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Legal and Political Framing of Homophobia in two Namibian Newspapers since Independence: An Appraisal Theoretic Analytical Approach

Abstract

The most abhorred population group in Africa (and by extension in Namibia) is the LGBTQI community. Non-heterosexuality is largely condemned in most African countries for political, religious, cultural and legal reasons. Couched within Appraisal Theory, the paper examines how linguistic resources are exploited in manners that evince how homophobia is politically and legally framed in two Namibian daily newspapers – *The Namibian* and *New Era*. For example, while the world has reacted to the realities of the departure from the traditional binary definitional parameters of sexualities and sexual identities, Namibia still remains largely homophobic, together with at least 47 other African countries still criminalising homosexuality. In 2001, for example, a video documentary quotes the then President of Namibia, Dr Sam Nujoma, expressing the sentiments that “Lesbians and homosexuality, these we condemn – we reject them. In Namibia there will be no lesbian, no homosexuality” (Blecher, 2001). In August 2005, Minister of Home Affairs, Theopolina Mushelenga, publicly denounced the human rights of Namibian gays and lesbians and also asserted that “homosexuals were responsible for the HIV and AIDS pandemic” (Lorway, 2006, p. 436). Homosexuality has generally, thus, been regarded as an uncultural, unAfrican, uncommon and unacceptable phenomenon in Africa, including Namibia. In Namibia, as in other African countries, the penalty for homosexual behaviour is imprisonment. Many Namibian political leaders have publicly expressed that homosexual rights go against the legal, religious and cultural values of the country. There are political and legal imports to the rejection of homosexual behaviour patterns in Namibia as evinced in news reporting cultures. Homosexuality in Namibian political and legal discourses is largely imagined as either an ‘unAfrican’ behaviour or attributed to western influences on Africa. Linguistic expression by many Namibian politicians also evince a revulsion of homosexuality.

Keywords

Namibia, Homophobia, Framing, Political, Legal, Appraisal, Newspapers

1 Introduction: Homosexuality and homophobia in Africa

In understanding the context in which news reports on the LGBTQI community are framed in Namibian newspapers, it is imperative to contextualise the treatment of the population group in Africa. Within postcolonial Africa, homophobia has been well established. Evinced through the political positions assumed by many African leaders, it is largely restricted through the legal frameworks operational within many African countries (where in most instances, because of the lack of laws directly criminalising homosexuality, remnants of colonial laws such as sodomy laws are used instead to criminalise homosexuality). There prevails within the African continent, a politically, religiously, legally and most importantly culturally sanctioned ostracisation of individuals and groups of people imagined as sexually going against African cultural beliefs, norms and values. The most detested population group in most African nations in general is the LGBTQI community (Winkler, 2019). Despite the world at large transitioning and accepting the death of the traditional binary characterisations of sexual identities and accepting their attendant fluidity, the Africa continent by and large continues to remain largely homophobic. This can be observed from the fact

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that, with the exception of South Africa, which has recently legalised same sex unions, at least 47 out of the 54 African countries, including Namibia, have laws that still criminalise homosexuality and homosexual activities (Reddy, 2001; Van Klinken & Chitando, 2016). The commonest reason for the rejection of homosexual tendencies by Africa has been because it is considered unnatural, unAfrican and uncultural (Reddy, 2001). In some quarters it has also been viewed as “uncommon and unacceptable phenomenon in Africa and other countries the world over” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 13).

These homophobic perceptions, largely sanctioned by religious, cultural, legal and political positions have also permeated into the mainstream media and in the process informed the ideological positioning from which the population group is framed in news reports (The Big Debate, 2013). For example, on a global level, the death penalty for homosexual tendencies is enforced in countries such as Northern Nigeria, Mauritania and Iran (Van Klinken & Chitando, 2016). In several African nations including Liberia, Kenya, Malawi, Uganda, Tanzania, Namibia, Sierra Leone, Zimbabwe and Zambia, homosexual behaviour is punishable by different ranges of prison sentences (Tweneboah, 2018). Despite threats, largely by the western world to withdraw aid to especially African countries that seem to restrict or stifle the rights of homosexuals (Bompani & Valois, 2017), many African countries have remained resolute in their stance to refuse to include or even consider LGBTQI rights as human rights. An example of such would be the signing of, and subsequent promulgation of the Anti-Homosexuality Bill into law in Uganda by President Yoweri Museveni in May 2023, which is still considered to be among the harshest anti-LGBTQI laws in the world.

This disdain for the LGBTQI community has largely been evinced through the verbal attacks on the population group by many of Africa’s leaders. The most vocal being the late Zimbabwean former president, Robert Gabriel Mugabe. Mugabe’s hatred for especially gays and lesbians, is demonstrated through the vitriol with which he, in November 2011, disparaged them as “worse than pigs and dogs” (Gunda, 2009). He is also on record as having further rationalised this position by declaring that, “[w]e equally reject to prescribe new rights that are contrary to our values, norms, traditions and beliefs. We are not gays” (Hoffbauer, 2019). Mugabe was however, not alone as such homophobic positions have also been reiterated elsewhere by a host of African leaders – in Uganda, Kenya, Zambia, Malawi and Namibia. In 2015, for instance, former Kenyan president, Uhuru Kenyatta told former United States of America president, Barack Obama that gay rights were a non-issue in Kenya. Further reiterating this during a 2018 CNN interview with Christian Amanpour, saying:

I want to be very clear. I will not engage in a subject that is of no major importance to the majority of the people and the Republic of Kenya. This is not an issue as you would want to put it, of human rights. This is an issue of society - of our base as a culture, as a people regardless of which community you come from... (CNN, 2018).

