**AN ANALYSIS OF THE PUBLIC'S PERCEPTION ABOUT POPE FRANCIS' ENDORSEMENT OF BLESSINGS FOR SAME-SEX COUPLES: A CASE STUDY OF PORT-HARCOURT, RIVERS STATE**

**TABLE OF CONTENTS**

**ABSTRACT**

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Background Of The Study

1.2 Problem Statement

1.3 Study Objectives

1.4 Significance Of The Study

1.5 Study Questions/Hypotheses

1.6 Scope And Limitation Of The Study

1.7 Definition Of Terms

**CHAPTER TWO**

**REVIEW OF RELATED AND RELEVANT LITERATURE**

2.1 Introduction

2.2 Conceptual Clarifications

2.3 Theoretical Studies

**CHAPTER THREE**

**RESEARCH METHODLOGY**

3.1 Research Design

3.2 Study Area

3.3 Sources Of Data

3.4 Population Of The Study

3.5 Sample Size Determination

3.6 Instrumentation

3.7 Reliability And Validity Of Instrument

3.8 Method Of Data Analysis

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**DATA PRESENATATION, ANALYSIS AND INTERPRETATION**

4.1 Data Presentation

4.2 Data Analysis

4.3 Data Interpretation

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**SUMMARY, CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION**

5.1 Summary

5.2 Conclusion

5.3 Recommendation

**REFERENCES**

**APPENDIX**

**ABSTRACT**

The purpose of this study was to analyse the public's perception regarding Pope Francis' endorsement of blessings for same-sex couples. The study recruited individuals residing in Port Harcourt, Rivers State. This study aimed to evaluate the public perception of Pope Francis' endorsement of same-sex blessings. This study also aimed to determine whether Pope Francis' approval of same-sex blessings would result in a decrease in Catholic membership. The research design utilised in this study was the survey research design. The design of this study entailed gathering data from a sample of individuals by eliciting their responses to a series of questions. This particular research design facilitates the utilisation of diverse participant recruitment methods, data collection techniques, and instrumentation methods. The study utilised a convenience sampling method to determine the appropriate sample size, which consisted of approximately 50 participants. The study utilised percentage frequency counts to analyse the responses obtained from the questionnaires and provide answers to the research questions. The study's findings indicate that the approval of Pope Francis' blessings has generated significant public controversy within the Catholic church. There exists a diverse range of public opinions regarding Pope Francis' decision to grant his blessing to same-sex couples. The study's findings indicate that the approval of Pope Francis' blessing for same-sex relationships has not resulted in a decrease in Catholic membership.

**CHAPTER ONE**

**INTRODUCTION**

**Background of the study**

While same-sex marriage was not initially a primary focus of the LGBT movement in the 1970s, it gained significant prominence in the early 2000s, becoming a central issue on the movement's agenda in the United States and numerous other developed countries. The movement advocating for same-sex marriage is a global phenomenon. The Netherlands became the first nation to legalise same-sex marriage in 2000. Since then, over a dozen countries in Western Europe, North America, and South America, as well as South Africa, have also legalised same-sex marriage. As of the beginning of 2013, same-sex marriage had been legalised in nine states and the District of Columbia in the United States. Additionally, four more states recognised same-sex marriages that were performed in other states (Kahn, 1989).

Since the beginning of the 21st century, the push for same-sex marriage has been a prominent focus within the LGBT movement, despite some activists within the community expressing differing opinions. A significant portion of the progress in this area can be attributed to individuals such as Evan Wolfson. Wolfson played a crucial role in the Hawaii Baehr v. Lewin case and later established The Freedom to Marry Coalition in 2003, with the aim of advocating for the legalisation of same-sex marriage. The 2003 Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court ruling in Goodridge v. Department of Public Health marked a significant milestone in the fight for same-sex marriage rights. This ruling granted same-sex couples in Massachusetts the right to marry, but it also triggered a backlash against same-sex marriage. As a result, a considerable amount of resources within the LGBT movement were redirected towards the effort to legalise same-sex marriage (Knight, 1994).

The majority of the movement's energy was dedicated to combating antigay ballot measures aimed at prohibiting same-sex marriage. Since 1998, the American public has participated in a series of ballot measures to vote on the issue of same-sex marriage. According to APnews (2023), there were thirty ballot measures that aimed to revise the state constitution and prohibit same-sex marriages. Marriage bans have been widely approved by voters, with only two instances of defeat in Arizona (2006) and Minnesota (2012) (Stone, 2012). One of the most controversial ballot measures to date is California Proposition 8, which stands out as the only marriage ban to have overturned legalised marriage. Proposition 8 was a response to a 2008 decision made by the California Supreme Court, which had legalised same-sex marriage. In the state of California, over 18,000 same-sex marriages were performed during the period between the California Supreme Court case and the campaign. The LGBT campaign and the Religious Right campaign, both aimed at combating Proposition 8, collectively raised an impressive sum of over $40 million dollars, surpassing previous campaign spending records. After Proposition 8 was approved in the November 2012 election, protests erupted nationwide, leading to a legal challenge in the Supreme Court known as Hollingsworth versus Perry. This case aimed to contest the marriage ban imposed by Proposition 8. While ballot measures have proven to be a successful strategy for the Religious Right, the LGBT movement achieved a significant victory in the November 2012 election. During this election, voters in Minnesota rejected a marriage ban, while voters in Maryland and Washington affirmed same-sex marriage laws that had been recently passed by their legislatures. In addition, Maine voters approved a same-sex marriage initiative put forth by LGBT organisers (Philip, 2023).

Marriage was not the sole objective. During this time period, numerous accomplishments were made by the LGBT movement. The Supreme Court case Lawrence v. Texas (2003) resulted in the overturning of sodomy laws in 14 US states. President Barack Obama signed the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act in October 2009. This act provides coverage for hate crime acts based on sexual orientation and gender identity. President Obama later repealed the ban on gay and lesbian service members, while transgender service members remain prohibited from serving in the US military.

Since the 1970s, there have been ongoing but unsuccessful attempts to pass a federal Employment Non-Discrimination Act. Nevertheless, there has been a significant increase in the implementation of nondiscrimination laws at the local level. In 2007, more than half of the population in the United States was protected by state, county, and/or city laws that prohibited discrimination based on sexual orientation. This was a significant increase compared to 1990, when less than one-third of the population had the same level of legal protection. According to the New York Times (2023), an increasing number of state and city laws now incorporate gender identity and expression, providing enhanced protection for transgender individuals. The enactment of these local laws can be attributed to the increasing support for LGBT rights in public opinion, the effectiveness of local movement organisations, and the support provided by national organisations.

The LGBT movement has also been placing increasing emphasis on intersectional issues, including immigration reform and social security. The growth of transgender organising and media visibility was accompanied by the establishment of the National Centre for Transgender Equality in 2003, marking the first national transgender rights organisation.

**Statement of research problem**

On Monday, the Vatican announced that Pope Francis has officially approved the practice of Catholic priests blessing same-sex couples. This decision represents a significant change in policy, as it seeks to foster inclusivity within the church while upholding its longstanding prohibition on gay marriage (CNN News, 2023).

Although the Vatican statement was seen as a positive development by some, as it was seen as a step towards reducing discrimination within the Catholic Church, there were concerns raised by LGBTQ+ advocates. They cautioned that the statement reinforced the church's belief that same-sex couples are still considered inferior to heterosexual relationships (Punchng, 2023).

The document from the Vatican's doctrine office provides further details on a letter that Francis had previously sent to two conservative cardinals, which was published in October. In the initial response, Francis proposed that these blessings could be provided in certain situations, as long as they were not mistaken for the marriage ceremony itself. The new document reiterates and expands on this condition, confirming that marriage is a lifelong commitment between a man and a woman (Vatican News, 2023). It emphasises that the blessings should not be associated with a particular Catholic celebration or religious service, and they should not be given during a civil union ceremony. Furthermore, the blessings cannot be performed using specific rituals or include the customary attire and gestures associated with weddings. However, it is stated that requests for blessings for same-sex couples should not be refused. According to Vatican News (2023), the concept of "blessing" in Scripture is defined in a comprehensive and inclusive manner. It emphasises that individuals who desire a deep connection with God and seek His love and mercy should not be burdened by an unattainable moral standard in order to receive these blessings.

