

RECONCILING FAITH AND IDENTITY: AN ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF LGBTQIA+ MUSLIMS UTILIZING INTERSECTIONAL RECONCILIATION THEORY

Joel M. Ligoyligoy, FHEA¹, Eduardo R. Jabalde Jr., P-1²,
Jogenes Jeanne Reganit, T-III³, Grace P. Dinopol, HT-I⁴,
Marie Jane V. Mainit, MT-1⁵, Mosaba A. Spadilla, HT-II⁶

¹Walailak University, Thailand

²Lagunsay Elementary School, Maligang, Kiamba Sarangani Province, Philippines

³Malbang Elementary School / Malbang, Maasim Sarangani Province, Philippines

⁴Ireneo E Lopez Central Elementary School, Lumasal Maasim Sarangani Province, Philippines

⁵Lebe IS, Maasim Sarangani Province, Philippines

⁶Kanalo Elementary School, Kanalo, Maasim Sarangani Province, Philippines

<https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15342760>

ABSTRACT

This study examines the identity negotiation of LGBTQIA+ Muslims using the framework of Intersectional Reconciliation Theory, highlighting how individuals reconcile their religious beliefs with their sexual and gender identities in the context of traditional Islamic teachings and modern societal obstacles. This study utilizes a qualitative research design, employing ethnomethodology as its primary methodological framework, concentrating on the daily practices and interpretive techniques participants employ to resolve perceived identity conflicts. Data were gathered via in-depth interviews and thematically analyzed to reveal the intricate methods by which LGBTQIA+ Muslims formulate self-narratives, navigate stigma, and foster authenticity within religious and LGBTQIA+ communities. Findings indicate that participant utilizes techniques like selective religious reinterpretation, boundary establishment, community identity formation, and personal spiritual growth to manage their intricate positionalities. The research highlights the persistence and agency of LGBTQIA+ Muslims in contesting

binary notions of faith and sexuality, thus enriching discussions on inclusivity within religious contexts. These findings highlight the necessity for more supportive theological discussions and communal activities that acknowledge the intersecting experiences of LGBTQIA+ Muslims. The study provides useful information for religious leaders, educators, and mental health professionals aiming to cultivate supportive environments that affirm both faith and identity.

Keywords: *LGBTQIA+ Muslims, Intersectional Reconciliation Theory, ethnomethodology, identity negotiation, Islam, sexuality, resilience*

INTRODUCTION

The intersection of Islam, LGBTQIA+ communities and identities, and current sociocultural contexts has been a significant subject of inquiry in contemporary academic research. Traditional Islamic theological interpretations have historically regarded homosexuality and gender non-conformity as deviations from established moral and social norms, sometimes referencing Quranic texts and Hadith to justify restrictions. However, the increasing visibility of LGBTQIA+ Muslims globally, particularly in Muslim-minority settings, has prompted a reassessment of theological interpretations via more inclusive, critical, and contextual lenses (Das 2024).

Theological discourse in Islam is heterogeneous; several traditions and legal schools offer contrasting perspectives on human sexuality and gender identity (Althaus-Reid 2009). This variability facilitates the reinterpretation of religious texts in light of evolving notions of human rights, personal dignity, and social justice (Bardhi 2002). LGBTQIA+ Muslims often manage complex dynamics, balancing their religious duties with their sexual and gender identities. Their narratives underscore the ongoing challenges of maintaining religious orthodoxy while promoting authentic self-expression in conservative and progressive Muslim communities (Abraham 2009).

This study aims to investigate how Islamic theological interpretations of homosexuality and gender diversity are being contested, confirmed, or altered in modern Muslim society. It seeks to comprehend the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ Muslims as they navigate their identities amid diverse cultural, religious, and political influences. This research aims to enhance the knowledge of identity, faith, and inclusion among the varied global Muslim community by connecting theological discourse with lived realities. Examine the experience of Teacher-A, a participant in this qualitative study, and observe his continual negotiation of his identity as a member of LGBTQIA+ Muslims.

As a member of conventional Islamic views on homosexuality, especially the mainstream interpretations that frame it as sinful or unnatural, can have a profound impact on LGBTQIA+ Muslims.

He faced Conventional Islamic doctrines that typically classify homosexuality as wicked or contrary to the natural order, grounded in particular interpretations of the Qur'an and Hadith.

As a member of LGBTQIA+ Muslims, I experience profound internal turmoil as I attempt to reconcile my faith, a fundamental piece of my identity, with elements of myself that are frequently repudiated by my religious community. This tension results in feelings of loneliness, guilt, and emotional turmoil. It also affects my identity as a member of LGBTQIA+ Muslims to see acceptance, spirituality, and belonging within Muslim communities and the larger society.

The participant discusses these views often create a painful internal conflict.

It's not just a matter of belief, it's about identity, belonging, and the struggle of trying to reconcile who you are with what you've been taught. For someone like me, who still identifies as Muslim and holds respect for the Qur'an and Hadith, this conflict becomes personal. What I've seen and experienced is that many LGBTQIA+ Muslims grow up in environments where being queer is rarely talked about, or if it is, it's with condemnation. That silence and fear can make it difficult to even name your identity, let alone live it. It affects mental health, relationships, and sometimes even one's ability to practice their faith openly. At the same time, I try to navigate this with respect for others who are fully committed to traditional Islamic teachings. I've learned to set my own boundaries ways of managing my life as someone who is queer and Muslim without disrespecting the faith or the people who hold more conservative views. That balance isn't easy, but it's essential for my peace and authenticity.

