

LGBT, PRIDE PARADE IN CANADA, AND THE MUSLIM COMMUNITY

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ABSTRACT

This article provides information about the new developments in Canada regarding various curriculum changes being introduced in schools and how they are affecting Muslims. It delves into what these changes mean for Muslims and suggests steps they can take to safeguard themselves and their progeny. Humans in general are going towards degrading moral values, and when the government of nations also allows such behaviour that goes against the religions then one can expect that the future generation will be at a morally corrupt state if attention is not paid to this issue. Gradually and slowly such a condition is created that the Muslims are being pressured to either stop immigrating to non-Muslim lands or to consider leaving if they have already immigrated.

Keywords: *LGBT, modesty, Canadian Muslims.*

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1. INTRODUCTION

The recent wars in Syria, ongoing crises in Palestine and Kashmir, and economic crises in third-world Muslim countries have significantly worsened conditions for Muslims. As moral

strength wanes among Muslims, so do their elected governments, taking nations towards a downhill economic road. The combination of war and economic downturn are a cause of frustration and unrest among the Muslims, making life in their own countries increasingly difficult.

Over the past few decades, many Muslims have been leaving their countries to immigrate, especially to Western lands due to unrest, poverty, and confusion in their homelands. However, this migration often comes with a price, as individuals may find themselves compromising on some matters of their religion which they should uphold, or face uncomfortable circumstances. One of the favourite lands for many Muslims is Canada where there is a perceived religious freedom and tolerance to practice, celebrate, and preach their religion. However, recent changes and new policies are creating worry for many. These include the increased support for LGBT communities from the government and the acceptance of their activities. Not only this, but its knowledge has been included in curriculums all over public school boards, creating worries for many, including the Muslim communities. This article highlights these issues and proposes possible solutions.

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Usually, when an incident or event is taking place, the most accurate information is gained through the news. CBC News has been a primary source of information regarding recent events concerning the issue of LGBT rights, which for one group in Canadian society is not an issue worth celebrating.

"Pride is a celebration but it's also a protest," said Sarah Rice, who traveled from London, Ont., to participate in the festivities. "I think this year in particular, it's been important for the queer community to show up, be visible, and have our voices heard."

On Sunday, some marchers carried banners featuring slogans such as "Protect trans youth" and "Protect trans kids." This was in 2023 and what awaits in 2024 remains uncertain.

Educational institutions have increasingly embraced LGBTQ inclusivity. Catherine Connell emphasizes: "To ease the fundamental tensions between gay pride and teaching professionalism that make working in education so challenging for so many, a stronger and more expansive network of non-discrimination protections for all LGBT workers is certainly important." writes Catherine Connell. She points out in her article, *Pride and Prejudice and Professionalism*, how it is difficult for gay and lesbian teachers to portray their true sexual identity while at work and in front of their students (Connell, 2015).

While homosexuality was stigmatized in the early 1900s, Amin Ghaziani notes in his article, "Measuring Urban sexual cultures", that this tide is turning. Ghaziani cites several significant surveys to provide evidence for a significant shift in attitudes toward homosexuality, especially in recent years. According to a 2010 Gallup poll, American support for the moral acceptability of gays and lesbians crossed the symbolic 50% threshold in 2010. At the same time, the percentage calling the relations morally wrong dropped to 43 %, the lowest in Gallup's decade-long trend (Ghaziani, 2014).

Researchers Bishin et al. (2016) say in their article, “Opinion Backlash and Public Attitudes: Are Political Advances in Gay Rights Counterproductive?” “Contrary to the expectations of the backlash theorists, we are unable to detect negative and large opinion changes consistent with backlash in response to the legalization of gay marriage.”

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The methodology used is Qualitative. Qualitative research involves collecting and analyzing non-numerical data (e.g., text, video, or audio) to understand concepts, opinions, or experiences. It can be used to gather in-depth insights into a problem or generate new ideas for research. The purpose of this research is to highlight the current situation regarding LGBT and what issues the Muslim community is facing nowadays.