**Objectives of the study**

The primary goal of this study is to:

1. Assess Port-Harcourt residents’ perception of Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex.
2. To find out if Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex would lead to a decline in Catholic membership.

**Research questions**

1. How do the Port-Harcourt residents perceive Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex?
2. How do Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex affect Catholic membership?

**Research hypothesis**

H1: There is a negative public perception of Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex.

H1a: There is a positive public perception of Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex.

H2n: There is no decline Catholic membership owing to Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex affect.

H2a: There is a decline Catholic membership owing to Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex affect.

**Significance of the study**

The forthcoming study's outcomes will shed light on Port-Harcourt residents regarding Pope Francis' endorsement of same-sex blessings within the Catholic community. Consequently, these findings may pave the way for mitigating the internal religious discord pertaining to matters of morality. The forthcoming study's results will elucidate the magnitude of societal perception pertaining to religion and morality.

**Scope of the study**

The scope of this study's findings is confined to the perspectives expressed by individuals residing within the geographical boundaries of Port-Harcourt, Rivers state. The inclusion of a geographical scope serves to enhance the precision of the problem under discussion. Furthermore, it is imperative to acknowledge that the scope of this investigation is confined to the examination of Pope Francis' endorsement of same-sex marriage. Amidst the myriad of gender-related controversies that pervade contemporary discourse, it is imperative to direct our attention towards the crux of this study, which revolves around the endorsement of same-sex blessings.

**Limitations of the study**

This study is constrained to the collection of responses obtained exclusively from participants residing in Port-Harcourt, Rivers state. Whilst the validity of the findings of this study remains intact, it is worth considering that the results could potentially be enhanced if the scope were broadened to encompass a more diverse range of respondents hailing from additional local government areas within Rivers state, as well as extending to other states. Moreover, the present study primarily centred its attention on the endorsement of same-sex marriage blessings. Although this narrow focus contributes to the study's brevity, a more comprehensive examination of scholarly viewpoints regarding gender-related perceptions would have facilitated a more extensive body of literature. Nevertheless, notwithstanding these limitations, the outcomes of this study remained unaffected. On the contrary, these lacunae serve as conduits for additional scholarly investigations.

**Operational definition of terms**

Same-sex: Partners of the same sex and/or gender identity. For example, a marriage between two men or two women.

**Gender:** the male sex or the female sex, especially when considered with reference to social and cultural differences rather than biological ones, or one of a range of other identities that do not correspond to established ideas of male and female.

**Perception:** the ability to see, hear, or become aware of something through the senses.

**Couple:** two people who are married or otherwise closely associated romantically or sexually.

**CHAPTER TWO**

**LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK**

**The History of Religion and Marriage**

Before the many religious wars that ravaged through Europe, marriage was almost entirely wrapped up in religion, specifically the Christian faith. It was of course a time of little religious tolerance and if the authority of the Church was questioned, it would produce dire consequences. But even in a climate so different from the one we presently live in, it is interesting to note that it was not required to have a priest or religious leader to solemnize a marriage.

Marriage was however controlled by church courts, which are courts that have jurisdiction over a wide array of religious and spiritual concerns. It used to be that only these courts could validate a marriage, and if any conflict arose within a marriage that needed to be dealt with legally, it was addressed there. It was the belief of these church courts, and the religion they were founded upon, that marriage was intended to be a life-long commitment between a man and a woman. As such, it was entered into with a contractual frame of mind that created a specific status for both the male and the female (Henley 2008).

Although marriage was not specifically a contract, it was entered into as such in that both the man and woman must mutually agree to the relationship; and this would effectively establish the marriage, despite the lack of having a tangible contract. Marriage not only created a role for each spouse within the relationship according to Christian tradition, but it also created a very specific legal status for both the husband and the wife. The man became the head of the household and was expected to provide for his wife, an idea that is still perpetuated today but to a much lesser degree as family norms have changed since then and are still evolving. However, once married, the woman essentially became her husband's property and all of her assets became his. After becoming married, a woman no longer had a legal personal identity; the husband would represent them both. These statuses could only change upon the death of either the husband or wife (Henley 2008). This tradition has long since been abandoned; neither spouse has civil control of the other. Today, in legal terms, both the man and woman are equals within a marriage, although within the relationship the role of husband and wife may of course vary according to the individuals.

These traditions traveled to the New World with the colonists; however, neither the authority of the church court in a marriage, nor the specific statuses created by a marriage still exist today in America. It was a slow evolution, but religion no longer has any legitimate power to control the public institution of marriage. In order to enter into a valid marriage in the United States the basic steps taken (with slight variation according to county or state) would be to go to a county clerk's office to file certain reports and documents, present proper identification, and pay a fee. Many American citizens chose to involve religion in their marriage procedures whether by having a member of the clergy officiate or by having the ceremony in a place of worship such as a church or synagogue, and this is often times the norm. However, there is no legal marriage requirement to get religious approval or to have a religious ceremony, for obtaining a legal marriage is entirely a civil matter, while incorporating religion is voluntary. The reason that religion is no longer a requirement for marriage is because of the doctrine of separation of church and state that our nation has a history of implementing.

**Separation of Church and State**

Borrowing ideas from British philosopher John Locke's A Letter Concerning Toleration, the phrase separation of church and state was first articulated by Thomas Jefferson when talking about the First Amendment. He was referencing the fact that the United States government should not establish a state religion and that there should be a wall of separation between church and state, and this has become known as the Establishment Clause of the First Amendment. Our founding fathers had great concerns about the new nation becoming a church-state like the one they had left in England, and rightly so. They had not had good experiences in their previous homeland with the church becoming a source of power for kings and queens to do whatever they chose. Therefore they wanted to ensure that the same problems would not arise in the United States.

Throughout history we have seen efforts by the Supreme Court to maintain that separation of church and state. In Reynolds versus United States, George Reynolds was convicted of violating a statute that prohibited bigamy. He appealed to the Supreme Court and argued that his Mormon religion called for him to marry more than once, and religious freedom should allow for this. The Court however did not agree, it clarified that the State can legitimately govern actions but not beliefs regarding religion and that prohibiting bigamy does not violate the free exercise clause of the First Amendment seeing as marriage has been between two people since before our ancestors traveled to America from England (Reynolds v. United States 1878). The Supreme Court also ruled that it was unconstitutional for state officials to require the recitation of a school imposed prayer in Engel versus Vitale. The decision stated that despite the prayer being vague in that it doesn't recognize a specific religion or god it still involves state endorsed religion, which is unacceptable in light of our government's commitment to the free exercise of religion (Engel v. Vitale 1962).

**A Different Animal**

Same-sex marriage, however, is different than the issues presented in Reynolds and Engel, and it is different from the common concept of a violation of the Establishment Clause. With same-sex marriage, there is no clear endorsement of a given religion, nor is there discrimination against a specific religion. And it is for this reason that many people do not see that there is a problem with the vast amount of influence religion has held in keeping same-sex marriage illegal. Gordon Babst attributes this problem to something he identifies as the shadow establishment of religion, or "an impermissible expression of sectarian preference in the law that is unreasonable in the light of the nation's constitutional commitments to all its citizens" (Gill 2009, 65). When this happens on a large scale, such as with Proposition, essentially what happens is that, those religious preferences become enacted into law; preferences that not all citizens agree with, preferences that encroach upon and limit how a group of people live their lives. This alone would seem to be sufficient justification to prevent Babst's 'shadow establishment,' but some would argue that this is merely morals legislation, something we have seen examples of in the Supreme Court.