This idea posits that LGBTQIA+ Muslims undergo a continuous reconciliation of their religious and sexual/gender identities, influenced by internal conflicts and external societal expectations. Instead of forsaking one facet of identity for another, individuals strive to integrate various identities, pursuing personal tranquility, authenticity, and spiritual affiliation while honoring conventional religious structures. This study utilizes Intersectional Reconciliation Theory (IRT) as the conceptual framework and ethnomethodology as the empirical approach to examine how LGBTQIA+ Muslims navigate while exploring theological interpretations in modern Muslim contexts.

The intricacies of the conflict between faith and culture among LGBTQIA+ Muslims to comprehend a phenomenon of such magnitude that even the group with the most stringent regulations on deviant gender preference was engulfed. This study divulges several features and effects that stimulate contemplation, aiming to aid LGBTQIA+ Muslims and their families in making necessary adjustments to their chosen gender route. The suppression of homosexuality has been profoundly affected by prevailing circumstances.

Research Questions

This study corresponds with the emphasis on investigating the integration of religious and sexual identities, while emphasizing the methodological and theoretical framework, and addresses this gap by aiming to answer three principal research questions:

1. In what ways do conventional Islamic theological views of homosexuality influence the identification and lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ Muslims?
2. How can modern Muslim academics and communities view Quranic verses and Hadith about homosexuality to align Islam with contemporary perspectives on sexual identity and LGBTQIA+ rights?
3. What psychological, social, and spiritual problems do LGBTQIA+ Muslims have in reconciling their sexual orientation with Islamic doctrines, and how he navigates his religious and sexual identities within both conservative and progressive Muslim contexts?

The conventional Islamic views on homosexuality, especially the mainstream interpretations that frame it as sinful or unnatural, can have a profound impact on LGBTQIA+ Muslims. These views often create a painful internal conflict. It's not just a matter of belief, it's about identity, belonging, and the struggle of trying to reconcile who I am with what I've been taught. For someone like me, who still identifies as Muslim and holds respect for the Qur'an and Hadith, this conflict becomes personal. What I've seen and experienced is that many LGBTQIA+ Muslims grow up in environments where being queer is rarely talked about, or if it is, it's with condemnation. That silence and fear can make it difficult to even name my identity, that alone, I live it. It affects my mental health, relationships, and sometimes even my ability to practice my faith openly. At the same time, I try to navigate this with respect for others who are fully committed to traditional Islamic teachings. I've learned to set my own boundaries ways of managing my life as someone who is queer and Muslim without disrespecting the faith or the people who hold more conservative views. That balance isn't easy, but it's essential for my peace and authenticity.

This study examines how LGBTQIA+ Muslims reconcile their religious and sexual identities with Islamic theological interpretations and modern Muslim societies. It emphasizes their approaches to harmonizing faith and identity, navigating internal tensions, and cultivating a feeling of belonging.

Intersectional Reconciliation Theory as the Theoretical Framework

This study is based on Intersectional Reconciliation Theory, which examines how LGBTQIA+ Muslims harmonize their religious and gay identities within traditional Islamic doctrines and contemporary social environments. It emphasizes the strategies employed to manage internal conflicts, establish personal boundaries, and cultivate authenticity and

a sense of belonging. Comprehending these reconciliation processes can assist religious communities, mental health professionals in establishing more supportive, inclusive environments that validate both faith and identity.

In the context of Islam, gender orientation is perceived as a consequence of choice. The creation of homosexuals by God, coupled with the designation of homosexuality as a criminal act and the enforcement of penalties for it in this life and the afterlife, is perplexing. Accepting such a premise equates to recognizing that God is unjust. The human body can exhibit tendencies for a diverse array of natural and unnatural activities, including necrophilia, bestiality, fornication, and rape, among others. The term "Islam" originates from the Arabic language and signifies "to submit one's will to God." Monotheism is a belief system that asserts the existence of a singular divine entity, a supreme Creator of the universe, identified as God. It is Surah Al-Fathah 3.

Muslims assert that Islam is the authentic religion of God disclosed to humanity. It is a global religion that can be performed by anybody, at any time, and in any location. The fundamental principle of this lifestyle is complete surrender to God. Islam is a comprehensive and integrated lifestyle that encompasses all facets of existence. Islam comprehensively instructs humanity on conduct in all aspects of life: individual, social, material, moral, ethical, legal, cultural, political, economic, and global. Simultaneously identifying as Muslim and gay appears incongruous. Without seeking subjective justification from religious texts, both characteristics can coexist if we consider that serving God is independent of sexual orientation. In numerous chapters of the Holy Qur'an and the sayings of the Prophet Muhammad (S.A.W), homosexuality has consistently been condemned, with clear punishments prescribed both in the Islamic state and the afterlife.

Theological Interpretations in Modern Muslim Contexts

The Qur'anic verse on homosexuality is unequivocal according to this fatwa, which states: "homosexuality is sinful and shameful. In Islamic terminology, it is called al-fahsha' or an atrocious and obscene act. Islam teaches that believers should neither do the obscene acts, nor in any way indulge in their propagation. Further, Allah says: "Those who love (to see) obscenity published broadcast among the believers will have a grievous penalty in this life and the hereafter: Allah knows, and you know not." Homosexual behavior among people has been in existence since time immemorial, since the existence of man.