In Uganda, president Yoweri Museveni is on record denigrating homosexuals as “disgusting and unnatural”.

They are disgusting. What sort of people are they? I never knew what they were doing. I have been told recently what they do is terrible. Disgusting...I was regarding it as an inborn problem, genetic distortion. That was my argument. But now our scientists have knocked this one out. (CNN, 2016)

In Zambia, former president Edgar Lungu, is also on public record as equating the sexual orientations of LGBTQI persons as “vices”. Lungu on many public occasions campaigned for the arrest and indictment of all persons suspected of, and caught engaging in homosexual activities, which he said were not only illegal in Zambia but also flew in the face of the country’s “cultures and values as a Christian nation” (Van Klinken, 2017). In Rwanda, confronted with questions of whether the LGBTQI persons were part of the future planning, president Paul Kagame was non-committal and is quoted as saying, “It has not been our problem and we don’t intend to make it a problem. We are struggling with all kinds of problems...So this far – as I said – for us, I don’t want to make it a problem.” (Kigali Today, 2016)

In Malawi, the late former president, Bingu wa Mutharika proposed to criminalise and ban homosexuality and associated behaviours in Malawi (Price, 2010). The depth of intolerance for LGBTQI persons was largely demonstrated in 2012 when a Malawian court convicted and sentenced to 14 years' imprisonment with hard labour, two men for conducting a mock homosexual marriage ceremony. What drew the attention of the world was the length of the sentence, which was argued to have been even harsher than sentences typically given to even murderers (Mbaya, 2014). Joyce Banda, who replaced waMutharika, faced with the threat of a dying economy arising from the aid withdrawal, allegedly "ultimately bulked under pressure" (The Herald, 2014). There is thus, a documented backlash by the western world on countries that seem to resist the recognition of LGBTQI rights as fundamental human rights.

2 Homosexuality and homophobia in Namibia

As with many African countries, homosexuality is also loathed in Namibia. While homophobia in Namibia is also culturally, politically and religiously sanctioned it is, most importantly, legally outlawed. Of course, as with most African countries discussed above, there is no law in existence in Namibia that criminalises homosexuality. In the absence of such, Apartheid-era sodomy laws are used to convict and sentence alleged offenders (Brown, 2019). As such Namibians sympathetic to the LGBTQI cause, have blamed the homophobia within Namibia on the "continued existence of old apartheid laws that discriminate against sexual minorities", believing that "homosexuality is still illegal in Namibia due to the old laws from the apartheid period". In a news report titled 'Work in progress to phase out discriminatory laws' (New Era, 20 March 2012) the journalistic voice propositions that most of the draconian laws used to subjugate against homosexual persons are remnants of the Apartheid (colonial) era in the country – a period during which Namibia was under the colonial administration of South Africa. The news report is rife with descriptions of such laws as 'archaic laws from the colonial period', '[laws] with little essence to [Namibia's] new democratic dispensation' and 'infringing on the rights of some of the citizens and residents'. This is a clear demonstration that perhaps the assumed national homophobia is not so national after all.

Important to underscore here is the fact that the homophobia in Namibia is also largely politically sanctioned. Since Namibia's independence in 1990, there has been no consistent political will to acknowledge the existence of the LGBTQI populations. Brown (2019, p. 93) observes in this regard that, "political homophobia has created (homo)sexuality to be a moral concern by couching homosexuality as a threat to what is traditionally Namibian". In 2001, for example, a video documentary records former Namibian president, Sam Nujoma, during celebrations of the birthday of SWAPO, expressing that: "Lesbians and homosexuality, these we condemn – we reject them. In Namibia there will be no lesbian, no homosexuality" (Blecher, 2001).

Subsequently, on the 19th of March 2001, Nujoma further reiterated these calls and went even further to call for the detainment, incarceration and deportation of any persons suspected of practicing gay or lesbian behaviours. Nujoma made these calls while officially addressing the student assembly at the University of Namibia (Lorway, 2006). These sentiments were also echoed in public spaces by many senior politicians and ministers in Namibia including former Home Affairs Minister, Jerry Ekandjo and former Finance Minister, Helmut Angula. Angula is described by Brown (2019, p. 94) as having,

...joined the crusade of Nujoma's popular mythologies tainting homosexuality as social disease, unAfrican, a Western incitement to corrupt African nations and some even called for the elimination of homosexual people from the surface of Namibia. Helmut Angula ... lambasted "homosexuality is an unnatural behavioural disorder which is alien to the African culture.

This signals, in communion with sentiments from other African countries, a legally, culturally and politically sanctioned proliferation of homophobia. It also signals the lack of political will and desire to address the realities of the existence of LGBTQI populations in Namibia and Africa in general.

Embedded within this ideological position is a now widely shared disposition within African nations to blame the western world for the existence of homosexuality in Africa.

The other two Namibian presidents whose tenures ran simultaneously after Nujoma's have also not done much in terms of addressing the concerns of the so-called sexual minorities – those not exactly aligned to heteronormative sexual identities – the LGBTQI community. Hipikefunye Pohamba (who replaced Nujoma) and Hage Geingob (who replaced Pohamba and is current Namibian president) have largely preferred silence and silencing any dissent from sexual minorities. They have opted to avoid making overt verbalisations for or against homosexuality – a move that is akin to implicitly endorsing the position assumed earlier on by their predecessor, Sam Nujoma. In a rare moment, immediately after his election to the presidency, when asked about homosexuality in Namibia, Geingob replied “those are not the issues we are talking about, those are luxuries” – a non-committal position not new with African political leadership.