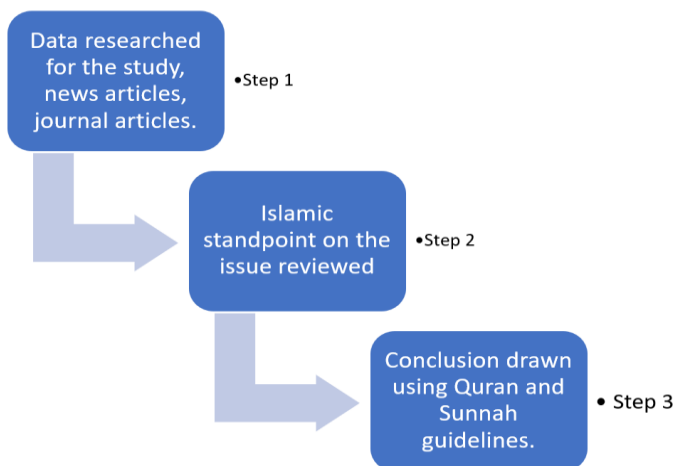


Figure 1. Qualitative Research Process

4. ANALYSIS

Canada, a North American country with a total population is 38.25 million as of 2021, boasts a diverse population comprising various religious communities. While Christians constitute the majority of the population, Muslims form a significant minority of 1,775,715 individuals. In addition, other religious backgrounds like Jews, Hindus, etc. also opt to take residence and eventually citizenship of this country. In this respect, there are various cultures celebrated in this country along with the Canadian culture. People from all around the world, like Pakistan, Jamaica, Egypt, etc. choose to make Canada their home, contributing to the multicultural fabric of the nation.

The law of the country is quite accommodating for all nations, and nothing is enforced on the public, everyone can practice their own beliefs and live freely. However, the tide has been turning for the past two decades. Various laws are being introduced which hurt the minority.

This was vividly noticed when the Harper government, tried to implement the niqab ban countrywide, On October 6th, 2015, CBC News reported the following:

“Conservative Leader Stephen Harper says his government would consider banning public servants from wearing the niqab but rejects the suggestion that recent assaults against Muslim women should stifle debate about the issue. The party was accused “of engaging in identity politics and fuelling anti-Muslim sentiment.” (CBC News, 2015)

Zunera Ishaq, a Muslim woman, went to court to challenge the government's ban on citizenship oath and her request was met with positivity. The situation in those times was that the Muslim women were being assaulted and two such prominent incidents had occurred (Tremonti, 2015).

The white supremacist groups "believe that white people are superior to those of other races and thus should dominate them". Some recent American governments have fed the ideology of white supremacy. It has been so profound in recent years that in London, Ontario a person with such beliefs ran over an entire family in the summer of 2022 who were just enjoying an evening walk. On June 6, 2021, a man rammed a pickup truck into Muslim Pakistani Canadian pedestrians at an intersection in London, Ontario, Canada. Four people were killed and a fifth was wounded; all were from the same family. Police say the attack was motivated by Islamophobia. Islamophobia and white supremacy, are branches of each other. (CBC News, 2022)

In recent times, the Quebec Government imposed a ban on head coverings in Government jobs, and employees, including teachers needed to keep their heads uncovered while at work in Government positions; Due to this ban, many people who were in governmental jobs left the province.

Trudeau's government seems to be in favor of the Muslims, but it seems that Muslim identity is diminishing during their term, and new rules are being introduced that go against their belief system. A large number of Muslims voted for this government in the last and current elections and made his win possible. However, something that completely goes against the Muslim

faith is the pride parade, and Trudeau participates actively and publicly in it. It was a pride parade every year to support the LGBTQ community but now a new announcement has caused community unrest in Ontario where the Conservative government has shown support to educate the kids in this regard in public schools.

On a government-run website, Canada.ca, it is mentioned: "It is paramount that professionals working with gender variant youth ensure that the young person's rights and dignity are respected. It is important that evidence-based strategies, such as those found in this document, are used to support age-appropriate discussions on gender, sexual health, and informed decision-making."

Guidelines for the school include the following points:

1. Sexual health educational programming is inclusive of the pressing health, safety, and educational needs and challenges of gender-variant youth.
2. The experiences of gender-variant youth are included in all facets of broadly-based and inclusive sexual health education; and
3. Educators, administrators, and school board personnel are provided with a more thorough understanding of the goals and objectives of broadly-based and inclusive sexual health education."