Typically, male homosexuals are termed gay, whilst female homosexuals are designated as lesbians. In recent years, homosexuality has emerged as a complex topic of examination within the domains of Science, Politics, and Religion. Consequently, the researcher is eager to undertake this intriguing study. Islam does not endorse homosexuality or lesbianism. It established stringent regulations regarding the preservation of a single gender and sex to substantiate the rationale for creation and the essence of the creation of man and woman. Consequently, individuals identifying as gay must articulate their circumstances authentically, either by publicly disclosing their identity when prepared or by achieving personal comfort with their status before anticipating

societal comprehension. Prophet Muhammad (SAW) cursed men who imitate women and women who imitate men. Abu Hurayrah, May Allah be peace with him, said: "The Messenger of Allah cursed the man who wears women's clothes and the woman who wears men's clothes." (Abu Dawood & Ibn Maajad 1998). According to Yusuf Ali's translation Qur'an (4:16)-"If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both. If they repent and amend, leave them alone". However, Prophet Muhammad (SAW) cursed men who imitate women and women who imitate men. Abu Hurayrah, May Allah is pleased with him, said: "The Messenger of Allah cursed the man who wears women's clothes and the woman who wears men's clothes." (Abu Dawood & Ibn Maajad 1998). According to Yusuf Ali's translation Qur'an (4:16)-"If two men among you are guilty of lewdness, punish them both. If they repent and amend, leave them alone".

While in the bible in Romans 1:26-27 (NIV), "Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural sexual relations for unnatural ones. In the same way, the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error." As pointed out in the book of 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 (NIV), "Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God." Also in the book of 1 Timothy 1:9–10 (NIV) "We also know that the law is made not for the righteous but for lawbreakers and rebels, the ungodly and sinful, the unholy and irreligious, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers, for the sexually immoral, for those practicing homosexuality, for slave traders and liars and perjurers and for whatever else is contrary to the sound doctrine."

Islam, LGBTQIA+ Identities, and Challenges

"Surah 4:19" However, anyone who defies God and His Messenger, and exceeds His limits, will be cast into the fire, where he shall reside eternally; for him awaits a disgraceful torment (Ali 2003). "Transgenderism is not present in the Quran." The hadith contains condemnations of effeminate men (perhaps eunuchs) and "women who emulate men." It is claimed that Mohammed exiled effeminate males but refrained from executing them because of their status as believers. Since the 1990s, there has been an increase in the visibility of homosexual, bisexual, lesbian, and transgender Muslims.

They demonstrate that one can be both gay or lesbian and religious. They frequently refrain from discussing the Quran due to its current sensitivity. In their response, they underscore that "Allah is infallible and has created us all distinct" (citing Surah 5:48), and assert that "Individuals should refrain from judging one another, as only Allah possesses that authority" (citing Surah 49:11). Ammerman (2007) stated that the Sodomites, excessively proud of their population and wealth, exhibited insolence towards humanity and impiety towards the divine, to the extent that they no longer recalled the benefits bestowed upon them, harbored animosity towards outsiders, and shunned any interaction with others.

Outraged by their behavior, God decided to punish them for their hubris, intending not only to destroy their city but also to render their land barren, ensuring it would produce no vegetation or fruit henceforth” (Muhsinhedricks, 2010). “Is He not aware, He who created, being the Subtle and the Omniscient?” Quran 67:14 Regardless of social conventions, trends, or cultural practices, Islamic principles and prohibitions, particularly those explicitly stated in the Quran and universally acknowledged, are definitive, encompassing issues such as homosexuality, usury, gambling, intoxicants, and adultery. According to Hadith Silsilat al Dhahab (2006), the throng assembled outside Lot's residence need not be solely of males, as the Hebrew plural "anashim" can encompass both genders, and the text indicates representation from all age groups (Genesis 19:4, 11). Leviticus 20:13 (cf. 18:22) states that it is abhorrent for a man to engage in sexual relations with another man as with a woman, and both participants are to be executed.

Moreover, the potential for coercion of one party is not addressed: both are tarnished. Nevertheless, the offense appears to be no more egregious than other capital crimes referenced in the same context, such as adultery and incest. Cultures, customs, and religion have significantly contributed to the repression of homosexuality. It is hardly unexpected that numerous religious academics from the three monotheistic faiths, Christianity, Judaism, and Islam, consider homosexuality abhorrent. (Bartkowski & Read 2003). Islam perceives homosexuality as a consequence of individual choice. It is unfathomable that God would create individuals as homosexuals and thereafter deem it a crime, imposing penalties for it in both this life and the afterlife.

Additionally, the literature underscores a multifaceted environment in which LGBTQIA+ Muslims confront overlapping difficulties of faith, identity, and societal acceptance. Studies indicate that persons navigating both Islamic and gay identities frequently experience religious isolation, cultural marginalization, and psychological distress. These hurdles may lead to identity conflict, impaired mental health, and obstacles in locating inclusive spiritual communities, all of which can affect personal well-being, social belonging, and involvement in faith. (Bates 2005).

Overcoming Challenges

The challenges illustrate a multifaceted environment in which LGBTQIA+ Muslims frequently encounter marginalization and identity conflict stemming from the perceived discord between their sexual orientation or gender identity and conventional Islamic doctrines (Blackwood 2010). However, recent scholarship underscores the diverse strategies these individuals employ to navigate and surmount these challenges. (Das 2024). examines how LGBT Muslims participate in communal identity building to establish environments for spiritual and personal affirmation. Deen (2003). Advocates for a critical examination of Islamic jurisprudence to promote more inclusive interpretations that recognize the lived experiences of underprivileged communities.