Another example of further political positioning of homosexuals is when, addressing a national commemoration gathering in August of 2005, the then Deputy Minister of Immigration and Home Affairs, Theopolina Mushelenga, “publicly denounced the human rights of Namibian gays and lesbians and also asserted that homosexuals were responsible for the HIV and AIDS pandemic” (Lorway, 2006, p. 436). These overtly anti-gay perceptions implicitly and explicitly associate homosexuality with the spread of HIV and AIDS as well as the decay of the social and moral fabrics of the Namibian nation - state (Herek, 1997).

3 The mass media environment in Namibia

Namibia's mass media landscape is characterised by plurality and diversity. It almost characterises the ideal democratic space in which press freedom and plurality are realised. There is a sizeable number of newspapers in Namibia, publishing in different languages such as German, English and Afrikaans. However, the focus of the study is the examination of the manners in which appraisal resources are used in manners that evince both the ideological positioning of the news reports (by extension, the journalistic voice) as well as demonstrate the political and legal framing of homosexuality and homophobia within Namibia as reflected in the reporting on the LGBTQI population in the two largest English dailies in Namibia – *The Namibian* and *New Era*.

(a) The Namibian newspaper

With a daily circulation of over 40 000 copies, *The Namibian* newspaper is considered Namibia's largest daily. Established in 1985, and privately owned by the Namibia Media Trust, the newspaper has over the years managed to keep a steady readership and currently boasts of both a print and an online presence. Over the years, the newspaper has been subjected to violent attacks, especially during the pre-independence era as it was overtly critical of the then Apartheid colonial government. Post-independence, the newspaper has continued to be one of the biggest critics of the government and government policies. Largely funded through donors and advertisements, the newspaper is supposedly founded on the ideal of furthering the principles of press freedom and freedom of expression in Namibia (Shihepo, 2021).

(b) New Era newspaper

The *New Era* is owned by the state and was established in 1991. With a daily circulation of approximately 8 000 copies, it also has both print and online presence. Its readership is largely constituted of people aged between 18 and 42, the majority of whom are urbanites. The publication was established with the chief goal of providing counternarratives to reports in *The Namibian* and prioritise the favourable coverage of the state (Kivikuru, 2013). Sympathetic to the government, who enjoy editorial sympathy, the newspaper popularises government policies.

4 Theory: The Framing and Appraisal theoretic frameworks

The study draws analytical insights from Framing Theory (Entman, 1993; 2007) and Appraisal Theory (Martin & Rose, 2003, White, 1998). Within Framing Theory, “framing” is defined “as the process of culling a few elements of perceived reality and assembling a narrative that highlights connections among them to promote a particular interpretation” (Entman, 2007, p. 167). Framing is important in explaining the ways in which the media subjectively chooses which news items to report and the factors – cultural, political or otherwise that shape the ‘framing’ of such news. In discussing framing and its manifestation in news reporting and journalistic practice, several scholars (Entman, 1993; Sabao, 2013, 2016; Sabao, Magadza & Chikara, 2021; Sabao & Visser, 2015; Weaver, 2007) have expressed its importance in explaining how the media contextualises news reports and events. The news does not occur in a vacuum but instead in a context, which context (coupled with other news external convictions, beliefs, vices and subjectivities) shape the angle from which the news is reported, read and interpreted. For our current concerns, the frames within which the news reports are analysed are the political and legal environments within Namibia since independence in 1990.

On the other hand, Appraisal Theory “is concerned with evaluation – the kinds of attitudes that are negotiated in a text, the strength of the feelings involved and the ways in which values are sourced and readers aligned” (Martin & Rose, 2003, p. 22). Authors/speakers employ the resources of Appraisal for negotiating their social relationships; in other words, how they feel about things and people involved in the discourse and this is evidenced through linguistic choice – the choices of linguistic resources they choose to express themselves. Within the subsystem of Appraisal are further subsystems of ATTITUDE, ENGAGEMENT and GRADUATION. Within the subsystem of ATTITUDE there are further subdomains of AFFECT, JUDGMENT and APPRECIATION. These are the Appraisal resources through which we analyse the proliferation of authorial evaluative language and discern authorial ‘stance’ and subjectivities.

As a subsystem of ATTITUDE, ‘JUDGMENT’ is concerned with the assessment of human behaviour based on a set of established social norms and expectations. It is the evaluation of human behaviour with respect to social norms (White, 2002). “It deals with attitudes towards behaviour, which we admire or criticise, praise or condemn” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 42). It is realised in expressions that a speaker/writer makes attitudinal evaluations of human behaviour based on social expectations and often this is construed through ‘judgments’ based on legality/illegality, morality/immorality, politeness/impoliteness as these are configured within a cultural, institutional or social context. ‘APPRECIATION’ concerns itself with the examination and analysis of linguistic ‘resources that construe values of things including natural phenomena and semiosis’ (Martin & White, 2005) specifically focusing on non-humans. It is ‘the evaluation of objects by reference to aesthetic principles and other systems of social value’ (White, 1998, 2006, 2008).