**Morals Legislation**

In 1986 the case Bowers versus Hardwick reached the Supreme Court. This case addressed the constitutionality of a Georgia sodomy statute, which made oral and anal sex illegal even when between consenting adults, under which Michael Hardwick was convicted when he was found engaged in homosexual sodomy. Hardwick's case evolved into whether or not there was a fundamental right to homosexual sodomy, even though the Georgia statue applied to all acts of sodomy and not sodomy specifically between people of a certain sexual orientation. Thus it seemed as if the Court was merely expressing a distaste for a specific type of sodomy, that between homosexuals, because they were unequally applying the law according to sexuality. Justice Byron White justified the Supreme Court's decision in his majority opinion when said that Even if the conduct at issue here is not a fundamental right, respondent [Hardwick] asserts that there must be a rational basis for the law and that there is none in this case other than the presumed belief of a majority of the electorate in Georgia that homosexual sodomy is immoral and unacceptable...The law, however, is constantly based on notions of morality, and if all laws representing essentially moral choices are to be invalidated under the Due Process Clause, the courts will be very busy indeed. Even respondent makes no such claim, but insists that the majority sentiments about the morality of homosexuality should be declared inadequate (Bowers v Hardwick 1986).

Hardwick's conviction was upheld because the Court found that there was a standing tradition of sodomy laws, there was no fundamental right to homosexual sodomy, and that the expression of morality through the law was legitimate. And this has been the argument made for morals legislation, if the expressed morality is the commonly held belief of the majority, then it is acceptable to deny any given "ick" factor. In this case, the majority of Georgians agreed that sodomy was such an "ick" factor that should be restricted. However, one the reason this form of morals legislation is unacceptable is because the morality is only being enforced against homosexuals, and not all who engage in sodomy, not to mention the majoritarianism at work. The decision made in Bowers was overturned when Lawrence versus Texas reached the Supreme Court. Unlike the statue in Bowers, this case dealt with a Texas statue that explicitly outlawed only homosexual sodomy, and the Court effectively ruled that both were unconstitutional. In the majority opinion the Justices asserted that the morals legislation used in Bowers was invalid because "the longstanding criminal prohibition of homosexual sodomy upon which Bowers placed such reliance is consistent...with an established tradition of prosecuting acts because of their homosexual character" (Lawrence v. Texas 2003). This instance of morals legislation was merely an expression of discrimination towards a certain class of people instead of distaste for the actual act of sodomy itself. Morals legislation, however, is neither illegal nor unconstitutional. When morals legislation occurs, it is merely viewed as an aspect of our democracy in which the majority voices its opinion. It is argued that it should not matter what sways our democratic vote, whether it be lessons taught to us by a parent, or values dictated by our religion or religious leaders. American citizens are each guaranteed a voice in the political process through the vote, however it is possible for elections and legislation to exemplify a tyranny of the majority. When this occurs, the majority opinion drowns out the concerns and needs of minorities. Essentially what results from this is that a minority group ends up being oppressed because they do not have sufficient numbers to stand up for the rights that they are seeking out. This was not the intent the Founding Fathers had when they prescribed citizens the right to vote. The democratic process of including the citizens in voting was not meant to create legislation without the legislature. We see that examples of tyranny of the majority frequently happen with ballot initiatives in state elections. Many times groups that represent the majority opinion on an issue will push through their interests using such propositions that arguably cater to the electorate's unreflective instincts, moral or otherwise. And this is what we saw happen with California's Proposition. Religious groups became extremely active in attempting to return marriage to being only between a man and a woman, a belief derived from their scripture. This idea is especially concerning because Proposition became a part of California's state constitution, and was driven through from the efforts and views of religious groups.

**Police Powers**

Another argument religious groups often put forth in defense of the continuing prohibition on same-sex marriage centers on the state's police powers. The police powers are typically classified as the right of the state to regulate activity that can influence the safety, security, or public welfare of the community. Those who oppose same-sex marriage claim that it is indeed an issue of morality, which falls under the category of public welfare, and therefore is within the realm of the state to interfere. In this case, the religious opposition tends to use their view of morality, which states more or less that homosexuality is a sin or against nature as God created it. Needless to say, this does not equate to a secular morality that all citizens can adhere to. Babst refers to the Wolfenden Report, which asserts that "unless a deliberate attempt is made by society, acting through the agency of the law, to equate the sphere of crime with that of sin, there must remain a realm of private morality and immorality which is, in brief and crude terms, not the law's business" (Babst 2002, 43).

This suggests that the attempt of religious believers to impose their morality on all citizens is unjust and unconstitutional. Crime is a matter for the law, sin a matter for religion, and the two cannot coincide within the sphere of politics and legislation. This is due to the fact that we have separation of church and state in this country, a notion that has been long embedded in our history and legal traditions. However, most people do not make these various connections between the current situation with same-sex marriage prohibitions and a violation of separation of church and state. And therefore most citizens do not see a problem with the religious influence in keeping same-sex marriage illegal. I will now turn to the common arguments put forth by religious groups in their attempts to maintain a prohibition against same-sex marriage, show how ambiguous those arguments are, and demonstrate how each argument can be turned around and used to support same-sex marriage, beginning with the argument from scripture itself. Although I believe the religious influence on the matter to violate the ideal of separation of church and state, I feel it is still important to examine arguments that are more purely religious, given the focus of this paper is on the relationship between religion and same-sex marriage.

**Homosexuality and Same-Sex Marriage as Sin**

The most common religious argument against same-sex marriage revolves around scripture, which many faith communities believe came directly from the mouth of God, and they interpret scripture to forbid homosexuality, and by extension, same-sex marriage. The most frequently quoted piece of scripture to meet this end comes from Leviticus 18:22, cited from the New International Version Classic Reference Bible, which says "Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable" (1988, 133). For many religious groups, this is the beginning and the end of the discussion. In this one statement, God declares homosexuality to be a sin, and therefore no argument over it need occur. However, using this one verse of scripture for prohibiting same-sex marriage is entirely unconstitutional. If this were the only justification they used, religious groups would be in clear violation of the American ideal of separation of church and state. Moreover, it is not a question of the religious validity of the statement, whether or not God actually spoke these words. The fact is that not all citizens abide by this scripture; it is therefore wrong to legislate by it when not all believe in it, nor is it the business of the state to try to persuade its citizens of a (contestable) religious truth. Another commonly quoted piece of scripture to argue against homosexuality and same-sex marriage is found in 1Corinthians 6: 9-10, Do you not know that the wicked will not inherit the kingdom of God? “Do not be deceived: “Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers not male prostitutes nor homosexual offenders nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God (1988, 1300).”

But what if these various "wicked" peoples are not interested in inheriting the kingdom of God? Do they still deserve to have these beliefs imposed upon them through law? This scripture condemns many others aside from homosexuals; do greedy people also deserve to have their rights revoked as citizens? Again we see the problem that not all of us agree with these beliefs. In addition, it seems that the religious are being selective from amongst the "wicked" they wish to discriminate against in the law.

It is interesting to note what the next verse in 1 Corinthians chapter 6 goes on to say "and that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God" (1988, 1300). I do not pretend to be a theologian, but this seems to suggest that even the "wicked" are forgiven and made clean again through Christ. If this is so, then why can't the religious groups, who claim to be extensions of that same God, forgive as well, even if those to be forgiven do not abide by the same faith? By reading on just one more verse, it seems that the same piece of scripture can also be used as motivation for the religious to in fact be accepting of homosexuals rather than condemning, as God is of all sinners.

This is an idea supported by Jack McKinney, a reverend of a Baptist church in Raleigh, North Carolina. Reverend McKinney argues that as people of religious faiths, they need to be accepting and tolerant of all people, just as Jesus Christ taught. Reverend McKinney looks to the same scripture as those who are against homosexuality and same-sex marriage, but instead finds reason to support it. He even references the same book previously mentioned, a mere six chapters later. In 1 Corinthians 12: 12-13, the apostle Paul says that “The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body. So it is with Christ. For we were all baptized by one Spirit into one body- whether Jews or Greeks, slave or free- and we were all given the one Spirit to drink (1988, 1306).

This was written at a time when men had all the power, your ethnicity determined what kind of life you had, according you some rights while giving others none. And yet Paul is saying that through Christ, all of these people are equal. According to McKinney, "Jesus and Paul are naming all the ways power has been held by certain members of society to the exclusion of others- and they are naming it a sin" (2004, 284). We can see that this has happened with several groups throughout our history, African-Americans, women, and now the homosexual community. McKinney is asserting that according to the teachings of Christ, we should get rid of such divisions of rights and power according to supposed inequalities, because in the eyes of God we are all equal.