These endeavors frequently encompass the reinterpretation of religious texts, interaction with contemporary theological paradigms, and involvement in inclusive Muslim

communities that validate both faith and identity (Althaus-Reid, 2009). These strategies exemplify the resilience and agency of LGBTQIA+ Muslims, who challenge binary notions of faith and sexuality by creating hybrid identities that facilitate spiritual development and authenticity. These acts of reconciliation facilitate personal healing and promote extensive theological dialogue and communal development within Islam (Duderija 2016). LGBTQIA+ Muslims must confront overlapping problems concerning their faith, identity, and societal acceptance. Studies indicate that persons navigating both Islamic and gay identities frequently experience religious isolation, cultural marginalization, and psychological distress. These hurdles may lead to identity conflict, impaired mental health, and obstacles in locating inclusive spiritual communities, all of which can affect personal well-being, social belonging, and involvement in faith. (Garcia 2023).

Ethnomethodology as the Methodological Approach

This study uses ethnomethodology as its principal methodological framework to examine how LGBTQIA+ Muslims formulate, navigate, and maintain their identities among the intricate intersections of religion, sexuality, and societal norms. Ethnomethodology, as founded by Kvale (1996), examines the quotidian behaviors and interpretive mechanisms individuals employ to comprehend their social realities. This research employs ethnomethodology to elucidate how participants utilize religious practices, cultural norms, and personal experiences to construct coherent self-narratives that harmonize Islamic faith with LGBTQIA+ identity. This approach meticulously examines participants' language, sacraments, and interactions, emphasizing the "methods" they utilize to resolve identity conflicts, control stigma, and assert belonging within Muslim and LGBTQIA+ communities. The ethnomethodological perspective prioritizes the contextual and practical reasoning that influences how individuals express their faith and sexuality in everyday life, rather than attempting to generalize findings (Garcia 2023). This methodology is especially effective in revealing the nuanced, frequently overlooked dynamics that influence the continual negotiation of authenticity, dignity, and agency within LGBTQIA+ Muslims.

The Participant and the Research Context

The participant of this study is a 38-year-old gay Muslim educator living in Maasim, Sarangani Province, in the southern Philippines. Through his personal confession and consistent self-identification, he represents a distinctive convergence of Islam faith and queer identity. The participant, deeply entrenched in the Islamic tradition, remains a devout Muslim, steadfastly adhering to Islamic principles despite confronting the challenges of being openly gay in a primarily conservative sociocultural and religious context. Maasim, a rural municipality marked by a significant Muslim demographic and traditional community frameworks, offers a unique setting for comprehending the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ individuals within Islamic contexts. The participant's dual role as a proponent of religious orthodoxy and an individual expressing a marginalized sexual identity provides valuable insight into the daily negotiations, internal reconciliations, and social obstacles encountered by gay Muslims in rural environments. His narrative

functions as a crucial lens for examining the overarching contradictions among faith, sexuality, and communal belonging.

METHODOLOGY

A qualitative methodology was utilized to collect comprehensive, contextual data via in-depth interviews. Kvale (1996) and Seidman (2013) assert that interviews are essential in qualitative research, facilitating a comprehensive examination of participants' viewpoints, experiences, and the significances they get from their sociocultural contexts. The participant, a 38-year-old gay Muslim educator from Maasim, Sarangani Province, is fluent in English; therefore, the interview questions were delivered in English. The interview questions concentrated on his experiences reconciling his religious beliefs with his sexual identity, the problems faced in personal and professional contexts, and his methods for preserving authenticity while honoring Islamic principles.

The initial interview was conducted via Zoom, but further clarifications and inquiries were addressed over Facebook Messenger to maintain consistency and depth in the responses. Comprehensive narratives were gathered, providing insights into the participant's reconciliation of faith and sexuality, the associated emotional and social challenges, and the strategies he utilizes to develop and maintain his identity within a conventionally conservative environment. This method elucidated the participant's internal mechanisms of meaning construction, resilience, and boundary establishment. The interview was audio-recorded and carefully transcribed to maintain the authenticity and subtleties of the participant's comments. In compliance with ethical research norms, informed consent was secured from the participant before data collection, and confidentiality was rigorously upheld during the study.

Data analysis

The researchers transcribed the participants' narratives post-interview, and he was provided access to the transcriptions for verification and confirmation of accuracy. This research employed thematic analysis to discern themes and patterns within the transcripts. This inquiry utilized the six-phase thematic analysis methodology established by Braun & Clarke (2006). (Maguire & Delahunt, 2017) assert that this six-phase framework is the most often employed strategy, particularly in the social sciences. This is due to the provision of a clear and effective framework for conducting thematic analysis. Thematic analysis (TA) is a technique for identifying, examining, and understanding patterns of meaning (or "themes") in qualitative data, as stated by Clarke & Braun (2016). According to their claim, TA can be utilized to discern trends in data regarding participants' life experiences, opinions, perspectives, actions, and behaviors; this is termed "experiential" research, which aims to comprehend participants' thoughts, feelings, and behaviors (p. 297).