Lastly, AFFECT resources are concerned with the construal of “emotional reaction to events, for example, feelings of shock, elation and so on” (Martin & White, 2005, p. 38). According to White (2005), ‘the general outlines of the grammar and semantics of AFFECT are well understood. “AFFECT” is concerned with emotional response and disposition, and is typically realised through mental processes of reaction’ (White, 2002, p. 6). In essence, our analysis of the resources of AFFECT are concerned with the identification of instances of both explicit (inscribed) and implicit (invoked) instances of a writer’s/speaker’s emotional reaction to the subject/events of their text. This can also cover the emotional reactions of the sources within the text (attributed text) as ‘observed by the writer.’ In the analysis of the occurrence of attitudinal evaluations within the texts, occurring as both explicit (inscribed) and implicit (invoked) evaluations, the study adopts the analytical key proposed by Tran and Thomson (2008, p. 55) which is reproduced below;

<p>KEY</p> <p><u>bold underlining</u> = inscribed (explicit) negative attitude</p> <p>bold = implicit (implied) negative attitude</p> <p><i><u>italics underlined</u></i> = inscribed positive attitude</p> <p><i>italics</i> = invoked positive attitude</p> <p>boxed material = heterogloss (material attributed to an external source)</p> <p>The subtype of the attitude is indicated in square brackets immediately following the relevant span of text:</p> <p>[j] = judgement (positive/negative assessment of human behaviour in terms of social norms)</p> <p>[ap] = appreciation (positive/negative assessment of objects, artefacts, events and states of affairs in terms of systems of aesthetics and other systems of social valuation)</p> <p>[af] = affect (positive/negative emotional response); 1st af = first person or authorial affect; 3rd af = observed affect, i.e. the reporter describing the emotional responses of third parties.</p> <p>Kinds of attribution</p> <p><ack> = ‘acknowledgement’: material is attributed to some external source by means of quotation and related formulations. Nothing in the lexicogrammar of the words by which the quotation is framed indicates where the writer stands with respect to propositions being presented – i.e. there is no overt indication of the writer favouring or disfavouring the attributed material. It is, however, possible that the writer’s position vis-à-vis the attributed material will be indicated elsewhere in the text. Attribution is typically via a formulation involving reporting verbs – for example, “X stated that...”, “X argues that...”, “X believes that...” or through adjuncts such as “according to X...”</p> <p><end> = ‘endorsement’: material is attributed to an external source – as is the case with acknowledgement – but the framing is such as to indicate that the writer holds the material as true or valid – for example by means of ‘factive’ reporting such as ‘to prove’, ‘to show’ or ‘to demonstrate’;</p> <p><dist> = ‘distancing’: material is attributed to an external source – as in the case of acknowledgement – but the framing is such as to indicate that the writer holds the material to be still open to question, as not yet proved. Distancing in English is typically achieved by the use of the reporting verb ‘to claim’ and by the use of so called ‘scare quotes’.</p> <p>*** There is a notion of ‘proclamation’ <proc> which Van and Thomson (2008) describe as those instances when the reporter makes overt interventions into the text which “present themselves as challenging or dismissing some alternative viewpoints.”</p>

Table 1: Comparative analytical analysis

5 Legal and political framing of homosexuality and homophobia in *The Namibian* and *New Era*

This section provides analyses of news reports on homosexuality in *The Namibian* and *New Era*. In selecting news reports for analysis, search words “LGBTQI, gay, lesbian, homosexual and queer” were used to search for news articles within the electronic databases of the newspapers. This yielded a sizeable number of news reports (392). The news reports were further decomposed into own copy (news reports by journalists from the Namibian newspapers which reported on the LGBTQI population within the Namibian context) and foreign copy (news reports copied or received from sources external to the newspapers, such as agencies and foreign correspondents). This was done in order to eliminate news reports on other countries and contexts outside Namibia which do not fall within the scope of this study. A pool of 119 news reports remained. These were subjected to a further exclusion criterion that sought to select only those news reports that evinced political and legal frames. Most of the news reports within the 119 evinced other frames from which LGBTQI persons were framed. These included the cultural, health vector (projecting LGBTQI persons as disease spreaders and a nuisance) and religious framing – leaving a corpus of 16 news reports analysed herein below, which speak directly to the concerns of the current enquiry.

6 Legal framing of homosexuality/homophobia in the two Namibian newspapers

This section examines the manners in which the law has been, and is being used as a means to proliferate homophobia in Namibia as evinced through the linguistic resources that the news reports contain – and which occur from both the journalistic voice as well as through attribution. As shall be observed here and in further analyses, sometimes it is very difficult to limit the analyses of evaluative resources to singular words or phrases. Instead, in some instances, whole chunks of linguistic data will make more vivid the implications of particular resources within them and are hence thus analysed/marked as such. The law has generally been used as an instrument for both the criminalisation as well as ostracisation of homosexuals. In some cases, as will be observed in the analysis, the law has also been used as a means for proffering sympathy towards the LGBTQI population group. It is important to note that while there were several other news reports on the LGBTQI in the two newspapers since Namibia's independence, the analysis only focuses on own copy news reports which speak specifically directly to the Namibian legal and political systems and society. There were quite a sizeable number of foreign copy news reports also published in the two newspapers. However, these do not have a direct appeal to the concerns of the current enquiry. Below I offer analyses of the news reports from the *New Era* and *The Namibian* respectively. Below them will follow a brief comparative analysis of the framing of homosexuality and homophobia within the newspapers demonstrated by the analyses of appraisal resources conducted.

