduce the life of that person to purely sexual terms. Considering the statistical variance of this usage, it seems that South Africa is only a few steps ahead of Nigeria in terms of tolerance towards same-sex sexuality. This suggests that South Africa might not be totally tolerant or conducive for non-heterosexuals. The term *homosexuality* has a pathological connotation, suggesting same-sex identified people are sick. When such a term is used in the media, discrimination against non-heterosexuals is encouraged. These forms constitute heteronormative, and more specifically homophobic, language use. The terms *homosexual* and *homosexuality* have retained medical connotations that suggest that same-sex identified people or people who engage in same-sex sexual practices are pathological (Moschenbecher, 2021). So when, for example, the adjective *homosexual* is used to describe people, this usually expresses an out-group perspective: language users who have little or no contact with the gay community or who possess a homophobic mindset are likely to use the term, some because they are insensitive to its pathological connotations and some because they are aware of them. The more neutral term, same-sex, appears not so popular in both contexts.

It is also important to see how the lemmas *gay* and *homosexual* are used as either nouns or adjectives. The term *gay(s)* is represented as noun 80 times (22.7%) in the *Mail and Guardian*, 36 times (33.6%) in *The Times*, 86 times (20.6%) in *Vanguard* and 31 times (33.3%) in *The Punch*. These figures are obviously low compared to the overall figure of the lemma. This suggests that *gay* is sometimes used as a noun, indicating its use as a means of constructing identity in both the

South African and Nigerian contexts, but not as much as it is used as an adjective. Marshall (2004: 8) describes the use of *gay* as a noun as “central to the process of adverse discrimination” by “defining people by a single element”. This means that non-heterosexuals are discursively constructed negatively in both contexts. The figures above also suggest that *gay* is often used as an adjective in both contexts. *Gay* appeared as adjective 273 times, (77.3%), in *Mail & Guardian*, 71, (66.4%), in *The Times*, 331 times, (79.4%), in *Vanguard* and 62, (66.7%), in *The Punch*.

Homosexual(s) as noun occurs 43 times, (58%), in *Mail & Guardian*, 11 times, (55%), in *The Times*, 106 times, (53.5%) in *Vanguard* and 26 (49%) in *The Punch*. As an adjective, *homosexual* appeared 31 times, (41%) in *Mail & Guardian*, 9 (45%) in *The Times*, 92 (46%) in *Vanguard* and 27, (50.9%), in *The Punch*. These figures show that *homosexual* is more used as a noun than as an adjective in the corpora, except in *the punch*, where it is used as an adjective with just a figure above its being used as a noun (26 vs 27). Considering the pathological connotation associated with the word *homosexual* and the discriminatory effect of defining people by a single term (Marshall, 2004), one can assume that heteronormativity is legitimized in both the South African and Nigerian contexts.

The most common form of lemma *gay* in the four corpora is the adjective *gay*. It is, therefore, reasonable to consider the types of nouns that these adjectives modify. I categorized *gay* and *homosexual* according to whether they describe the identity of one or more referents or some forms of behavior. Examples of identities are *men, people, person, couple, community*, among others. Examples of behaviors are *act, activity, desire, lifestyle, marriage, relationship, sex*, among others. Table 3 shows the frequencies of *gay* used as adjectives to signal *identity* and *behavior*. Here, the *Mail and Guardian* and *The Times* newspapers are regarded as the South African Newspapers (SAN) corpus, while *The Punch* and *Vanguard* newspapers are tagged the Nigerian Newspapers (NN) corpus.

Table 3: Combined frequencies of *gay* used as adjectives to signal *identity* and *behavior*

	<i>South African newspapers(SAN) corpus</i>	<i>Nigerian Newspapers (NN) corpus</i>
<i>Identity</i>	<i>156</i>	<i>168</i>
<i>Behavior</i>	<i>74</i>	<i>104</i>

Table 3 shows the combined frequencies of the term *gay* in the corpora made up of the two South African newspapers and the two Nigerian newspapers. The table shows that *gay* is associated with identity more than it is viewed as a behavior. While this might suggest a positive tendency, it is necessary to see the identities and behaviors that *gay* describes.