Commitment to Islamic Principles, Despite Facing the Difficulties of Being Openly Homosexual

The participant's experience highlights the significant difficulties encountered in managing a dual identity as a devout Muslim and an openly gay person in a largely orthodox Islamic culture. He describes the profound emotional turmoil caused by religious doctrines that typically denounce homosexuality, societal pressures that mandate compliance, and the psychological discord between faith and self-acceptance (Subhi & Geelan, 2012). Recurring challenges in his journey included feelings of loneliness, fear of rejection, and mental health concerns, intensified by the scarcity of discourse regarding queerness in the Muslim setting. Aside from these considerable hurdles, the participant demonstrates exceptional endurance and unwavering dedication to Islamic teachings. Instead of renouncing his faith, he opted to critically examine religious scriptures, highlighting Islam's core principles of mercy, compassion, and justice (Althaus-Reid, 2009; Ammerman, 2007). By establishing personal limits and adopting inclusive interpretations of Islamic teachings, he successfully harmonized his faith with his sexual identity while maintaining respect for established religious structures.

His narrative exemplifies a compelling paradigm of spiritual resilience, showcasing that faith and queerness are not inherently contradictory but may harmoniously coexist through profound introspection, bravery, and self-determination. The participant's experience exemplifies the feasibility of sustaining religious commitment while genuinely embracing one's identity as a gay Muslim. His experience highlights the necessity for more inclusive religious discussions and supportive environments that validate the intricate realities of LGBTQIA+ Muslims in modern communities.

Perceptions of religious texts are shaped by historical and cultural factors.

The participant contested that academic scholars should revisit Quranic verses and Hadith concerning understanding contemporary perspectives on sexual identity and LGBTQIA+ rights. When asked about his perceptions of religious texts toward identity and faith, he replied as follows.

I don't think of modernism as rejecting tradition; it's just what is now. These days, people are talking about gender, sexuality, and identity in new ways, and Islam can always adapt to these changes. So, I think it's not only okay but also important for Muslim communities and academics to look at Quranic verses and Hadith again with fresh eyes. This isn't to change what God revealed, but to better understand how it applies to the world today.

When he asked to explain his understanding of religious books and things like history, culture, and society, he said:

There is a difference between God's unchanging word and how people understand it based on their culture and history. A lot of the traditional ways of reading these works came from times when people didn't understand sexuality the same way we do now. Because of this, I value scholars who honestly and deeply look into this subject, asking:

How can we stay true to the principles of justice, compassion, and humanity while accepting the truth of LGBTQIA+ lives? The Qur'an and Hadith are very important to me spiritually, so I value them very much. I also think that Islam is not fixed, though. I try to hold on to both the truths of my faith and who I am as a gay Muslim. Respecting people who take more traditional paths and listening to what older people have to say helps me stay grounded. At the same time, I don't try to hide who I am.

The participant believes that faith and personal identity can live together as long as holy texts are read with respect and a willingness to reinterpret them carefully as people's knowledge grows. He also said that staying true to your religious beliefs and accepting your LGBTQIA+ identity don't have to be at odds with each other. Instead, they can be balanced with respect, kindness, and honesty. When asked to expound on the psychological, social, and spiritual problems do LGBTQIA+ Muslims have in reconciling their sexual orientation with Islamic doctrines. He stated:

One of the hardest things that I do is work toward healing. It's hard on the mind to carry around shame or the fear that my very presence could be seen as sinful or wrong. Some people feel like I have to choose between my faith and who I am, which can be very painful on a spiritual level. I don't think I should have to pick, though. Being gay and Muslim are both parts of who I am; I don't cancel each other out.

Muslim LGBTQIA+ individuals currently encounter intricate and frequently distressing problems as they endeavor to reconcile their rigorous commitment to faith and culture with their identities. Numerous individuals experience profound religious tensions, as conventional interpretations of Islam frequently regard varied sexual orientations and gender identities as prohibited, resulting in internal conflicts characterized by guilt, dread, and spiritual turmoil. Cultural and familial pressures exacerbate their circumstances, as expectations regarding marriage, gender roles, and the preservation of family honor restrict opportunities for candid expression. In numerous Muslim communities, disclosing one's sexual orientation may lead to rejection, isolation, or coerced marriage; however, in certain nations, legal repercussions and violence render mere existence as an LGBTQIA+ individual perilous.

The absence of inclusive religious venues results in several individuals unable to locate mosques or leaders that truly embrace them, exacerbating feelings of isolation and detachment from their spiritual group. This isolation frequently impacts mental health, leading to anxiety, melancholy, and a profound sense of worthlessness. Furthermore, Muslim LGBTQIA+ individuals may grapple with a distressing dual allegiance, feeling conflicted between adhering to their Islamic convictions and expressing their authentic selves. Ultimately, individuals who endeavor to understand sacred texts positively frequently encounter allegations of misrepresenting heavenly doctrines, compounding their personal challenges with religious solitude. Nevertheless, these hurdles, many persist in living with resilience, pursuing new avenues that respect both their beliefs and their true identities.

Promote inclusive scholars to reinterpret Islamic teachings with equity and compassion.

The participant considers the assistance of Muslim LGBTQIA+ individuals in reconciling their faith, culture, and identity, Various strategies may be implemented to mitigate conflicts. According to his perspectives:

Several things can be done to help Muslim LGBTQIA+ people balance their faith, society, and identity. First, it's important to support religious research that includes everyone. For example, Islamic teachings can be looked at again with new eyes that are based on justice, compassion, and a better understanding of how different people are. Being Muslim and being queer are both parts of me, and they don't cancel each other out. Socially, LGBTQIA+ Muslims often feel like outsiders in both worlds. In conservative Muslim communities, I face rejection in silence. In secular or LGBTQIA+ spaces, they might be questioned for holding onto my faith. So, it becomes about finding or creating third spaces communities that affirm my queerness as an Islamic.