6.1 Legal framing of homosexuality and homophobia in the *New Era*

In the news report titled 'Ostracised, Isolated, The "odddy" Demands Recognition: Gays, Lesbians To End Silence' (8-14 June 1995), the journalistic voice revisits the well-established homophobia in Namibian society which views homosexuality through the eyes of 'othering' as referenced by the description of homosexuals as the "odddy" in the heading. The journalistic voice, through negative 1st AFFECT (1st person or authorial emotional response) resources evinces sympathetic overtones towards the LGBTQI population by describing them as '**homosexuals in Namibia are a hounded lot** [1st af]', who, '**like secret cults are living secret lives** [1st af]'. There are also sympathies from externally expressed resources of negative 3rd AFFECT (the emotional responses of third parties as described by the author) in which the population group is described as '**live in fear and ostracization** [3rd af]' and '**fear public ridicule as well inviting legal wrath against themselves** [3rd af]'. The external voice of the Attorney General, cited in the news report, reinforces the legally sanctioned homophobia through the negative JUDGEMENT (positive/negative assessment of human behaviour in terms of social norms) resources, in which homosexual behaviour is described as '**opposed to our culture and is un-African** [j]'. Finally, through negative APPRECIATION resources, '**the law is not on their side** [ap]' the authorial/journalistic voice provides evaluations of the legal challenges that confront LGBTQI persons through the criminalisation of their behaviour.

The news report, 'S/African Judge with AIDS Wants Justice for Millions' (19 November 2001), reports on a visiting South African Judge who publicly expresses negative evaluations towards the homophobic laws in Namibia. The news report, through authorial positive JUDGEMENT evaluations of the Judge as, '*leading critic of the AIDS policy* [j]' and '*castigated his government's policy* [j]' provides a sympathetic evaluative position towards the LGBTQI population. It exposes the inequalities that characterise AIDS policies in many countries, especially how they exclude homosexuals. Through positive JUDGEMENT resources, the journalistic voice hails the visiting South African Judge for his courage to challenge publicly the dissimulatory laws in Namibia.

'Work in progress to phase out discriminatory laws' (20 March 2012), is a news report in which, through both inscriptions and evocations, the journalistic voice aided by attribution (evaluative material from external sources) offers a criticism of Namibian laws as discriminatory against the LGBTQI group. Through negative 1st AFFECT resources, it describes Namibian laws as '**infringing on the rights of some of the citizens and residents** [1st af]' and further offers negative APPRECIATION evaluations of the laws as antiquated through the resources, '**archaic laws from the colonial period** [ap]' and '**laws**

with little essence to her new democratic dispensation [ap]'. In castigating the laws and their sanctioning of homophobia, the journalistic voice in the process, is sympathetic to the population group who are discriminated against by such laws.

The journalistic voice in the news report, 'Journalist claims he was fired for being gay' (20 November 2015), provides sympathy for the LGBTQI population by exposing the legally sanctioned homophobia through discrimination in the workplace. The news report provides positive 1st AFFECT resources that evince sympathy towards the LGBTQI population group by challenging the discrimination through '*sexual orientation of people does not impact on their ability to perform work* [1st af]', '*one's sexual orientation does not affect one's competency in delivering the work* [1st af]' and '*sexual orientation has nothing to do with the capabilities and skills of a person* [1st af]'. These signal an emotional appeal for the laws which are described through negative JUDGEMENT resources towards the government as laws makers that the treatment of homosexuals in Namibia, '**it's a direct human rights violation** [j]' and that '**government and stakeholders should take up to uphold everybody's human rights** [j]'. The government here is implicitly challenged to promulgate inclusive laws, in the process, this is a direct affront on the draconian nature of the current laws.

'SADC pinned over sexual minority rights' (21 April 2016), is a news report that takes a swipe at SADC countries for their reluctance to promulgate laws that respect the rights of sexual minorities. In this regard, through overt and implicit journalistic evaluations, the news report evinces sympathy for the LGBTQI population who are not being protected by laws in most of these countries. This news report is framed within the homophobia prevalent especially in African countries, as also demonstrated by the positions on homosexuality enunciated by many African leaders (see the introduction of this paper). The news report suggests both implicitly and explicitly through authorial negative JUDGEMENT of the governments, '**pinned over sexual minority rights** [j]' and '**under increasing pressure to introduce legislation to protect the rights of sexual minorities** [j]' and positive APPRECIATION resources towards calls for change '*a call...to promulgate laws in favour of lesbian, gays, bisexual, transgender and intersex citizens within the sub-regional bloc* [ap]', that the need for legal reform. Hence, in the process coming out as sympathetic to the cause of the LGBTQI population who are ostracised because of unaccommodating laws.

'UN wants homosexuality legalised in Namibia' (18 August 2016), reports on calls by the UN for the abolishment of legal instruments that criminalise homosexuality and discriminate against the LGBTQI population in general. The journalistic voice, through positive 3rd AFFECT resources towards the UN and its call, '*UN wants homosexuality legalized in Namibia* [3rd af]' and '*wants Namibia to abolish common law crime of sodomy* [3rd af]' speaks to the existence of laws unfavourable to the LGBTQI population and homosexual practices in general. Furthermore, through evoked implicit negative JUDGEMENT resources, that this call was '**expected to draw condemnation from section of both Namibia society and government** [j]' and '**homosexuality remains a largely unaccepted practice among Namibians** [j]' castigates the draconian laws currently in existence in Namibia which it views as the source of homophobia. In the process, it evinces sympathy for the LGBTQI population.