Table 4 shows the proportion of nouns modified by *gay* in terms of their qualitative classification as either *identity* or *behavior*.

Table 4: All nouns modified by *gay* categorized as identities and behaviors in the corpora

	Nigerian Newspapers (NN) corpus	South African Newspapers (SAN) corpus
Identities described as gay	<i>Activists, men, adults, associations, Christians, community, group, groups, population, pastor, defender, couple, societies, suspects, father, movement, Reverend Jide Macauley, Reverend Rowland, prophet, protectors, priests, preacher, person, persons, people, peoples, organisations, Nigerian, Nigerians, minister, members, man, lovers, lover, issues, former student, diplomats, debate, websites, cult, couples, clubs, citizens, church, bishop,, nonsense, believers, bar</i>	<i>Activist, activists, men, community, people, bars, Lobby group, groups, refugees, association, persons, individuals, black, boxer, boys, brothers, candidate, child, children, clubs, societies, organisations, couple, couples, friend, goat, hero, label, man, movie, Nigerian, party, Rwanda gospel singer, sexuality, son, women, world, writer, youngster, judge, killer</i>
Behaviours described as gay	<i>Activities, activity, advances, argument, sex, rumours, relationships, marriage, lifestyle, practices, party, marriages, desire, culture, crime</i>	<i>Acts, activities, memory, culture, dating, desire, lifestyle, love, marriage, marriages, partnership, persecution, practices, pride, relationship, relationships, sex, union, unions, wedding, genes</i>

Table 4 shows the different categorizations of *gay* as identities and behaviors in the SAN and NN corpora. From the table, we see that *gay* is mainly constructed as identities in the two corpora. The two corpora share in common quite a number of identities. Shared identities (in bold) include *activist(s), men, community, group, people, groups, associations, persons, club, couples,* and *Nigerian*, among others. These identities suggest that same-sex identified people are considered to be human and a social group in both contexts.

1. *Expectedly, the signing of the same-sex Prohibition Act has provoked bitter reactions from the United States, Canada and members of the European Union peeved that the new law will violate the rights of the **gay community** in Nigeria. Vanguard, January 26, 2014.*

2. *In 2014, Nigerian President Goodluck Jonathan signed the Same Sex Marriage Prohibition Act. After this, a March 2018 report by The Guardian noted that raids on establishments frequented by the **gay community** became a common occurrence. Times, November 2, 2018.*

Excerpts 1 and 2 show how *gay* is constructed as a social group in both contexts. The representation of the LGBT people as a community could have a positive connotation, suggesting strength and cooperation. Community refers to the development of bonds between a group of people or feeling a sense of unity with one another. A community often shares the same values, beliefs, and worldview. While the usage of the noun *community* might be a deliberate attempt to represent non-heterosexuals as a powerful force in the South African newspapers, the ignorance of the Nigerian journalists to the ideological implication of such usage could be responsible. But, if this is not the case, such positive representation in the media could signal hope to LGBT people, especially in Nigeria.

Further, the use of *activist(s)*, *defender*, *protector*, *lobby group*, *debate*, *issue*, *argument*, and *movement*, all belonging to the semantic field of political activism and as nouns described by the adjective *gay*, suggests that same-sex sexuality is still contentious or problematic in both contexts.