**The Argument from Definition**

There are some from among religious believers who recognize that the arguments formed around scripture will not suffice, and look to something seemingly less indefinite. To this end, a definition of marriage is sought. But right here we incur our first difficulty, whose definition do we use? Which dictionary do we reference? According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary marriage is "the state of being united to a person of the opposite sex as husband or wife in a consensual and contractual relationship recognized by law" and also less specifically "the mutual relation of married persons." Even when we limit our definition to one source, we get slightly different meanings. The first option clearly precludes homosexual marriage while the second does not. Yet for some, such as Robert H. Knight, the definition of marriage is straightforward and means "what it has always meant: the social, legal, and spiritual union of a man and a woman" (Knight 1994, 114). And with this I take issue with two things; first, as previously discussed, there is no requirement for marriage to include a spiritual aspect and many people do not, and secondly the definition of marriage has not been stagnant but has in fact changed throughout the course of our nation's history, to say nothing of western civilization at large.

In 1924, the legislature of Virginia passed the Racial Integrity Act, which mandated two things: all peoples be divided and recorded at birth into two categories, white or colored, and a prohibition on miscegenation, or the marriage of people of two different races (specifically white and non-white). In 1958 Mildred Dolores Jeter and George Loving were charged with violating this Act, so the couple took their case to court. The lower trial court in the case stated that "Almighty God created the races white, black, yellow, malay and red, and he placed them on separate continents...The fact that he separated the races shows that he did not intend for the races to mix" (Strasser 1997, 13). Here we see an unacceptable sectarian preference for a religious view expressed in the court's decision, a view that most religions today would agree is morally wrong. But, even if we disregard this incursion, the Supreme Court still did not agree with the trial court's reasoning and overturned it with a unanimous decision. Chief Justice Earl Warren explained that it was in violation of the Fourteenth Amendment's equal protection clause to prohibit a "fundamental freedom on so unsupportable a basis as the racial classifications embodied in these statutes" (McKinney 2004, 281). And this argument can be extended to sexual orientation. We cannot prohibit a group of citizens from participating in such a basic right as marriage simply because of classifications of sexuality and semantics. Before the decision for Loving v. Virginia was made in 1967, the definition of marriage did not allow for interracial marriage. The definition of marriage has changed before, so why can't it change again to include homosexuals? Religious groups answer this query with the assertion that if we were to change the definition, and we were to allow same-sex marriage, there would be several consequences. They assert that the family and the institute of marriage would crumble, causing children to be raised poorly, and thus shortly thereafter society as a whole would meet its demise as a result.

**Marriage, Family, and Procreation**

Religious groups tend to put marriage on a pedestal, thus it is easy for them to claim that allowing same-sex marriage will end the perfection that is the institute of marriage. However, marriage is already struggling as roughly half of all marriages today end in divorce, though the numbers vary slightly according to the source. And, simply the number of marriages occurring has been steadily dropping; in 2004 there were 2,279,000 marriages and the following year there were 2,230,000 despite an increase in population of 2.9 million people, by 2008 the number had further decreased to 2,162,000 marriages. Larry King, the infamous CNN interview show host, has just recently filed for his eighth divorce; actress Elizabeth Taylor has been married eight times and is rumored to be approaching her ninth. Both of these individuals are heterosexual, they as well as the many others like them, have caused great harm to the reputation and sanctity of marriage all on their own. Thus the argument that same-sex marriage will ruin the institute of marriage is slightly irrelevant, considering heterosexuals are not honoring it in the way most religions believe it should be honored.

Many argue that it is not the norm for homosexuals to practice monogamy, that it is in fact a rarity. In the issue of same-sex marriage, people tend to seek the errors in homosexual relationships and fail to see that the same problem almost always exists in heterosexual relationships as well. If anyone were to bother to look, heterosexual men and women are just as faulty in keeping a monogamous relationship. According to the Infidelity Facts website, in 41% of marriages either one or both spouses have admitted to an infidelity, and 57% of men and 54% of women admit to committing infidelity in any relationship they have had. This goes to show that heterosexual partnerships in a marriage aren't any better off than homosexual relationships in keeping faithful. Thus it seems hypocritical to condemn those in same-sex relationships for things that the majority of us, gay or straight, are guilty of. Often, the argument goes one step further to say that even if homosexuals are successfully monogamous, "the result is not healthier behavior.

A study published in the journal AIDS found that men in steady relationships practiced more anal intercourse and oral-anal intercourse than those without a steady partner" (Knight 1994, 116). Again, I feel it necessary to counter with the question, what about the heterosexual relationships that involve that same "unhealthy" behavior of anal or oral-anal intercourse? But it never occurs to them for this question to be asked, just like it never occurs for people to ask why heterosexuals are heterosexual instead of why homosexuals are homosexual. It might be best not to get distracted by such irrelevant and disingenuous arguments.

**The Traditional Family**

Another argument religious groups put forth in their attempts to prohibit same sex marriage is that such relationships go against the grain of the traditional family. And in a sense this is true, traditionally families have not been thought to include two mommies or two daddies. But this does not mean that such a family is ineffectual or incapable of providing the same benefits of living as a traditional family with one mom and one dad. Yet just the opposite is claimed, that "the best chance for having a successful, strong marriage is to grow up in a family with a strong marriage as a family," which to most religious groups means via a family consisting of heterosexual parents (Knight 1994, 119).

Thus allowing same-sex marriage would suggest an equality in their ability to raise children, which they suggest is untrue. However, studies and statistics show that there are no significant differences between children raised by heterosexual couples versus same-sex couples. Sean Cahill Reports that: The vast majority of children's advocacy organizations, including the American Academy of Pediatrics, the National Association of Social Workers, and the American Psychological Association (APA), recognize that gay and lesbian parents are just as good as heterosexual parents, and that children thrive in gay- and lesbian-headed families. One APA publication reports, "not a single study has found children of gay or lesbian parents to be disadvantaged in any significant respect relative to children of heterosexual parents (Cahill 2004, 46).

With no significant difference found, the concern over same-sex couples causing harm to children by raising them doesn't signify. Thus, allowing same-sex couples to adopt should not be prohibited, especially when there are countless foster children and orphans who could be provided a stable home with two parents, something that no one of any religion ought oppose. Once the consideration of raising children insufficiently is eliminated, religious groups will then argue that the purpose of marriage revolves around procreation, and that same-sex couples cannot biologically have children.

**The Purpose of Marriage**

Again looking to scripture, religious groups argue that one of the highest purposes of marriage is to procreate and bear children. This is physically impossible for same-sex couples and thus it follows that this would disqualify them from fulfilling the duties of marriage, as seen by the religious. But what about all of the heterosexual couples who never intend to have children or are physically incapable of becoming pregnant? According to a report issued by the Census Bureau, 18.2% of married women aged 15 to 44 are childless (Bachu 2002, 4). Are we to tell these people that their marriages are not truly valid because they have no children, whether by choice or physical limitations? Should these marriages be legally nullified? Should we start questioning all who want to marry of their intent to bear children? Most would respond to these questions in the negative, because that would be an unacceptable intrusion by the state into their privacy as individuals. If no one has ever thought to ask heterosexual couples whether or not they plan to have children and carry out this specific "purpose" of marriage, it should not be a consideration that inhibits the ability of same-sex couples from entering into the institution of marriage.

Rabbi Yoel H. Kahn offers a religious viewpoint that affirms this argument. Kahn asserts that his Jewish faith does not exclude homosexuals from kiddushin, or marriage, because of the inability to procreate. He agrees that it is unfair to require this of same-sex couples when we do not ask it of heterosexual couples. Kahn adds that, "halachah states that a woman who does not bear children after ten years can be divorced by her husband. But evidence that this law was reluctantly or negligibly enforced is precisely the type of historical example...often cited to support the explicit expansion of a value we find implicit in our historical tradition" (Kahn 1989, 75). In other words, although the Jewish faith has expressed a preference for procreation in marriage, it has not historically shown it to be a priority that has been strictly adhered to or enforced. It is for this reason that Kahn claims samesex couples should not have to overcome such a frivolous burden on their path to attaining access to the institute of marriage.

