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The development of a comprehensive sexual health education for Western Muslim youth

The misunderstandings of the West towards Islam are frequently directed towards issues regarding the treatment of women, Islamic dress and issues regarding sex and sexuality. The proliferation of pop culture, paperback novels on the mistreatment of Muslim women and mass media has only perpetuated the conundrum of misunderstandings and misconceptions about Islam and Muslims. There is no better time than the present to dispel the myths, misconceptions and misunderstandings of Islam and to promote the views, values and visions of Muslims.

Research

My research on sexuality sets itself in the middle of both local and international turbulence on Islam and Muslims and is aimed to be an entry point towards a move from the dominant one-dimensional Western representation of Islam. In my research, a contemporary look at the problems, perspectives and possibilities surrounding the development of a comprehensive sexual health education for Western Muslim youth has been explored. Education regarding health and sexual health matters occupies a central position in Islam and should be dealt with as part of the religious upbringing of a Muslim child. An Islamic perspective on health and sexual health education is generally underpinned by the teachings of the Holy Qur'an and Hadith and be in accordance with Sharia. The complexity of achieving comprehensive sexual health education that reflects and honours Islamic teachings as presented in Islam's core texts, the Qur'an, Hadith and Sharia (Islamic Law) were discussed by

Western teachers, students and members of the Muslim community.

Despite the cultural and ethnic diversification of Western societies and the growing Muslim student population in many Western schools, present health education curriculum decision-making and practice exert a dominant Judeo-Christian values system and ideology. Furthermore, the permissive sexual ideology, which endorses many forms of non-procreative sex including masturbation, oral sex and accepts homosexuality as morally valid is the driving force shaping the nature and scope of sexual health education in the West today. In exposing dominant ideological perspectives of sexual health, an opportunity was created to contest these and space was created for conversations about possibilities.

Greater understanding

The findings of the research offer teachers, students, policy-makers and cultural theorists greater understanding of sexual health for Muslims by Muslims and offer a better means of dealing with the tensions between this curriculum issue and classroom practice.

In discussing their preferences for a comprehensive sexual health education curriculum for their students, the necessary space for the voices of marginalised Westerners on a curriculum issue (which has been the cause of much dissension in the Western Muslim community) was created. A wider dialogue on the importance, necessity and possibility of working with and for marginalised voices was also created in this research.