3. *The lesson Nigerian self-made gay-rights defenders and their western backers should learn from Edmund Burke is that the prevalence or luxuriant growth of an evil, an immorality, a behavioral disorder, an illegality in any nation is an indication of the dormancy and inaction of good men and women in that country. Vanguard, January 20, 2014.*

4. *Naledi Pandor saves gay activist from deportation. Mail & Guardian, February 20, 2014.*

5. *Gay activists on Tuesday vowed to fight the Nigerian government after the country outlawed same-sex unions, warning the act legitimised homophobic violence and increased fears of persecution. Mail & Guardian, January 15, 2014.*

Journalists in both contexts often report the words and activities of gay rights activists. However, the South African newspapers often report on the activities of gay activists in other African countries where same-sex sexuality is criminalized as exemplified in excerpt 5. The contentions and struggles on same-sex sexualities in the Nigerian context are further shown by the use of the verbal process *vowed to fight*. The verb *saves* in excerpt 4 also foregrounds this struggle, as the gay person takes the object position that is being 'saved'. Excerpt 3 shows an anti-gay sentiment, in which gay rights activists are labeled *self-made* and same-sex sexuality tactically labeled *an evil, an immorality, a behavioral disorder, and an illegality*.

Kinship terms such as *father*, *brother*, *child* and *children* are also peculiar to both corpora. This indicates that gay people are not strangers but members of families. However, in both the Nigerian and South African corpora, the references to kinship terms show the worry of household members of gay people. The examples below show this.

6. *I read an article by Dawn Stefanowicz, a Canadian raised by a gay father. Her narrative on the experience is succinct and bares my worries: "Children are not commodities that can be*

*justifiably severed from their natural parentage and traded between unrelated adults. **Children** in same-sex households will often deny their grief and pretend they don't miss a biological parent, feeling pressured to speak positively due to the politics surrounding LGBT households ... vanguard, july 4, 2015*

7. *“Sthoko loves her son very much and for her it was more fear and her being self-centred that prevailed, more so than actual homophobia. She doesn't hate gay people or judge them as harshly as her typically-homophobic mother, but she knows how they are treated in the world and wishes more than anything that she didn't have to be the one with a **gay son** needing protection. times*

While excerpt 7 shows the opinion of a Nigerian commentator on the unfortunate situation of children raised by gay parents, especially in climes where adoption is allowed, excerpt 8 expresses the fear of a mother of a gay son. The mother was reported to have expressed fear knowing the ill-treatment often meted out to gay people even in South Africa. Again, while excerpt 7 may be seen as an attempt to emphasize heteronormativity, excerpt 8 shows the helplessness of a mother in a place where heterosexuality is the norm. These two excerpts suggest that homophobia is still rife in the two contexts under study.

Also, there is a high tendency to categorize gay people in terms of functionalization and religious classification in both contexts; gay people are referred to for the social function they perform in the normalized society (*pastor, prophet, priests, preacher, minister, Reverend, lover, lovers, Bishop, believers, boxer, friend, Rwanda gospel singer, writer, judge, candidate, etc.*) or for their religious beliefs (*Christians*). This suggests that gay people can be found anywhere in the society. The meaning of this in the Nigerian context could be that people should be vigilant as people in noble professions could be same-sex identified people. In the SAN corpus, these terms are used in a positive light to show that gay people are good and intelligent people. A glimpse at the excerpts below reveals this

8. *Police nab **gay pastor** in Aba. Vanguard, august 7,2013*

9. ***Gay Reverend Jide Macaulay**, Founder and Project Director of House Of Rainbow Fellowship wrote to Saturday Vanguard, describing the new anti-gay law as one of the harshest laws in the world, adding that the LGBT-community now lives in fear of arrest and violence. Vanguard, January 18, 2014*

10. *Emile Griffith: A **gay boxer**'s triumphs and despairs. But none are as celebrated as Emile Griffith, who won six world titles in three weight divisions and is widely regarded as one of the greatest welterweights of them all.*

11. *“We knew that we had achieved one big victory but that it was still a victory at the start of a long road ahead,” remembers Edwin Cameron, an openly **gay judge** at the Constitutional Court. Mail & Guardian, May 16, 2014*

In excerpts 8 and 9, we see the representation of gay people in terms of their functions and religious affiliations in the Nigerian newspapers corpus. The religious affiliation of the gay people is Christianity. While the gay person is the recipient of the action of arrest carried out by the law enforcement agent (police), the second is a letter sent by the gay person to the media. These

two examples suggest the kind of condition same-sex identified people are subjected to in Nigeria. They are either victims of arrest or remain in the closet. The gay reverend could only have sent a note and not address the media physically because of the repercussions. In contrast, excerpts 10 and 11 are examples of the representation of gay people as being successful in the South African corpus.