6.2 Legal framing of homosexuality and homophobia in *The Namibian*

'Govt planning to criminalise gay' (9 November, 1998) is a news report on the intentions by the Namibian government to criminalise homosexual activities in Namibia. There are, in the news report intimations of 'criminality' (pointing towards legally sanctioned homophobia) and 'sin' (pointing towards religion sanctioned homophobia) associated with homosexuality. The news report is framed through strategic impersonalisation – largely achieved through evaluations made from external sources and hence are negative 3rd AFFECT and negative JUDGEMENT resources. This is achieved through attribution. This happens when evaluative positions are made through the voices of external sources and not the journalistic voice. Jullian (2011) refers to this news writing process and 'appraising through the words of others. Characterisations of homosexuality as '**inimical to Namibian culture, African culture and religion** [3rd af]' and '**rank as sin against society and God** [3rd af]' speak to how cultural

and religious ideological positions within Namibia influence the promulgation of laws unfavourable to the LGBTQI population. The external voices further provide negative characterisations of homosexual behaviour as **'sin [j]'** and **'human wrongs [j]'** (as opposed to human rights), which results in the need to **'curbing the spread of homosexual practices [j]'** and **'uproot homosexuality [j]'**. There is also blame gaming as homosexuality is blamed on the western world since it is 'not African'. This is achieved through the negative JUDGEMENT resources **'Europeans destroying Namibian culture [j]'**. The cultural imperative is thus used to justify the existence, and further promulgations of anti-LGBTQI laws.

In the news report, 'Earring crackdown' (23 December 2003), the journalistic voice betrays an ideological position that is sympathetic to the LGBTQI population group (and especially those suspected of homosexual tendencies or behaviour) for being beaten up by the army for merely wearing earrings – demonstrating the homophobia within the legal enforcement system in Namibia. There are negative authorial JUDGEMENT resources, **'beat him...with a sjaambok [j]'**, **'picked on any man who sported earrings [j]'**, **'rounded up [j]'** and **'was a moffie (homosexual) [j]'** towards the soldiers for beating up suspected homosexuals. These evaluations suggest the criminalisation of homosexuality through the actions of state security agent. At the same time, there is sympathy for the LGBTQI persons demonstrated through the negative 1st AFFECT resources, **'beaten [1st af]'** and **'victimised [1st af]'** – which evince sympathy for the suspected LGBTQI persons and in the process condemns the actions of the army.

In the news report, 'Moongo wants law against hate speech passed' (7 October 2011), is reported of a motion tabled by a Namibian opposition MP (Moongo) proposing for the passing of laws criminalising hate speech against particular groups of people including homosexuals. The journalistic voice implicitly establishes the ideological position sympathetic to the LGBTQI community through observed AFFECT resources. There are several instances of overt negative 3rd (observed) AFFECT towards intolerant language against LGBTQI persons. Such resources, which also occur in attribution, describe hate language against homosexuals as **'intolerant verbal communication [3rd af]'**, **'apartheid-like behaviour [3rd af]'**, **'a discriminatory tool [3rd af]'**, **'political weapon of mass destruction [3rd af]'**, **'derogatory and dehumanising language [3rd af]'** and **'ill-advisedly used in public [3rd af]'** The report, thus, evinces sympathy towards the LGBTQI persons. However, there is an overt absence of the journalistic voice, as evaluations present in attribution, a strategy many newspapers use in order to avoid censure and castigation.

The news report, 'Home affairs loses bid to deport Ugandan gay' (8 August, 2014), occurring largely in attributed APPRECIATION and JUDGEMENT resources, illustrates the homophobic nature of Namibia and allegedly Namibian laws for being insensitive to the plight of a gay man fleeing Uganda where anti-gay laws had recently been enacted. Negative JUDGEMENT evaluations of law officials in Namibia, **'officials were willing to quickly deport the man because he is gay [j]'**, **'without following due process and have his case heard [j]'** demonstrates the impunity and disregard of basic human rights that they are willing to act on in order to curtail the proliferation of homosexual behaviour in Namibia. The journalistic voice offers overt negative JUDGEMENT evaluations of the Namibian officials for acting on homophobic triggers with disregard for the law.

7 Comparative analysis

In examining the news reports in the two newspapers, it becomes apparent that there exists in Namibia, an established form of legally sanctioned homophobia. Of course, what is important to observe is that the legal will to enact and enforce laws that discriminate against members of the LGBTQI community or the lack of it thereof to enact laws that 'accept' and 'accommodate' members of the same group are driven not just by the law but other law external factors such as political will, culture and religion. As observed in most of the news reports, the negative evaluations of members of the LGBTQI community, occurring largely as observed AFFECT (3rd af) and JUDGEMENT resources are largely framed in attribution. There is little, if any, sympathy for members of the population group evinced through the

attributed resources. There are observed sympathetic overtones towards the population group from the journalistic voice and this occurs across the board. There seems to be a general consensus amongst news writers from both the newspapers that the existing Namibian laws are intolerant of homosexual tendencies or behaviours. The sympathy towards members of the population group thus largely evinces itself through authorial/journalistic AFFECT (1st af) and JUDGEMENT resources expressed through the journalistic voice. The AFFECT resources largely provide the general negative sentiment of the journalistic voice towards the inhuman treatment of the members of the population group. In the same vein, these are also evinced through JUDGEMENT resources targeted towards political actors and the generality of the Namibian population for their unacceptance of the LGBTQI community. APPRECIATION resources expressed through the journalistic voice are also used to signal the draconian nature of the existing legislation in Namibia. In this manner, they provide a criticism of the laws and in the process challenge responsible political actors to perhaps promulgate new laws that are more accommodating of the population group.