Mass surveys were conducted regarding the status of LGBTQ staff and students. Every Teacher Project, a national research study conducted by the University of Winnipeg in collaboration

with the Manitoba Teachers Society (MTS), provides valuable insight into the readiness of Canada's teachers, including those within the Catholic education system, to support LGBTQ inclusion. The report conveyed that teachers across Canada are prepared to embrace LGBTQ-inclusive education, recognizing its importance, and expressing comfort in delivering it (Taylor, 2015).

The Grades 1 – 8 curriculum of Ontario schools, includes education about human development and sexual health, topics that are often considered taboo in many Muslim families. Not just Muslims, but other faith groups have also shown disapproval of this step. On July 15th, 2023, the Haya Day parade was held in Mississauga, Ontario to raise voices against this new rule of the government. Hundreds of individuals attended the parade. A CTV news report said that Mayor Bonnie Crombie of Mississauga spoke about this event and said, "As your Mayor, I strongly believe in the principles of inclusivity, acceptance, and equality and strongly denounce this rally," She further added: "I want to make it clear that I stand firmly against any actions or events that seek to promote discrimination or undermine the rights and dignity of our 2SLGBTQI+community (Taylor, 2015)."

5. RESULTS

Sh. Hatem al Haj released the following statement in this regard:

Public disapproval of LGBTQ practices, beliefs, and advocacy is increasingly met with charges of intolerance and unwarranted accusations of bigotry. There is an increasing push to promote LGBTQ-centric values among children through legislation and

regulations, disregarding parental consent and denying both parents and children the opportunity to express conscientious objection (Hatem, 2014).

He also says, by a decree from God, sexual relations are permitted within the bounds of marriage, and marriage can only occur between a man and a woman. In the Quran, God explicitly condemns sexual relations with the same sex (see, e.g., Quran, *al-Nisā'*: 16, *al-A'raf*: 80–83, and *al-Naml*: 55–58). Moreover, premarital, and extramarital sexual acts are prohibited in Islam. As God explains, “Do not go near fornication. It is truly an immoral deed and a terrible way [to behave]” (Quran, *al-Isrā'*: 32). These aspects of Islam are unambiguously established in the Quran, the teachings of Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him), and a chain of scholarly tradition spanning fourteen centuries. As a result, they have gained the status of religious consensus (*ijmā'*) and are recognized as integral components of the faith known to the general body of Muslims (Hatem, 2014).

God defined humanity as consisting of males and females and declared that He “... created [humans] from a male and a female and made [them] into peoples and tribes so that you may come to know one another” (Quran, *al-Ḥujurāt*: 13; see also *al-Najm*: 45). Islam affirms that men and women are spiritually equal before God, even though each has different characteristics and roles. The Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) referred to women as equivalent counterparts of men. Yet, he (peace be upon him) explicitly condemned imitating the appearance of the opposite gender. Further, God calls on humanity to respect His wisdom in creation (see, e.g., Quran, *al-Nisā'*: 119). As such,

generally, Islam strictly prohibits medical procedures intended to change the sex of healthy individuals, regardless of whether such procedures are termed gender “affirming” or “confirming.” For individuals born with biological ambiguities, such as disorders of sexual development, Islam permits them to seek medical care for corrective reasons.

Islam distinguishes between feelings, actions, and identity. God holds individuals accountable for their words and actions, not for their involuntary thoughts and feelings. As our Prophet (peace be upon him) said, “God has pardoned Muslims for what they think, as long as they do not speak of or act on it” (Bukhari, 2528). In Islam, the sinful actions of an individual do not and should not dictate his or her identity. As such, it is impermissible for Muslims to take pride in identifying with labels that categorize them by their sins. It is important to note that the stance of Islam on illicit sexual relations goes hand in hand with its protection and promotion of the individual’s right to privacy. Islam prohibits prying into others’ private lives and discourages public disclosure of sexual behavior (see, e.g., Quran, *al-Hujurāt*: 12 and *al-Nūr*: 19).