In response to inquiries regarding his aspirations for achieving what he refers to as a "sense of compassion and justice," he stated:

To become compassionate and fair, I say I'm going to work on making my family and society more understanding. I think this essential purpose and knowing yourself. I've decided to set limits that keep my peace while still following my religion the way I see fit and listening to what older people have to say. I follow a middle road that makes me strong because I honor tradition without hiding who I am. Making Muslim communities safer and more accepting places, like mosques and support groups, along with encouraging open communication and mental health care that is sensitive to different cultures, can help build understanding, healing, and long-lasting change.

The participant's method of reconciling personal identification with religious tradition serves as the framework for fostering compassion, justice, and understanding in LGBTQIA+ Muslim communities. This holds particular significance in civilizations where cultural expectations profoundly influence individual lives, where acceptance can greatly affect emotional and spiritual well-being. Advocating for secure environments, transparent communication, and culturally attuned mental health services fosters a constructive community ethos that facilitates healing, resilience, and enduring social transformation.

The cumulative impact of familial bonds, cultural customs, spiritual beliefs, and the insights of elders.

The participant's contemplation on the collective impact of familial connections, cultural traditions, spiritual convictions, and the insights of elders.

As a part of the LGBTQIA+ Muslim community, I see how family ties, cultural traditions, spiritual beliefs, and the advice of older people all work together to shape who I am as a whole. Family and culture give people a sense of belonging, but they can also be a source of stress if my identity doesn't fully fit with what society expects. Spiritual beliefs give me

strength and meaning, but they often need to be reinterpreted through personal thought. When elders share their knowledge and experience, it's very helpful, but it's important to think critically about what they say. Keeping these forces in check is a lifelong process of accepting myself, being strong, and being true to myself.

When asked how he deals with the fact that he is both a Muslim and an LGBTQIA+ person, he said that:

When asked how I deal with my religion and identity as a Muslim LGBTQIA+ person, I set clear limits to keep the peace in my family and community. I respect my family's traditional views, but I also do private religious things that help me stay emotionally grounded, like prayer and meditation. I hang out with other people and am open about who I am by joining LGBTQIA+ support groups. I also take advice from older people, but change some rituals to fit my own life. This way, I stay true to my faith while being myself.

When prompted to expound on his navigation of the connection between faith and identity as a Muslim LGBTQIA+ individual, he replied as follows:

I find it quite challenging to maintain a healthy balance between my faith and my identity when I am a member of a Muslim society that is very rigid, particularly when I have parents who are traditional and elders who are very closed-minded. Because my family has traditional ideas on sexuality, I have been forced to conceal who I am to avoid controversy. For instance, when I go to get-togethers with my family, I am expected to adhere to certain actions that are in line with their values. At the same time, I find comfort in praying and reflecting in private, and I participate in online LGBTQIA+ support groups where I can openly discuss the challenges I am facing. I make an effort to honor both my faith and my identity to the best of my ability, even though it is a fight that never ends.

The participant is undergoing a challenging and often distressing journey to reconcile his Muslim faith with LGBTQIA+ identification, especially within a stringent cultural and familial framework. The individual recognizes the challenge of reconciling both facets of his identity, while society and familial expectations, grounded in conventional perspectives on sexuality, compel him to hide his authentic self. He seeks solace in private practices such as prayer and introspection, as well as in participation with LGBTQIA+ support groups, which offer a platform for open discourse and self-expression. Despite the persistent challenge, he endeavors to uphold both his faith and identity, even though the process is laden with tension and emotional hardship. This illustrates a journey of resilience, when the individual strives to maintain personal individuality while honoring familial ideals, despite the inherent contradiction between them.

In response to the inquiry of whether he is also deriving insights from his experiences, he replied:

Psychologically, it's exhausting to carry the weight of shame or fear that my very existence might be seen as wrong or sinful. Spiritually, there's often a sense of loss that some people feel like I must choose between my identity and my religion. But I don't believe I

should have to choose. Being Muslim and being queer are both parts of me, and I don't cancel each other out. Socially, LGBTQIA+ Muslims often feel like outsiders in both worlds. In conservative Muslim communities, I may face rejection or silence. In secular or LGBTQIA+ spaces, they might be questioned for holding onto their faith. So, it becomes about finding or creating third spaces communities that affirm both your queerness and your Islam. I've found that navigating this requires intention and self-awareness. I've chosen to set boundaries to protect my peace, to engage with my religion on my terms while still listening to the elders and learning from their wisdom. I don't dismiss tradition, but I also won't deny who I am. This middle path is where I've found the most clarity and strength. It's not always easy, but it's real, and it's mine.

The intricate psychological, spiritual, and societal complications encountered by a member of the LGBTQIA+ Muslim community as he negotiates conflicting identities. The internalization of shame and dread arising from religious and cultural obligations can result in emotional weariness and internal conflict. The spiritually incorrect duality that necessitates a decision between faith and identity engenders a terrible sense of loss. LGBTQIA+ Muslims frequently encounter discrimination from both conservative Muslim groups and secular LGBTQIA+ environments, resulting in dual alienation. The participant underscores the significance of fostering "third spaces", inclusive environments that respect both queerness and Islamic faith. By establishing personal boundaries, critically engaging with tradition, and cultivating self-awareness, the participant exerts control over their religious and personal path. His Selected "middle path" respecting faith while embracing genuine selfhood exemplifies a robust and adaptive strategy for negotiating identity in frequently antagonistic social environments.