8 Political framing of homosexuality/homophobia in the two Namibian newspapers

Within this section are analysed news reports that are framed within political will or lack of it thereof to support or sympathise with the LGBTQI population. As such the analyses of news reports within this frame reflects on whether news reports evince political will that is antagonistic towards/bash homosexuality or that evince support/sympathy for homosexuality and its attendant activities. The selection criteria for news reports to analyse was also conducted through the process of exclusion explained above. Below I offer analyses of the news reports from the *New Era* and *The Namibian* respectively. Below them follows a brief comparative analysis of the framing of homosexuality and homophobia within the newspapers through the political frame as demonstrated by the analyses of appraisal resources conducted.

8.1 Political framing of homosexuality and homophobia in the *New Era*

An analysis of the news report titled ‘Gays, Lesbians, Force to Reckon with’ (25 November 1999), demonstrates that the journalistic voice, aided by attributed materials from external sources, makes propositions of negative JUDGEMENT such as that, ‘**political parties need to wake up [j]**’ and ‘**realise that the country’s gay and lesbian community constitute almost 10 percent of the electorate [j]**, ‘**utterance by SWAPO leadership...have rocked the foundations of many of the homosexual hardline SWAPO supporters [j]**’ and ‘**good governance is proven by not discriminating against the people you govern [j]**’. These negative evaluations of political actors within Namibia – both within the ruling and oppositions parties reveal the failure to recognise the potential that homosexuals have to influence political victory within Namibian politics. The propositions are made within a frame of homophobia observed in Namibia. This was especially so since the key population group ideally constituted 10% of the population, and as such could make a difference with regards to who wins or loses in elections. The evaluations through the journalistic voice occurring as negative JUDGEMENT resources which frame the need for political will to accept homosexuality is contextualised within verbalisations made by politicians in castigation of homosexuals – notably by former president, Sam Nujoma and several other high-profile figures within the ruling SWAPO party. In further demonstration of sympathy towards the LGBTQI population group, demonstrated through the use of positive JUDGEMENT resources towards them, describing them as ‘*they can play an important role on who gets the most votes [j]*’ and that they are a ‘*“mighty” group to work with [j]*’.

In the news report, ‘Nujoma Lashes at Homosexuals’ (19 – 22 August 2002), the journalistic voice establishes the politically sanctioned homophobia through overt negative JUDGEMENT of then president, ‘**Sam Nujoma [who] was lashing out at homosexuals in the country [j]**’. These are further supported by observed 3rd AFFECT resources in which Nujoma describes homosexuals as, ‘**a shameful thing**’ [3rd af]. The external voice of then president, Sam Nujoma is quoted expressing verbalisations full of negative JUDGEMENT, ‘**urged the congress to denounce homosexuality [j/3rd**

af]’, **workers need to denounce the practice** [j]’ and **make sure that children are not exposed to it** [j]’. Further evaluations attributed to Nujoma are used to reaffirm this framing of homophobia and how such verbalisations represent the political antagonism towards homosexuality as evinced by Namibian political elite and society.

‘Homosexuality Will Retard Population Growth – Nujoma’ (12 December 2006), is another news report that demonstrates how politically sanctioned homophobia proliferates even through the highest office of the land, The Presidency. The news report, largely framed in attribution, projects Namibian president, Sam Nujoma’s distaste for LGBTQI persons. The journalistic voice in this regard establishes the politically sanctioned homophobia as demonstrated in Nujoma’s verbalisations. Implicitly and explicitly, the journalistic voice evinces a sympathetic tone towards the homosexual community. As with other African leaders (and Namibian leaders) the homophobia is also framed within ‘othering’ – that homosexuality is alien to Africa and a Western behaviour as demonstrated by the proliferation of the negative highly attitudinal JUDGEMENT, through which Nujoma, **urged men and women to unite, condemn and reject the promotion of sexual relations between people of the same sex** [j]’, **urged men to unite, condemn and reject those modes of foreign behaviour among Namibians** [j]’ because **freedom...[also] brings forth some negative foreign influences** [j/ap]’. Nujoma further describes homosexual behaviour as behaviour, **which...erode cultural and traditional norms** [ap/j]’ and is **a threat to the general wellbeing of a society** [j/3rd af]’. Such resources occurring through attribution are used as negative evaluative materials for the LGBTQI population.

8.2 Political framing of homosexuality and homophobia in *The Namibian*

‘Taking the AIDS message behind bars: Sodomy and homosexuality part of prison subculture’ (16 July 1997), is a news report on the potential move by the Namibian government to take the HIV and AIDS message to prisons. There are overt and implicit overtones, through the journalistic voice, that positively frames the move by a government ministry and the Minister for a good initiative to reach out to the prison population with the AIDS campaign – where homosexuality allegedly exists through positive JUDGEMENT resources, *HIV and AIDS awareness is catching on in Namibia’s prisons* [j/ap]’, *attempts are being made to quell the epidemic behind bars* [j/ap]’, *attempt to quell the growing AIDS epidemic* [j]’ and *uphold prisoner rights to health* [j]’. This is further sustained through attribution in the form of positive APPRECIATION resources made by the Deputy Minister of Prisons and Correctional Services, *...if you have AIDS campaigns, you can’t stop at the prison doors* [ap]’ and *ensure that the AIDS awareness programme reaches all sectors of society* [ap]’. The journalistic voice further, through inscribed positive JUDGEMENT and APPRECIATION resources, reiterates this sympathetic tone towards the LGBTQI population by describing the move by the ministry as proactive and in the best interest of all members of Namibian society. In a manner of speaking, the general framing of the news report propagates that homosexuals are human beings too and deserve access to healthcare like all other persons.