**Marriage Alternatives**

Many proponents of same-sex marriage, especially those within the gay community, argue that they should be allowed access to the institution of marriage in order to have the rights and benefits of a married couple. Without these rights, same-sex couples face many hardships that straight married couples do not have, or benefits they take for granted. For example, a same-sex couple would have difficulties with visitation rights if one of them were to become hospitalized. Or, if one person owned the house the couple lived in and that person died, the other would have no right to the house and would most likely have to pay an inheritance tax that a traditional spouse would not have to pay. And in order to remedy problems such as these, various alternatives to marriage have developed in the law such as civil unions, domestic partnerships, and life partnerships. Civil unions and domestic partnerships are intended to give same sex couples a number of rights, privileges, and benefits that traditional marriage affords opposite-sex couples, however the exact definition of each term varies by state or country.

Domestic partnerships first developed in Denmark in 1989 and "as in marriage, the registered partnership creates mutual obligations of maintenance, rights regarding compensation, and insurance benefits. Registered partners have insurance rights, rights of survivorship, and responsibility for funeral arrangements on the same scale as spouses" (Dupuis 2002, 123). California was the first state to legally recognize domestic partnerships and they were made available to both same-sex couples as well as opposite couples. At first, the benefits of domestic partnership in California were very limited, but over the years the state legislature has greatly expanded those rights to the extent that it is now very similar to marriage. And this is a point promoted by many religious groups; domestic partnerships and civil unions provide almost the same privileges as marriage, so why do same-sex couples need to be allowed access to traditional marriage? But the fact of the matter quite simply is that domestic partnerships and civil unions are not equal to marriage. Even the most developed forms of these marriage alternatives in the United States do not provide federal benefits or protections, "some of these are very important, like Social Security survivor benefits, the right to sponsor a partner for immigration purposes in binational relationships, and Medicaid and Medicare programs" (Pinello 2006, 165). In addition, because the definition of domestic partnerships and civil unions vary and not all states have these options available, if a domestic partnership couple from California, for example, were to cross the state line, they would cease to have any legal relationship with each other.

In addition to these two options, more and more couples both straight and gay are choosing simply to cohabitate and/or enter into registered partnerships. Peter S. Wenz describes the negative effects that cohabitation is having on the institute of marriage: According to the 2000 census, during the 1990's the number of unmarried-partner households in the United States increased by 72 percent.... Now the number [is] more than 5 million cohabitating couples, the vast majority of them heterosexual.... Marriage, meanwhile, is headed in the other direction. The marriage rate (defined as the annual number of weddings per thousand single women age fifteen or older) fell by 40 percent from 1970 to 2000 (2009, 197). Strictly speaking, all of these alternatives to marriage are undermining the traditional institution. Domestic partnerships, civil unions, and cohabitations geared toward same-sex couples provide the practicalities of marriage without the social expectation of life-long commitment that is expected of a marriage.

I believe that encouraging cohabitation of same-sex couples should concern religious groups that promote these different marriage alternatives. In many states, cohabitation is the only option for gay couples because there are no civil unions. Couples living together outside of marriage do not represent an ideal that most religions approve of. Yet when more and more same-sex couples cohabitate "because they can't get married, cohabitation as an alternative to marriage for straight couples is reinforced" (Wenz 2009, 197). Having so many options that aren't as binding as marriage only erodes the institution's status. Allowing same sex couples access to traditional marriage would actually strengthen marriage as an institution. If access to marriage were given to gay couples, it would help return it to the respected and coveted institution that it once was, and it would also reinforce the ideal that the religious groups hold so important, the idea that committed couples enter into marriage so as to solidify that relationship that exceeds the two persons individually. If same-sex marriage were allowed, there would no longer be a need for so many alternatives that not only deteriorate the value of marriage, but also are also unequal to it. We have seen in our nation's past that separate is not equal; this justification did not work for racial segregation, nor does it validate attempts to prevent same-sex couples from entering into traditional marriage. During the 1960s, segregation lead to the creation of school systems and other public services for African-Americans that were supposed to be equivalent to those given to the rest of the citizens. However, the rights of African-Americans were restricted to the point where they were being deprived of the equal citizenship that the Equal Protection and Due Process Clauses of the United States Constitution provides. And the same thing is happening in the current situation in which same-sex couples are being denied the right to marry.

**What's At Stake**

By prohibiting same-sex marriage and denying its validity, we have crated a class of citizens who are unequal and of a lower status than the rest. By keeping same sex couples out of marriage, the government is suggesting that one sexual orientation is superior to another, the higher standard being that of heterosexual status. However the government should neither condone nor condemn any form of sexuality because it creates two classes, insiders and outsiders, and thus furthers inequality between citizens. By prohibiting same-sex couples from marrying, we are essentially supporting the discrimination against a specific group of people. Thomas Jefferson stated in the Declaration of Independence that "all men are created equal," an ideal that our nation has been built upon. It is relevant to mention however that when this was written it only applied to rich, white, land owning men, leaving out all women and all African-American slaves. But this was remedied over time by granting both groups full and equal citizenship. Today homosexuals essentially have the status of partial citizenry, as slaves and women both did at one point in our nation's history. And although some states concede to homosexuals the right to engage in civil union or domestic partnership, these options are not equal to marriage. There has been a long and sad history of discrimination against homosexuals in this country, and because of that long history, the mentality that homosexuality is wrong or unacceptable has been more or less ingrained into our society's mindset. And because of this discrimination, we are preventing a class of people, homosexuals, from having the same access to rights In his "Introduction" to Moral Argument, Religion, and Same-Sex Marriage, Gordon Babst agrees with the idea that prohibiting same-sex marriage creates a class of people with unequal citizenship. He too looks to the Constitution in demonstrating why this is an infringement of rights. In regards to allowing same-sex marriage Babst says that "the new territory we stake isn't predicated in any other assumption than that the Constitution, properly understood, offers nothing less than full and equal citizenship before the law, and after, and that its protections are sincere, not facetious" (2009, viii). In denying homosexuals the level of equal citizenship that heterosexuals enjoy, we assert that the basic rights of the Constitution do not apply to them. They can see the promise that those words hold on paper, but for them those rights are not a reality.

Precluding same-sex couples from the institute of marriage is an abridgement of a basic right. According to Jack McKinney "marriage is such a basic civil right that no state is justified in denying this right to people based on discriminatory classifications" (2004, 282). And we have seen examples of this in our nation's past. Before the Women's Rights Movement in the late 1800s and early 1900s, women were given a lower status in society, because of a prejudice and sense of superiority held by men; they were deemed unequal in social abilities and knowledge and therefore were not allowed the right to vote. Women had to fight for equality, and homosexuals are currently doing the same. They are not granted the right to enter into a marriage based on long held discrimination and an inaccurate belief that they are inadequate on some level to do so.

There is one important commonality between religious groups and the homosexual community, a commonality that is often overlooked. The First Amendment right to freedom of religion allows people to live out their lives according to their beliefs and to practice them as they see fit, which is an encouragement of their right to form and exercise their own conscientiously-held beliefs. This right, however, is not one afforded to those of same-sex attraction, they are not allowed to practice that aspect of their identity to its fullest because they are denied the legitimacy that most religions are given. Religious groups want to deny same-sex couples the very freedom that allows them to practice their faith, and that is the ability to practice their religion without legitimate state interference. Both homosexuality and religion are viewed as central to a person's identity; they are aspects that define who they are as a person in the fact that they would not be the same without it. How is it just to deny homosexuals the ability to exercise that basic aspect of human existence? Renowned constitutional law scholar David A.J. Richards suggests that it can't be, not without a compelling state interest to prohibit it. And as we have examined, there is no such valid state interest here. Most frequently what we hear are forms of prejudice and discrimination masquerading as compelling state interests, but "overall, religious or particularist secular grounds should not count as grounds of abridgement. If they did count, weighing your religious objections, for example, against my practice of my conscious beliefs implies that your beliefs somehow trump my own." (Gill 2009, 59) As Americans we are allowed to live our lives by faith or devoid of faith, either way that is a right to conscientiously-held beliefs. The same should apply to sexuality, whether heterosexual or homosexual, the right to fulfill your life according to either orientation is your individual right.