DISCUSSION

This study emphasizes the dynamic and developing characteristics of the complex relationship among Islamic faith, LGBTQIA+ identities, and shifting cultural circumstances is a significant focus of investigation in modern theological and sociological research. The participant's experiences illustrate the complex obstacles and opportunities involved in balancing religious devotion with an openly LGBTQIA+ identity in predominantly orthodox Muslim communities. His journey highlights the psychological turmoil, social exclusion, and spiritual dilemmas frequently faced by LGBTQIA+ Muslims, while also providing insights into the transformational possibilities of inclusive theological reinterpretations.

Conventional Islamic interpretations have long considered various sexual orientations and gender identities as inconsistent with religious orthodoxy (Taylor & Snowdon, 2014). These perspectives have often resulted in internalized guilt, fear, and spiritual estrangement among LGBTQIA+ individuals, exacerbated by societal demands to adhere to heteronormative family frameworks and communal norms. The participant's narrative underscores the significant mental distress and isolation frequently experienced by LGBTQIA+ Muslims. The participant exhibits a nuanced engagement with Islam,

highlighting fundamental principles such as mercy, justice, and compassion (Wieringa 2022) instead of outright rejecting the faith. He promotes a critical yet respectful reevaluation of Quranic verses and Hadith through modern perspectives that consider contemporary notions of sexuality and human rights. This viewpoint contests the idea that Islam is intrinsically antagonistic towards LGBTQIA+ identities, proposing that historical and cultural influences have molded restrictive interpretations.

The participant's focus on establishing "third spaces," inclusive settings that validate both Islamic faith and gay identity, demonstrates a responsive adaptation to dual marginalization. In conservative Muslim environments, LGBTQIA+ individuals frequently face quiet or explicit rejection, yet in secular gay spaces, they may be scrutinized for their religious affiliations. This dual alienation highlights the necessity for secure, affirming environments where spiritual and sexual identities are not regarded as incompatible.

Furthermore, his methodology for managing familial, cultural, and religious traditions by establishing personal boundaries, upholding private spiritual practices, and participating in supportive LGBTQIA+ networks embodies a "middle path" strategy. This approach neither disregards tradition nor compromises personal authenticity, but rather endeavors to achieve a respectful integration of both aspects of identity.

The participant's position aligns with other trends in Islamic scholarship advocating for *ijtihad* (independent reasoning) to understand sacred scriptures according to modern circumstances. These initiatives promote a theology grounded in justice, equity, and humanity, seeking to harmonize traditional beliefs with contemporary perspectives on gender and sexuality. His experiences underscore personal resilience and contribute to an expanding discourse that perceives Islam as a dynamic, changing faith capable of accommodating multiple identities.

The participant's account illuminates the lived experiences of LGBTQIA+ Muslims and emphasizes the pressing necessity for inclusive religious discourse. His narrative illustrates how faith and identity, rather than being in opposition, may be reconciled through introspection, academic reevaluation, and communal initiatives. The incorporation of LGBTQIA+ experiences into Islamic discourses poses both a challenge and an opportunity for spiritual renewal and social reform as Muslim cultures confront issues of modernity, diversity, and fairness.

RESULTS

The participant's story highlights the significant psychological, social, and spiritual difficulties encountered by LGBTQIA+ Muslims in aligning their sexual orientation with Islamic beliefs in primarily orthodox cultural environments. His account highlights a continuous emotional conflict arising from conventional religious views that condemn homosexuality, societal expectations for conformity, and psychological dilemmas between

self-acceptance and religious commitment (Subhi & Geelan, 2012). The participant described persistent feelings of isolation, apprehension of rejection, and mental health vulnerabilities, compounded by the lack of candid discourse about LGBTQIA+ matters within Muslim groups. Despite these considerable obstacles, the participant exhibited remarkable endurance, opting to maintain his religion while critically interacting with Islamic teachings. By emphasizing Islam's core tenets of mercy, justice, and compassion (Althaus-Reid, 2009; Ammerman, 2007), he conveyed an inclusive perspective that facilitates the cohabitation of religious commitment and LGBTQIA+ identity.

The participant asserted that theological interpretations are historically and culturally contextual, rather than fixed. He argued that the interpretations of Quranic verses and Hadith should be reevaluated through modern perspectives on gender and sexuality to maintain relevance and equity. This critical perspective acknowledges that although the divine message remains constant, human perceptions have been influenced by historical contexts that were devoid of contemporary insights regarding various sexual identities (Althaus-Reid, 2009). The participant contended that reinterpreting sacred texts via an ethic of compassion and justice does not undermine Islam but instead reinforces its fundamental principles in confronting the lived experiences of all believers, including those who identify as LGBTQIA+.

The participant emphasized the twofold alienation experienced by LGBTQIA+ Muslims: exclusion in conservative Muslim groups and distrust in secular LGBTQIA+ environments. This exclusion engenders significant isolation, requiring the establishment of "third spaces" that validate both religious and LGBT identities. Engagement in culturally sensitive mental health support groups and inclusive religious discourses was seen as an essential tool for resilience. The participant navigated family expectations and communal norms by establishing polite boundaries, upholding private religious practices like prayer and meditation, and judiciously incorporating the insights of elders into his developing understanding of faith.