The representation of gay people as being members of a particular gender is also common to both corpora. Gay people are mainly constructed as males (*boys, brother, father, son, man, men*), with only one instance of the feminine gender in the SAN. *Gay* is also constructed in terms of sexual relations, with frequent references to *couple(s), lover(s)*. This coincides with its representation as a behavioral sexual relation (relationship (s), partnership, union(s), marriage, etc.). Gay people are also generally identified as individuals, who are humans, in both corpora. Examples include *people, person, citizens, Christians and Nigerian(s)*. Places, such as *club* and *bars* are also identified with *gay*, suggesting that same-sex identified people often look for safe places since they are marginalized. *Gay* is also associated with nouns that connote crime such as *suspect, crime*, and *killer* in both corpora. However, there is a difference in the usages of these terms in both contexts. While gay people are represented as criminals by nouns often associated with *gay*, the usage of such derogatory terms is often challenged in the South African corpus.

12. *Some residents of the State who spoke with VM expressed their disgust with the seven gay suspects, saying that they deserve to die because they have no fear of God and respect for humanity. Vanguard, January 30, 2014.*

13. *And yet it is dangerous to downplay the problematic nature of Du Pont's portrayal as a (probably) gay killer. Mail & Guardian, January 23, 2015*

In excerpt 12, the seven gay people are labeled *suspects* simply because they are not heterosexuals. Being a suspect signifies crime. Same-sex identified people are considered criminals, especially given the anti-gay law in Nigeria. Similar usage is the representation of *gay* as *nonsense* in the NN corpus. This form of representation is derogatory and could spur negative reactions towards same-sex identified people. However, in excerpt 13, the *Mail & Guardian* challenges the description of a *gay* person as a *killer* as the media reviewer refers to such usage as being *problematic*.

Other noticeable areas of divergence in the two corpora include the use of proper nouns showing names of gay persons in the NN corpus (*Reverend Hide Macaulay* and *Reverend Rowland*), the association of the adjective *gay* with the noun *gene* in the SAN corpus, suggesting that being a gay person is a result of certain biological elements rather than choice, frequent use of religious-related terms (*Christians, pastor, Reverend, prophet, priests, preacher, members, cult, Church, Bishop, believers*) in the NN corpus because arguments around same-sex relationships have mainly revolved around religious sentiments (Adegbola, 2019).

Shared behavioral traits associated with *gay* in both corpora include *activity, activities, arguments, desires, gene, issue, lifestyle(s), marriage, crime, organisations, partnerships, practice, relations, relationship, relationships, sex, culture, and lifestyle*. Some nouns such as *sex, desire, love, advances*, and *lifestyle* belong to the semantic domain of sexual desire, sexual practice (*sex, act, activities, culture*); and sexual relationship (*union, unions, marriage, relations, relationships*,

relationship, practices, dating, union, unions, wedding, partnership). These three semantic domains are peculiar to both corpora and thus testify to an activity-based conceptualization of sexuality. Some other nouns imply that *homosexuality* is bad or problematic (*crime, rumour, argument, persecution*) or some kind of optional or temporary phenomenon (*desire, lifestyle*). Similarly, the term *lifestyle* is used to stigmatize LGBT people and suggests that their lives should be viewed only through a sexual lens. This could be interpreted as explicit realizations of homophobic discourse. Generally, both corpora mainly have similar features in terms of the semantic prosodies of words associated with the adjective *gay*.