**Same-Sex Couples’ Parenting**

The moral component in same-sex couples’ recognition, however, is far from limited to the question of whether marriage can accommodate the idea of same sex spouses. In particular, marriages’ close connection with childrearing and social reproduction (van Acker, 2016) has often proven politically controversial when associated with same-sex couples. While financial and administrative privileges associated with marriage were readily extended to same-sex couples when granted access to civil marriage, the question of same-sex couples achieving legal parenthood contained in itself a moral maze that inspired spirited political Debate.

The first notable point is that the routes to parenthood differ for same-sex male and female couples by virtue of their biological realities. For gay men, the routes to parenthood are primarily through surrogacy or adoption, with co-parenting agreements being a third option. Lesbian couples, in turn, often conceive children through donor insemination or invitro fertilisation (Tasker & Patterson, 2008). Each of these pathways also generate their own regulatory responses. Adoption has long been practised across the West and is therefore the least politically controversial (Department of Economic and Social Affairs, 2010) even though the idea of same-sex couples being able to adopt jointly has proven more controversial (Goldberg, Kinkler, Richardson, & Downing, 2011; Perry & Whitehead, 2015; Stychin, 2008; Sullivan & Harrington, 2009). The debate surrounding artificial reproduction technologies, however, expands beyond the concerns regarding the morality of same-sex parentings and the impact on children raised by same-sex adoption. Surrogacy in particular has led to moral and ethical debates that are distinct. Access to in-vitro fertilisation, donor insemination, and surrogacy, therefore, is conditioned by factors that are indirectly linked to the issue of same-sex couples’ recognition.

Thus, the ability for same-sex couples to achieve legal parenthood is significantly moderated by the legal framework surrounding union recognition. This moderation occurs in one of two ways: either marriage is a barrier to access, or the lack of same-sex union recognition means an incomplete recognition of parentage (Bernstein, Naples, & Harvey, 2016; Chauveron, Alvarez, & van Eeden-Moorefield, 2017). Adoption illustrates both points. In particular, joint adoption by same-sex couples illustrates the close association between marital status and joint adoption rights well, Since the 1967 European Convention on the Adoption of Children6 adoption across Europe has been limited to individual applicants or married couples, which barred same-sex couples from adopting jointly given their lack of marriage rights. Even with the advent of same-sex union recognition in 1989, these non-marital unions did not entail access to joint adoption.

The right to adopt jointly was first granted with the admission of same-sex couples to marriage itself in the Netherlands in 2001. However, the link between same-sex marriage and joint adoption rights was not always automatic: both Belgium and Portugal initially barred same-sex married couples from jointly adopting. However, an increasing number of countries have adjusted their adoption laws to allow same-sex couples in formalised nonmarital unions to adopt jointly (e.g. Denmark, Austria, and Iceland), which has reduced the importance of marriage as a barrier to access. In regard to a lack of union recognition leading to incomplete parentage, the lack of ‘second-parent adoption’ foregrounds the consequences of lacking full parental recognition.

In this type of adoption, one member of the same-sex dyad has full legal parentage, while the other does not. In the absence of second-parent adoption, the second adult has no way of being recognised as the child’s parent. This situation can have severe consequences for both the child and the unrecognised parent in the case of divorce, separation, the legal parent’s death, or any situation in which only a legal parent may carry out parental responsibility (Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe, 2011, p. 120). In both cases, therefore, the type of recognition available and the rights accorded to these types of union recognition are essential to understanding how states recognise same-sex families beyond the adult dyad.

While the political debate is often fought on first principles, , researchers have put much effort into understanding same-sex parenting practices and outcomes for children parented by same-sex couples in part in response to the concerns of those opposing joint adoption and childrearing by same-sex couples (Allen, 2015; Patterson, 2014; Tasker & Patterson, 2008). The broad consensus in this strand of the literature is that children parented by same-sex couples do just as well as those parented by opposite-sex parents, and there is no evidence that non traditional families are less successful at parenting. Despite this evidence, there remain biases against same-sex couples amongst some elements of the public and, at times, in social work (Sullivan & Harrington, 2009). Overall, however, there seems to be a similar normalisation of the public’s perception of same-sex parenting and same-sex couples adopting as has been the case with regard to homosexuality more broadly (ISSP Research Group, 1990, 1997, 2016).

**Theoretical framework**

**Freud’s Theory of Psychosexual Development**

One of Freud’s greatest contributions was to promote the view of human personality as being the result of development in the first 5 years of life. That is, he saw the personality of an adult as the product of previous experiences, and he believed that early childhood experiences were most critical. He proposed a stage theory of psychosexual development, each stage being characterized by a focus on one of the erogenous zones, parts of skin or mucous membranes highly endowed with nerve endings that are very sensitive to stimulation (e.g., the lips and mouth, the anal region, genitals). During stage 1, the oral stage, the infant derives pleasure from sucking and eating and experiences the world mainly through the mouth. Following this is the anal stage, in which pleasure is focused on defecating. Freud proposed that boys and girls pass through the first two stages of psychosexual development, the oral and the anal, in a similar manner.

However, during the phallic stage, around the ages of 3 to 6, the development of boys and girls diverges. As one might suspect from the name for this stage, girls will be at somewhat of a disadvantage here. During the phallic stage, the boy becomes fascinated with his own penis, which is a rich source of pleasure and interest for him. At this stage boys experience the Oedipal complex, named for the Greek myth of Oedipus, who unknowingly killed his father and married his mother. In the Oedipal complex, the boy sexually desires his mother and has an intense attachment to her. He also wishes to rid himself of the father, who is a rival for the mother’s affection.

But the son views his father as a powerful opponent and fears that his father will retaliate by castrating him. This castration anxiety becomes so great that, in order to resolve the problem, he represses his sexual desire for his mother and makes the critical shift to identify with the father. In doing so, the boy introjects (takes into himself as his own) the values and ethics of society as represented by the father and thus develops a superego. And, in identifying with the father, he comes to acquire his gender identity, taking on the masculine qualities the father supposedly possesses—strength, power, and so on.

For girls, the phallic stage is quite different. According to Freud, the first critical event is the girl’s stark realization that she has no penis. Presumably she recognizes that the penis is superior to her clitoris. She feels cheated and envious of boys and thus comes to feel penis envy. Her penis envy can never be satisfied directly and, instead, is transformed into a desire to be impregnated by her father. Holding her mother responsible for her lack of a penis, she renounces her love for her mother and becomes intensely attracted to her father, thus forming her own version of the Oedipal complex, called the Electra complex. The desire to be impregnated by the father is a strong one and persists in the more general form of maternal urges, according to Freud. According to Freud, the resolution of the Oedipal complex is critical for the boy’s development, being necessary for the formation of his gender identity and superego. He also theorized that the Electra complex is never as fully resolved for girls as the Oedipal complex is for boys. This leads the girl to lifelong feelings of inferiority, a predisposition to jealousy, and intense maternal desires. In addition, because she never fully resolves the Electra complex and introjects society’s standards, her superego is immature. She is morally inferior and lacks a sense of justice, ultimately because she lacks a penis.

**Criticisms of Freud’s Psychoanalytic Theory**

Numerous general criticisms and feminist criticisms of Freudian theory have been made. From a scientific point of view, a major problem with psychoanalytic theory is that most of its concepts cannot be evaluated scientifically to see whether they are accurate. That is, because Freud placed so much value on unconscious desires—which cannot be directly observed, measured, or tested—it is impossible to falsify or evaluate the validity of his theory. Another criticism that is often raised is that Freud derived his ideas almost exclusively from work with patients who sought therapy. In particular, his views on women may contain some truth about women who have problems of adjustment, but they fail to describe typical or psychologically well-adjusted women. This is an example of an error of overgeneralization. Many modern psychologists argue that Freud overemphasized biological determinants of human behavior and underemphasized social or cultural forces in shaping behavior. In particular, his views on the origin of differences between men and women, and on the nature of female personality, are heavily biological, relying mostly on anatomical differences. In relying on anatomy as an explanation, Freud ignored the enormous forces of culture acting to create gender differences. Feminists have raised numerous criticisms of Freudian theory, including those noted above (e.g., Lerman, 1986; J. A. Sherman, 1971; Weisstein, 1971). They are particularly critical of Freud’s assumption that the clitoris and vagina are inferior to the penis and have argued that Freudian theory is phallocentric.