The participant's methodology corresponds with modern demands for *ijtihad* in Islamic scholarship. He promotes interpretations that adhere to the Qur'an's fundamental values of justice, kindness, and dignity, while also considering modern human situations (Ammerman, 2007). His lived experience contests the dominant binary of faith and queerness, positing that these identities can coexist via introspection, critical examination of tradition, and a dedication to authenticity.

The participant's account underscores the pressing necessity for inclusive religious studies that incorporate LGBTQIA+ experiences in Islam. His focus on compassion, justice, and cultural awareness indicates new opportunities for theological and community development. The participant demonstrates that personal and collective healing can transpire when individuals are empowered to respect both their spiritual beliefs and true identities by navigating his Muslim faith and LGBTQIA+ identity with integrity and resilience (Subhi & Geelan, 2012; Althaus-Reid, 2009; Ammerman, 2007).

Conclusions

This study examined the complex interplay between Islamic faith, LGBTQIA+ identification, and modern theological interpretations via the experiences of an out homosexual Muslim individual. The findings indicate that although conventional Islamic discourses provide considerable psychological, social, and spiritual obstacles for LGBTQIA+ Muslims, these problems are not insurmountable. The participant illustrated that rather than renouncing his religious identity, critical engagement with sacred texts can provide inclusive reinterpretations based on justice, mercy, and compassion.

The participants' experiences highlight the necessity of acknowledging that interpretations of religious teachings are influenced by historical and cultural settings, necessitating their evolution through engagement with modern perspectives on gender and sexuality. His navigation of parental obligations, societal constraints, and personal religious commitments exemplifies the psychological endurance necessary to sustain both religious devotion and genuine identity in frequently restrictive contexts. The participant's establishment of "third spaces" communities that validate both his queerness and Islamic faith offers a compelling framework for confronting the dual alienation often faced by LGBTQIA+ Muslims.

This study emphasizes the pressing necessity for inclusive Islamic studies that acknowledge the intricacies of contemporary Muslim identities. Accurate reinterpretations that honor both heavenly revelations and the lived experiences of various believers are essential for cultivating more compassionate, equitable, and inclusive Muslim communities. The participant's advocacy for a "middle path," reconciling tradition with self-acceptance, underscores that religious devotion and LGBTQIA+ identity are not intrinsically incompatible but can coexist via continuous self-reflection, respectful boundary establishment, and rigorous theological discourse.

The results support expanded religious, social, and academic initiatives to affirm the experiences of LGBTQIA+ Muslims. Advancing inclusive dialogues within Islamic theology and Muslim communities may promote healing, resilience, and social change, ensuring that faith groups serve as environments of inclusion rather than exclusion for all individuals, irrespective of sexual orientation or gender identity.

Recommendations

1. Advocate for Inclusive Theological Engagement: Muslim scholars and religious leaders must critically reassess Qur'anic passages and Hadith related to gender and sexuality, utilizing hermeneutical methods rooted in justice, compassion, and historical awareness.
2. Create "Third Spaces" for LGBTQIA+ Muslims: Muslim communities ought to foster the establishment of safe, supportive "third spaces" in inclusive environments where LGBTQIA+ Muslims can authentically express their religious and sexual identities.

3. Incorporate Culturally Attuned Mental Health Assistance: There is an urgent necessity to establish mental health treatments that are culturally and religiously sensitive to the distinct requirements of LGBTQIA+ Muslims. Culturally attuned counseling, peer support groups, and psychoeducational initiatives might mitigate the psychological distress stemming from internalized shame, social ostracism, and spiritual discord.
4. Promote Intergenerational Discourse Within Muslim Communities: Encourage constructive interaction between older, traditional generations and younger, diverse members of Muslim communities is essential.
5. Advanced Research on LGBTQIA+ Muslim Experiences: Future academic inquiries must persist in documenting and analyzing the experiences of LGBTQIA+ Muslims within diverse cultural, legal, and theological frameworks.

Compliance with ethical standards

The study adhered to ethical standards, and participants were informed about the purpose and procedures. Their right to withdraw without penalty was also capitalized. Written consent was obtained from the participants. Privacy was ensured through data anonymization, and access was restricted to authorized researchers. The author reported no conflicts of interest or funding support. Respect for participants was prioritized by observing protocols and consulting the department heads. This ensured the research upheld ethical integrity and cultural sensitivity throughout its design and implementation.

Acknowledgements

The researcher extends heartfelt gratitude to all who contributed to the success of this educational learning. Special thanks go to the participant, whose insights and experiences were invaluable to the research. Gratitude is also extended to my participant, colleagues, and mentors for their guidance and approval, ensuring the study adhered to ethical standards.

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APA Citation:

Ligoyligoy, J. M., Jabalde, E. J. R., Reganit, J. J., Dinopol, G. P., Mainit, M. J. V., & Spadilla, M. A. (2025). RECONCILING FAITH AND IDENTITY: AN ETHNOMETHODOLOGICAL EXAMINATION OF LGBTQIA+ MUSLIMS UTILIZING INTERSECTIONAL RECONCILIATION THEORY. *Ignatian International Journal for Multidisciplinary Research*, 3(4), 1717–1735. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.15342760>

ligoyligoyjoel2@gmail.com
eduardo.jabalde@deped.gov.ph
jogenesjeanne.mainit@deped.gov.ph
grace.dinopol001@deped.gov.ph
mariejane.mainit@deped.gov.ph
mosaba.spadilla001@deped.gov.ph