Table 5: Combined frequencies of *homosexual* used as adjectives to signal *identity* and *behaviour*

	<i>South African newspapers corpus</i>	<i>Nigerian Newspapers corpus</i>
<i>Identity</i>	5	29
<i>Behavior</i>	29	70

Table 6: All nouns modified by *homosexual* categorized as identities and behaviors in the SAN and NN corpora.

	<i>Nigeria newspapers corpus</i>	<i>South African Newspapers Corpus</i>
Identities described as homosexual	<i>Agenda, bills, businessman, boss, brothers, case, church, club, clients, couples, lobby, magazine, males, men, Nigerian, people, person. Persons, prophet, prostitutes, rapists, suspects</i>	<i>men, people, rights</i>
Behaviours described as homosexual	<i>Act, acts, activities, activity, advances, behaviour, behaviours, conduct, culture, desires, escapades, experience, extremes, health, life, lifestyle, marriage, marriages, partnership, orientation, relations, relation, relationship, relationships, sex, scandal, tendencies, unions</i>	<i>Acts, tendency, marriages, unions, relations, behaviour, desire, sex</i>

Table 6 shows the nouns modified by *homosexual* in both the SAN and NN corpora. These nouns are categorized as either identity or behavior. Table 5 reveals that *homosexual* is mainly constructed as behavior in both corpora, though the NN corpus has a higher figure (70 vs 29). This

is not surprising, since there is the scanty use of the term in the SAN corpus. In the South African corpus, it appears that *homosexual* has to some extent lost its function to describe people based on the few instances of nouns it describes. This development coincides with a greater public awareness of the negative, pathological connotations of the term *homosexual*, which, in the face of acceptance of same-sex sexualities in South Africa, is increasingly viewed as offensive when applied to people. The notion of a 'homosexual' identity is a product of psychological, medical, and criminal discourses that emerged in Europe during the late 19th century (Foucault 1978). Over time, such ideas were reproduced and mediated through language, eventually becoming accepted as common-sense categories that help people to identify themselves and others.

However, in both corpora, same-sex identified people are also constructed as humans, being represented as *people, men, person, businessman*, etc. Again, in both corpora, *homosexual* is identified in terms of masculinity. Words that sketch this out are *men, brothers, males, businessman and prophet*. There is also a tendency to categorize *homosexual* in terms of functionalization in the Nigerian context; gay people are referred to based on the social function they perform in the normalized society (*client, businessman, prophet, boss*). The term is also portrayed as a legal/political issue with regards to the use of *rights, case, and bill*. These suggest that *homosexual* is basically constructed almost the same way in both South African and Nigerian contexts. However, some nouns (identities) with negative denotations in the NN corpus mark out the Nigerian situation as being a bit different from the South African situation. They are *rapist, suspect* and *prostitutes*, sketch out *homosexual* as being bad and further encourage homophobic reactions towards LGBT people in the Nigerian context.

In terms of nouns described by *homosexual* categorized as behavior in both corpora, *homosexual* is discursively constructed as sexual activity (*act, activities*), sexual relations (*marriages, union, partnership, relationship, relations, relation, relationships*) and sexual desire (*advances, desires, escapades, sex*). Derogatory behaviors are modified by the term *homosexual* in the NN corpus. They are *scandal, escapades, conduct, lifestyle* and *extremes*. These terms suggest that same-sex relation is problematic, unacceptable and relates to a choice that could be changed. However, similar terms are not found in the SAN corpus, which could be a result of the awareness of South Africans to the repercussions of using such terms, and especially since only a few use the term *homosexual*.