We recognize that some religious groups have reinterpreted or revised religious doctrine to be inclusive of LGBTQ ideology. The Muslim community is not immune to such pressures. Indeed, some have attempted to reinterpret Islamic texts in favor of LGBTQ affirmation. We categorically reject such efforts as theologically indefensible because these aspects of sexual ethics fit within the category of immutable tenets and are therefore not subject to revision.

6. DISCUSSION

6.1 History of the Pride Parade in Canada

In 1969 Canada decriminalized homosexuality acts with the Criminal Law Amendment Act. Canada's First Gay Liberation Protest and March was held in 1971, a petition was presented to the government, it consisted of 10 demands for equal rights and protection. In several Canadian cities, Pride Week was held in 1973. Due to this event, there was a shift in gay liberation, and the concept of pride was introduced.

6.2 Status of Homosexuality in Islam

When the angels visited the house of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) as guests they told him that they were going to his brother Lut (a.s.) after this to warn him about his nation. Prophet Lut's (a.s.) people used to get involved in homosexuality and a warning had come to them from Allah ta'ala advising them to stop or they would be punished, Prophet Lut (a.s.) even told them to marry his daughters meaning the women of that area so they would stop homosexuality and live a straight life but they did not agree and continued on their sinful path. As a result, Prophet Lut (a.s.) left with his family, and the nation was punished by the earth being overturned on them and the rain of stones falling on them, however his wife was also punished along with them because she looked back at them, instead of moving forward with him, this looking back could be in two ways figuratively or literally. It is worth noting that all the Prophets came with the religion of Islam, no matter what name it was given at that time, it was with the same basic principle of Tawheed and with some rules of shariah that differed.

Furthermore, In Islam, we learn that the Muslim is a bashful human being. All the prophets possessed this quality to various degrees. Caliph Uthman was never seen without a shirt in public and even the angels were shy of his bashfulness. Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "Every deen has a distinctive quality, and the distinctive quality of Islam is modesty."

He (s.a.w.) also said, "Iman has more than sixty branches and Al Haya too is a branch of Islam."

Abu Huraira narrated, "Allah's messenger said, modesty is from Iman and Iman leads to paradise and indecency is from the useless scum/froth and the useless scum, froth leads to the fire."

Slaim bin Abdullah narrated from his father that once Allah's Messenger (s.a.w.) passed by a man of the Ansaar who was admonishing his brother regarding Haya. Allah's messenger said, "Leave him for modesty is part of Iman."

Abu sawwar al Adavi narrated that he heard Imran bin Hussain saying: The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, modesty does not bring anything but good."

Anas r.a. narrated: "Allah's messenger (s.a.w.) said, "There is no indecency in anything except for it makes it defective and there is no modesty in anything except for it makes it beautiful."

Abu Saeed al Khudri said, "The prophet (s.a.w.) was shyer than a virgin in her private room, and if he saw a thing that he disliked, we would see it on his face."

Abu Masud (r.a.) narrated, that the prophet (s.a.w.) said, “One of the sayings of the early prophets which was imparted to the people is, “If you do not feel shame then do as you like.”

All these hadith from the Prophet prove that modesty, Haya, and bashfulness are important in a Muslim’s life, however, in Canadian culture, it is a norm to talk about such matters as the LGBT.

The Muslim community is facing many challenges due to the increasing incline toward the topic of LGBTQ in Canada. As discussed earlier, modesty is part of a Muslim’s faith, and discussions about such topics are done very privately. However, the Muslim child is exposed to this from a very young age, and this creates a conflict in his mind when he compares his outside life with home life, which rejects the mention of such. The parents are ill-equipped to deal with this situation, and there are not enough efforts from the community to educate them on this topic as it is considered taboo. The Muslim teenager, new to his rising feelings, gets most affected and turns into an adult who is at unrest in his relationship with his spouse.

The actual situation is that the layman Muslim is not even aware of the new sex-education curriculum and its implications for the child. When we discussed the Pride parade with them, they responded as if they were unsure if it was in line with Islamic teachings. The reality is that the average Muslim does not even know, learn, or comprehend the true Islamic teachings, for them even 5 times a day prayer is too much, so in this scenario, it’s the solution is only Islamic education and preaching. Even though there are many Muslim preachers in the community right now, only a handful pay attention to them, so a plan must

be devised where their teaching style could be more effective in sha Allah.