In this context, Freud seems simply to be articulating ageold myths and images about women in “scientific” language. The image of women as sinful and the source of evil is translated into the scientific-sounding “immature superego.” Certainly Freud’s phallocentrism is a good example of a male-as-normative or androcentric model. Basically, for Freud, a girl is a castrated boy. His model of development describes male development, with female development being an inadequate variation on it. Nonetheless, it is important to acknowledge Freud’s contributions in his recognition of the importance of development in shaping human behavior and personality.

**CHAPTER THREE**

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**3.1 Preamble**

 This chapter discusses the processes employed in the identification, selection and validity of data and data instrument. It clarifies the research design, study area, target population, sampling technique and sampling size, method of data collection, and pertinently, the data analysis technique.

**3.2 Study Area**

Port Harcourt, located in the Niger Delta region of South South Nigeria, is a coastal city that serves as the capital of Rivers State. It is renowned as the hub of the country's oil sector. The primary language spoken is English, with the indigenous language of Ikwerre also being used. Additionally, Pidgin English is widely spoken across all demographic groups, as is the case in most areas of the country. The city of Port Harcourt was designated in honour of Lord Lewis Harcourt, who served as the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1913. Port Harcourt, also referred to as 'PH City', is a highly attractive destination in Nigeria. Port Harcourt was established in 1912. Port Harcourt had a population of approximately 1.2 million individuals in 2016.

**3.3 Research Design**

 This study adopts the survey research design. It involved a collection of information from a sample of individuals through their responses to questions. This type of research design allows for a variety of methods to recruit participants, collect data, and utilize various methods of instrumentation. Survey research can use quantitative research strategies (e.g., using questionnaires with numerically rated items), qualitative research strategies (e.g., using open-ended questions), or both strategies (i.e., mixed methods). This design is often used to describe and explore human behavior, surveys are therefore frequently used in social and psychological research.

 Survey research has been used for many years to gather information from people and groups. It can involve anything from casually approaching people on the corner of the street and asking a few pointed questions about their preferences and behaviors to doing a more thorough investigation using a number of trustworthy and credible tools (Antoniadou, 2017). Public opinion polls and commercial or political studies of consumer behavior are frequent instances of less rigorous surveys. Historically, large-scale population-based data gathering has been a component of survey research. The major goal of doing research in the form of a survey is to acquire information identifying the characteristics of a large sample of individuals of interest in a reasonably short amount of time (Ponto, 2015). Questionnaires, which are administered, are designed to gather information for programs or events aimed at a specific community or group or to identify the demographic characteristics of individuals. In more recent years, survey research has evolved into a rigorous method of conducting research, with strategies that have been scientifically tested that specify who to include (a representative sample), what to distribute, and how to distribute it (the survey method), as well as when to launch the survey and follow up with non-responders (to minimize non-response error).

**3.4 Population of the study**

Study population is a subset of the target population from which the sample is actually selected. The population of this study constitute of residents of Port-harcourt.

**3.5 Sample size technique and determination**

 A sample size is defined as the representative of a given population. The convenience sampling method was employed in determining the actual sample size of this study. Convenience sampling is a simple and easy way to get information compared to other sampling methods. Most of the time, simple and easy go well together. But you need to know what it is so you know when to use it and when not to. It is a type of sampling that doesn’t depend on chance and is often used in research studies. This sampling technique involves choosing people who are easy for the researcher to reach and get in touch with. Therefore, the sample size for this study approximately is 50.

**3.6 Research Instrument and Administration**

 A questionnaire used as a veritable instrument utilized in this study. The study participants were enrolled in a group survey, while a personal delivery method was employed in administering the instrument. In addition, data can be collected through the use of surveys and questionnaires, which are often administered in conjunction with in-depth interviews. According to Corona (2017), the kinds of questions that are asked in questionnaires should be designed to put the participants at ease, much like interviews and other approaches that are analogous to questionnaires. Furthermore, questions should be posed in a manner that does not pass judgement on the respondent in order to prevent creating the impression in the minds of the participants that their way of life, views, or behaviors are being evaluated. Because they usually deal with sensitive themes like perspectives on languages and how individuals identify themselves linguistically, questions should be asked innocently or incorporated into lengthier dialogues, as proposed by Corona (2017). When it comes to the analysis of the data, there are a variety of other characteristics that could be important in addition to the information on attitudes. Some of these characteristics include age, educational attainment, family circumstances, country of origin, location of residence, school attended, and a great deal of other things. This is of the utmost importance when engaging in a discussion on the context of the research with a group of speakers or students.

**3.7 Method of data collection**

 Data used for this study was obtained using the research instrument defined above. The questionnaire was divided into five parts with each part capturing different type of data relevant for this study. The study was structure in line with the four-scale Likert method. Also, the researcher ensured that informed consent was obtained from the participants before enrolling in the study, though orally. However, participants had the full right to exit the survey if they are no longer interested or considers the study irrelevant to them. Participation was purely voluntary.

**3.8 Method of data analysis**

 This study employed the percentage frequency counts to analyze the questionnaire responses and proffer answers to the research questions. Insights from the analysis were expressed using tables and charts. The process of transforming, analysing, and filtering raw data in order to acquire helpful, relevant information that aids strategic decision is referred to as data analysis. Data analysis procedure provides insightful observations and data, which are typically provided in the form of charts, visuals, tables, and graphs, and which decrease the risks connected with the decision-making process.

**3.9 Ethical consideration**

 The researcher ensured that this study was authorized by the institution to be conducted. The privacy of the respondents were protected and their consent were obtained prior to enrolling any participants in the survey. Participants were free to exit the study at will as participation was purely voluntary.

**CHAPTER FOUR**

**DATA PRESENTATION AND ANALYSIS**

**Table 4.2: Demographic data of respondents**

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Demographic information** | **Frequency** | **percent** |
| **Gender**Male |  |  |
| 24 | 48% |
| Female | 26 | 52% |
| Age |  |  |
| 20-30 | 7 | 14% |
| 30-40 | 24 | 48% |
| 41-50 | 19 | 38% |
| 51+ | 0 | 0% |
| **Education** |  |  |
| HND/BSC | 14 | 28% |
| MASTERS | 25 | 50% |
| PHD | 11 | 22% |
| **Marital Status** |  |  |
| Single | 8 | 16% |
| Married | 28 | 56% |
| Separated | 6 | 12% |
| Divorced | 7 | 14% |
| Widowed | 00 | 00% |

**Source: Field Survey, 2024**

**4.2 ANSWERING RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

**Question 1:** How do Port-Harcourt residents perceive Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex?

**Table 4.3:** Respondent on question 1

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| Positive | 30 | 60 |
| Negative | 11 | 22 |
| Undecided | 9 | 18 |
| **Total** | **50** | **100** |

**Field Survey, 2024**

From the responses obtained as expressed in the table above, 60% of the respondents said had a positive perception towards Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex. A total of 22% of the respondents had a negative perception towards Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex, while the remaining 18% were undecided.

**Question 2:** How do Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex couple affect Catholic membership?

**Table 4.4:** Respondent on question 2

|  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Frequency** | **Percentage** |
| Catholic membership has not decreased. | 28 | 56 |
| Catholic membership has decreased. | 11 | 22 |
| Undecided | 11 | 22 |
| **Total** | **50** | **100** |

**Field Survey, 2024**

From the responses obtained as expressed in the table above, 56% of the respondents opined that Catholic membership has not decreased owing to Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex couple. A total of 22% of the respondents opined that Catholic membership has decreased owing to Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex couple, while the remaining 22% were undecided.

**TEST OF HYPOTHESES**

**Hypothesis One**

**Table 4.6:** There is a negative public perception of Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex couple.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Fo** | **Fe** | **Fo - Fe** | **(Fo - Fe)2** | **(Fo˗-Fe)2/Fe** |
| Yes | 30 | 16.66 | 13.34 | 177.9 | 10.6 |
| No | 11 | 16.66 | -5.66 | 32.0 | 1.9 |
| Undecided | 9 | 16.66 | -7.66 | 58.6 | 3.5 |
| **Total** | **50** | **50** |  |  | **16** |

**Source: Extract from Contingency Table**

 Degree of freedom = (r-1) (c-1)

 (3-1) (2-1)

 (2) (1)

 = 2

At 0.05 significant level and at a calculated degree of freedom, the critical table value is 5.991.