CONCLUSION

Having carried out both quantitative and qualitative linguistic analysis of how *gay, homosexual*, and *homosexuality* are discursively constructed in selected newspapers of two contextually different African contexts (South Africa and Nigeria), I realized instances of similarities than differences in the usages of the terms. The quantitative analysis of the lemmas *gay, homosexual, homosexuality* and *same-sex* in the four corpora reveals that the lemma *gay* is the preferred term

over *homosexual*. The high use of the lemma in the South African newspapers could be justified based on the legal acceptance of same-sex relations in the country. However, the Nigerian situation is surprising given its homophobic legal stance. The high usage of the lemma could have resulted from the insensitivity of journalists as well as individual writers to the connotative implication of using the term. The high usage of the lemma, being a more positive one, could also signal hope for acceptance for the LGBT community in Nigeria.

Though the use of the lemma *gay* is higher than *homosexual* in the four corpora, I found that the use of the lemma *homosexual* is lower in the South African newspapers compared to the Nigerian newspapers. This suggests that the term is getting out of use faster in the South African context than in Nigeria. This also implies that South Africa could be more tolerant of same-sex relations than Nigeria. Again, the term *homosexuality*, with a pathological connotation, is preferred over the more neutral term, *same-sex*, in the four corpora. This gives evidence to the fact that the LGBT community still faces discrimination in both contexts, even with the legal acceptance in South Africa.

I also found that the lemma *gay* is used more as an adjective than it is used as a noun in the four corpora, while *homosexual* is used as a noun than it is used as an adjective in three out of the four corpora. This further shows the legitimization of heteronormativity in both the South African and Nigerian contexts. The combined frequency analysis of the corpora, consisting of the two selected South African newspapers tagged SAN corpus and the two Nigerian newspapers tagged NN corpus, shows that *gay* as an adjective is mainly used in the construction of identities and sometimes, the description of behaviors in both the SAN and NN corpora. Similar identities constructed by the adjective *gay* in both corpora include the representation of gay people as humans, constituting a social group; political activists, members of families and particular age groups, masculine, and criminals. Shared behavioral traits described by *gay* in the two corpora are words with semantic affiliations with sexual relations, sexual desires and sexual practice.

On the other hand, the combined frequencies of the term *homosexual* used as an adjective reveal that the adjective is mainly used to depict behaviors rather than identity in both corpora unlike what obtains in the use of *gay*. Same-sex identified people are constructed as humans, being represented as *people*, *person*, *businessman*, etc.; and *males*. Unlike *gay*, *homosexual* has no association with *community*. This suggests that the term *homosexual* is likely to be used more by members of the 'outgroup', expressing anti-gay views. However, in the South African corpus, it appears that *homosexual* has to some extent lost its function to describe people based on the few instances of nouns it describes. A significant contrast in both corpora is the association of *homosexual* with derogatory identities in the NN corpus, which might suggest that same-sex identified people are criminals. In terms of nouns described by *homosexual* categorized as behavior in both corpora, *homosexual* is discursively constructed as sexual activity, sexual relations and

sexual desire, which seem less offensive. However, while lexical items depicting negative behaviors are associated with *homosexual* in the NN corpus, such are not found on the SAN corpus. Media representations of marginal identities and minority communities impact how such groups are perceived. Uncovering and drawing attention to such representations is a critical step in mitigating such discourses and improving the lives of those affected. This study challenges the view that South Africa is totally tolerant to same-sex sexualities as there could still be some homophobic tendencies as shown by the media representations. The study also provides concrete evidence to the notion that LGBT people are often negatively represented in the Nigerian media (Adegbola, 2019), and suggestive of how non-heterosexuals are negatively treated in the society. It extends the literature on same-sex sexuality in Africa in general and South Africa and Nigeria in particular. This study contributes to the field of corpus-assisted (critical) discourse studies (Baker, 2015; Taylor and Marchi, 2018).

We acknowledge the potential limitations of this study. While the newspapers considered for this study have different ideologies, it is difficult to ascertain how the different ideologies impact the way LGBT persons are represented in news reports. Thus, future research may look at the influence of ideological differences in newsrooms on how a controversial issue is covered in the African news media. Again, while only two media outfits from each of the two countries have been used, future research can explore other media outfits.

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