The question arises as to what the Muslim community in Canada is supposed to do in this regard. Most of the people are of a modest status monetarily and cannot afford grand plans, nor can they afford Private schooling as there are many Private Islamic schools in Canada. However, they can take the following steps if they wish to continue to live in Canada:

1. Strengthen themselves in Islamic Knowledge
2. Make sure that the children attend the masjid for prayer at least once a day from a very young age.
3. Take appropriate steps to make the children's Islamic education essential for them.
4. Make sure the Islamic educationist they choose for their child comes from a solid background and knows how to develop the interest of the child in Islamic and Quran education.
5. Make sure at least one member of the family is involved in active dawah.
6. Make it clear to the child from a very young age how segregation between genders is essential and what limits they should observe while in public places.
7. Relate to the children the story of LUT a.s and how his nation was punished by Allah due to immoral acts and explain.

8. Marry the young adult at an appropriate age so that Zina could be prevented.

Take care of their dressing, their halal food, and halal entertainment so that the children get positive influence instead while fulfilling their duties as Muslim Parents.

7. CONCLUSION

Muslims can live in non-Muslim countries after making sure that they will be able to practice their religion freely and invite others to it too.

Sheikh Muhammad Iqbal Nadvi, director and imam of Al-Falah Islamic Center, Oakville, Ontario, Canada, states: "Scholars look into this issue from various perspectives and the bottom line is the ability to practice Islam and make da`wah (Arabic for inviting others to Islam). If Muslims are free to practice their faith and even invite others to join the same faith, then their presence in such countries is needed and sometimes mandatory. the second perspective is when Muslims are free to practice Islam, but they face some difficulties in making da`wah, then it is permissible to live in those countries. However, if one fears that his or her children will suffer religious-wise, then their presence in such countries is useless and they need to search for a better environment. So, there is no one ruling for all Muslims living in non-Muslim countries. the ideal situation is when a Muslim practices his or her faith and at the same time lives as a good citizen in his or her own country, sharing the beautiful teachings of Islam with other people. Almighty Allah says: [O My servants who believe! Truly, spacious is My Earth: therefore, serve you Me, (and Me alone)] (Al-` Ankaboot 29:56).

So, all the earth belongs to Allah, so we should worship Allah wherever we are.”

Moreover, Dr. Muzammil H. Siddiqi, President of the Fiqh Council of North America, adds: “A Muslim can live in any place and any country. However, there are some basic Islamic rules about migration: 1. It is Haram for a Muslim to live in or to migrate to a place where he cannot practice his/her religion unless one is very weak and has no other way. Almighty Allah says, “Lo! As for those whom the angels take (in death) while they wrong themselves, (the angels) will ask: In what were ye engaged? They will say: We were oppressed in the land. (The angels) will say: Was not Allah’s earth spacious that ye could have migrated therein? As for such, their habitation will be hell, an evil journey’s end...” (An-Nisa’: 97) It is obligatory for Muslims to live in and to migrate to those lands where they can freely practice their religion. 2. It is not recommended for Muslims to migrate to the lands where their and the next generations’ religion might be at risk unless they make every effort to safeguard their religion and the religion of their next generations. Without such efforts, it will be Makruh (reprehensible) [and in some cases even Haram] to migrate to such lands. 3. It is permissible for Muslims to migrate to lands where they feel confident that they can practice their religion freely and they can raise their children under Islamic principles. It is, however, better for Muslims to live in Muslim lands where they can live under Islamic laws to govern their personal as well as collective lives. It is highly recommended for Muslims to migrate to those lands where they feel they can practice Islam and can spread the message of Islam. The Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, sent many Sahabah (his Companions) to

different areas to spread Islam and to teach Islam. After the death of the Prophet, peace and blessings be upon him, many Sahabah left Madinah and went to different lands to live there and to teach Islam to the people of those lands. It is due to their efforts and the efforts of many Muslims after them that Islam spread in many lands. This is also our duty, and we must make every effort to convey the message of Allah to the whole world.”

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