**Findings**

The calculated X2 = 31.9 and is greater than the table value of X2 at 0.05 significant level which is 5.991.

**Decision**

Since the X2 calculated value is greater than the critical table value that is 16 is greater than 5.991, the Null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis which states that there is a positive public perception of Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex is accepted.

**Hypothesis Two**

**Table 4.7:** There is no decline Catholic membership owing to Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex couple.

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Options** | **Fo** | **Fe** | **Fo - Fe** | **(Fo - Fe)2** | **(Fo˗-Fe)2/Fe** |
| Yes | 28 | 16.66 | 11.34 | 128.5 | 7.71 |
| No | 11 | 16.66 | -5.66 | 32.0 | 1.9 |
| Undecided | 11 | 16.66 | -5.66 | 32.0 | 1.9 |
| **Total** | **50** | **50** |  |  | **11.51** |

**Source: Extract from Contingency Table**

 Degree of freedom = (r-1) (c-1)

 (3-1) (2-1)

 (2) (1)

 = 2

At 0.05 significant level and at a calculated degree of freedom, the critical table value is 5.991.

**Findings**

The calculated X2 = 22.9 and is greater than the table value of X2 at 0.05 significant level which is 5.991.

**Decision**

Since the X2 calculated value is greater than the critical table value that is 11.51 is greater than 5.991, the Null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis which states that is a decline Catholic membership owing to Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex couple is accepted.

**CHAPTER FIVE**

**SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

**5.1 Introduction**

This chapter summarizes the findings on Port-Harcourt residents perception of pope Francis’ blessings approval for same-sex couples. The chapter consists of summary of the study, conclusions, and recommendations.

**5.2 Summary of the Study**

In this study, our focus was on Port-Harcourt residents perception of pope Francis’ blessings approval for same-sex couples. The study was specifically set to find out how the public perceive Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex couples who request for it. It also assessed if Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex would lead to a decline in Catholic membership. The study adopted the survey research design and randomly enrolled participants in the study. A total of 50 responses were validated from the enrolled participants where all respondent are residents of Port-harcourt, Rivers state.

**5.3 Conclusions**

In the light of the analysis carried out, the following conclusions were drawn

1. Pope Francis’ blessings approval has caused public uproar in the Catholic church.
2. There is a mixed public perception regarding Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex couples.
3. Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex has not lead to a decline in Catholic membership.

**5.4 Recommendation**

The issue of same-sex marriage is regarded as a moral topic but when discussed under religion, it becomes a high moral topic. Religion differs from morality or a moral system in that it includes stories about events in the past, usually about supernatural beings, that are used to explain or justify the behavior that it prohibits or requires. Sometimes there is no distinction made between a moral code and a code of conduct put forward by a religion, and there is often a considerable overlap in the conduct prohibited or required by religion and that prohibited or required by morality. But religions may prohibit or require more than is prohibited or required by guides to behavior that are explicitly labeled as moral guides, and may allow some behavior that is prohibited by morality. Sometimes morality is regarded as the code of conduct that is put forward by religion, but even when this is not the case, morality is thought by many to need some religious explanation and justification. However, just as with law, some religious practices and precepts are criticized on moral grounds, e.g., discrimination on the basis of race, gender, or sexual orientation. Morality is only a guide to conduct, whereas religion is always more than this. This study recommends that morality should be the guiding principle for approving blessing of same-sex couple. This is owing to the ripple effect this will have on the Catholic and non-Catholic Christian adherents.

**REFERENCES**

Aljazeera (2023). Pope Francis allows blessings for same-sex couples under certain conditions. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2023/12/18/vatican-approves-blessings-for-same-sex-couples-under-certain-conditions>

APnews (2023). Pope approves blessings for same-sex couples that must not resemble marriage. <https://apnews.com/article/vatican-lgbtq-pope-bfa5b71fa79055626e362936e739d1d8>

Babst, Gordon A. 2002. Liberal Constitutionalism, Marriage, and Sexual Orientation: A Contemporary Case for Disestablishment. New York: Peter Lang.

Babst, Gordon A., Emily R. Gill, and Jason Pierceson, eds. 2009. Moral Argument, Religion, and Same Sex Marriage: Advancing the Public Good. Lanham:Lexington Books.

Bachu, Amara and Martin O'Connell. 2002. Fertility of American Women. Current Population Reports: U.S. Census Bureau. < http://www.census.gov/prod/2000pubs/p20-526.pdf> (2010, Apr. 27).

Baird, Robert M., and Stuart E. Rosenbaum, eds. 2004. Same-Sex Marriage: The Moral and Legal Debate. New York: Prometheus Books.

BBC NEWS (2023). <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-67751600>

Bowers, Attorney General of Georgia v. Hardwick et. al., 478 U.S. 186 (1986). <http://scholar.google.com/scholar\_case?case=14901730125647575103&q=bowers+v.+hardwick&hl=en&as\_sdt=2002&as\_vis=1> (2010, Apr. 22).

Cahill, Sean. 2004. Same-Sex Marriage in the United States: A Focus on the Facts. Lanham: Lexington Books.

CNN News (2023). Pope Francis authorizes blessings for same-sex couples. <https://edition.cnn.com/2023/12/18/europe/pope-francis-same-sex-couples-blessing-intl/index.html>

Dupuis, Martin. 2002. Same-Sex Marriage: Legal Mobilization, and the Politics of Law. New York: Peter Lang.

Gill, Emily R. 2009. "The Religion Clauses and Same-Sex Marriage." In Babst, Gill, and Pierceson, eds., Moral Argument, Religion, and Same-Sex Marriage. Lanham: Lexington Books.

Henley, Kenneth. 2008. "The Cheshire Cat: Same-Sex Marriage, Religion, and Coercion by Exclusion." In Reidy and Riker, eds., Coercion and the State. New York: Springer.

Hull, Kathleen E. 2006. Same-Sex Marriage: The Cultural Politics of Love and Law. New York: Cambridge University Press.

Kahn, Yoel H. 1989. "The Kedushah of Homosexual Relations." In Sullivan, ed., Same-Sex Marriage: Pro and Con A Reader. New York: Vintage Books.

Knight, Robert H. 1994. "How Domestic Partnerships and "Gay Marriage" Threaten the Family." In Baird and Rosenbaum, eds., Same-Sex Marriage: the Moral and Legal Debate. New York: Prometheus

New York Times (2023). Pope Francis Allows Priests to Bless Same-Sex Couples. <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/18/world/europe/pope-gay-lesbian-same-sex-blessing.html>

Philip P. (2023). Vatican approves blessings for same-sex couples in landmark ruling. <https://www.reuters.com/world/vatican-approves-blessings-same-sex-couples-under-certain-conditions-2023-12-18/>

Punchng (2023). Nigerians divided as bishops kick against blessing same-sex-marriage. <https://punchng.com/nigerians-divided-as-bishops-kick-against-blessing-same-sex-marriage/>

Vatican News (2023). Doctrinal declaration opens possibility of blessing couples in irregular situations. <https://www.vaticannews.va/en/vatican-city/news/2023-12/fiducia-supplicans-doctrine-faith-blessing-irregular-couples.html>

**Questionnaire**

Kindly tick an option that best describes your opinion.

**Gender**

Male ( )

Female ( )

**Age**

20-30 ( )

30-40 ( )

41-50 ( )

51+ ( )

**Education**

HND/BSC ( )

MASTERS ( )

PHD ( )

**Marital Status**

Single ( )

Married ( )

Separated ( )

Divorced ( )

Widowed ( )

**Part B**

What is your perception towards Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex?

Positive ( )

Negative ( )

Neutral ( )

Do you think Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex couple affect Catholic membership?

Yes, it does. ( )

No, it does not. ( )

Do you think Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex couple has aroused tension within the Christian communities?

Yes, it has ( )

No, it has not ( )

Do you think Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex couple may lead to potential Fractions among Catholic adherents?

Yes, it will. ( )

No, it won’t ( )

How do you think that non-catholics will perceive Pope Francis blessing approval for same-sex couple?

Anti-godly ( )

Godly ( )