The analysis of the news report, ‘Namibia surveys AIDS infections among homosexuals’ (27 July 2012) evinces propositions through which the journalistic voice establishes the move by the government to undertake a survey of AIDS infections amongst members of the LGBTQI community as geared towards getting to the “bottom of the HIV impact on these minority groups” The journalistic voice establishes the ‘othering’ of the LGBTQI community by utilising the negative 1st AFFECT and APPRECIATION resources, **homosexuality and commercial sex workers remain stigmatised in Namibia** [1st af/ap]’ and **they are stigmatised by our own health workers to a certain extent** [1st af/j]’. Further evaluative materials framed in attribution to Deputy Permanent Secretary of Health and Social Services reveal the homophobia in Namibia, further implicitly admitting that there was exclusion of these key populations in so far as access to healthcare facilities was of concern. This is evinced through the positive APPRECIATION resources, *study focuses on the challenges and issues that these communities face* [ap]’. This of course is the goal of the news report, to offer a sympathetic voice to the

cause of homosexuals. It is also an applaud to the Namibian government for the initiative that recognises the reality that homosexuality exists and that these were an ostracised group.

9 Comparative analysis

In examining the news reports in the two newspapers within the established political frame established here, it can be observed that there exists a high level of politically engrained homophobia within Namibia as demonstrated through the ideological positions assumed by prominent and high-ranking politicians within the country. Within their verbalisations evince highly negative attitudinal resources of largely JUDGEMENT and AFFECT (1st and 3rd AFFECT alike) towards members of the LGBTQI community as demonstrated in the analyses undertaken in Sections 7 and 8 above. These resources clearly demonstrate an apparent and calculated disregard for members and activities of this population group. Of course, in some instances, there is evidence of some sympathy towards the LGBTQI populations also evinced through some of the politicians' stances towards them. However, in most instances, it has been established that these sympathies have not been followed through with tangible government efforts and behaviours to redress the inequalities and discrimination that members of the group face day in and day out. Highly attitudinal resources of negative JUDGEMENT, negative APPRECIATION and negative 1st and 3rd AFFECT, expressed through attributed materials, reflect a general sense of homophobia within the political leadership of the country.

The journalistic voices in both publications also evince sympathetic ideological evaluative positions towards the LGBTQI population group. These are demonstrated through the highly attitudinal usage of negative observed AFFECT (1st AFFECT) and negative JUDGEMENT resources towards verbalisations by prominent political actors who have expressed sentiments deemed discriminatory towards the population group. Further to that, the proliferation of overt negative authorial AFFECT (1st af) and negative APPRECIATION resources reflective of the journalistic voice's description of the state of affairs with regards to the status of LGBTQI persons in Namibia evince highly attitudinal sympathetic overtones. In further evidencing sympathy towards homosexuality, positive APPRECIATION and JUDGEMENT resources are expressed towards the processes and political actors for making positive strides towards enforcing change in the legal, cultural, health as well as political imaging of members of the LGBTQI population. The journalistic voice also evinces positive JUDGEMENT and authorial AFFECT (1st af) descriptions of homosexual persons within Namibia, imagining them as a group not to be shunned but embraced and accommodated. In doing this, the authorial voices in all the news reports overtly exhibit sympathy for the LGBTQI population group whilst at the same time implicitly providing negative JUDGEMENT evaluations towards politicians, political parties and the generality of Namibian society for shunning the population group.

10 Conclusion: Critical analytical perspective

Homophobia is well established in Namibia as demonstrated by the negative political and legal framing of homosexuality in the analysed news reports. Sadly, one of the major challenges observed in the collection of data is that the general reportage on the LGBTQI in the context of the political landscape and the law as evinced in the analyses in the above sections reflects that most of the reportage is largely foreign copy and not own copy. This resulted in only a smaller corpus undergoing analysis as most of the news reports collected using the search words largely reflect events elsewhere and not in Namibia. One is tempted to draw the conclusion that this might result from the newspapers averting culpable liability and censure from the Namibian government – which has on many occasions, as reflected in the literature review as well as analyses, pronounced publicly a highly anti-gay position. Seen to be going against the government and legally established positions could also impact on the operations of the newspapers within the country. As such, most of the analysed news reports are thus framed as anti-homosexuality and homophobic at best and homosexuals are framed within the news reports and through both journalistic voice and attributed materials, as a vulnerable group – threatened by both criminal prosecution and legal censure through draconian laws. This also realised within the political

rhetoric of high-ranking Namibian politicians and demonstrates the political will to subvert the recognition and humanity of members of the LGBTQI population group. On the other hand, in most instances, the journalistic voices reflect ideological biases that proffer sympathetic overtones towards homosexuals and their legal challenges. It is important however to note that there are, in most cases, glaring absences of overt journalistic convictions and thus the journalistic position is largely implicitly realised. Attribution is also used as a method of strategic impersonalisation, which many newspapers use in a bid to avoid censure and castigation from the political and legal forces within the environment in which they publish. In terms of representation, the dialogic nature of the news reports in general provide a multiplicity of voices except that of the affected group – homosexuals.

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