

‘The Reluctant Homosexuals’: Documenting the gay Muslims’ discursive subversion of Western-Liberal conception of gay rights

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The majority of Muslim communities worldwide are unapologetic in their stance against homosexuality. This position of theirs in a world that is increasingly accepting of the LGBT rights has caused great friction within Muslim-majority communities. In Malaysia, this is especially pronounced between the more liberal fraction of society and the larger conservative society. For many Muslims including the gay Muslims themselves, Islam’s rejection of homosexuality is perceived as resolute and immutable. This creates a novel space for discursive introspection of this issue from a new angle. We adopt phenomenology as the theoretical framework guiding this research whereby six writings of gay Muslims who uphold the mainstream teaching of Islam that reject homosexuality are chosen to be studied. The writings are taken from a popular Malaysian confessional webpage, IIUM Confession where individuals can post their thoughts, experience, or story anonymously to be shared to a large audience. We also utilize Discursive Action Model (DAM) as the analytical lens contextualizing the discourse of these ‘reluctant homosexuals’. Themes from the subjects’ writings are then identified; they are 1) narration as effective device to establish credibility; 2) confessional writings as a form of proselytization, and 3) highlighting the struggles of gay Muslims in containing their desire. In a country where homosexual acts are still legally punishable with imprisonment and whipping, and where Islam is heavily institutionalized in the form of various governmental agencies and department; contextualizing the issue of LGBT requires a great balancing act. While abuse towards LGBT individuals by these agencies are of serious concern, the need to view LGBT movement and ideology from an Islamic perspective as what is done in this research is also crucial in illuminating this pressing issue.

Keywords: homosexuality, Islam, Discursive Psychology, Discursive Action Model, Phenomenology