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Education and Tolerance of Homosexuality in Diverse Islamic Contexts

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Education and Tolerance of Homosexuality
in Diverse Islamic Contexts

by

Camila Swift

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of

Master's of Science
in
Sociology

Thesis Committee:
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Abstract

This study examines the relationship between educational attainment and moral tolerance of homosexuality among Muslims in Algeria, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey. Utilizing human development theory to understand how educational attainment affects social values, the analysis draws on data from over 5,000 respondents from the Pew Research Center's "World's Muslims" dataset, which includes responses from a nationally representative sample of Muslims in these four countries. Logistic regression models and predicted probabilities are used to explore how educational attainment relates to moral tolerance of homosexuality, adjusting estimates for various alternate explanations through the use of control variables. The findings reveal that the moral tolerance of homosexuality is actually higher among respondents with the lowest levels of education in three of the four countries: Algeria, Malaysia, and Pakistan. In contrast, respondents in Turkey are more likely to be morally tolerant of homosexuality if they have higher levels of educational attainment. I use the Human Development Theory to make sense of the results that challenge the general applicability of modernization theory, showing that educational effects on tolerance of homosexuality are contingent upon broader political and cultural contexts that are best accounted for by the Human Development Theory. The Human Development theory builds on limitations of modernization theory. This research contributes to understanding how education in Muslim-majority countries can both challenge and reinforce prevailing cultural and political ideologies regarding homosexuality. It underscores the necessity of considering educational content and

societal context in formulating educational policies aimed at fostering tolerance and inclusivity.

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Introduction

Ronald Inglehart's (Welzel 2005) post-materialist thesis views changes in democracy, cultural values, economic development and modernization can be measured on two planes, survival values versus self-expression values (on the x-axis) and traditional versus secular-rational values (on the y axis). The data from the world values surveys can be used to create cultural maps in which clusters of countries reflect the shared cultural values. The hypothesis is that as individuals become less concerned with survival they can then focus on self-expression values prioritize quality of life and the individual's well-being, such as defending the rights of vulnerable minorities. Similarly on the y-axis, traditional values emphasize religion, deference to authority, nationalism and family values, and typically oppose divorce, abortion, euthanasia, and suicide. Inglehart describes the transition between traditional to secular-rational values as substituting religion and superstition with science and bureaucracy. The Human Development Theory furthers the work of Inglehart and modernization theorists by encompassing a more encompassing and dynamic approach to social change. The Human Development Theory posits that individual game interactions, strategy decisions and outcome histories determine the individual's experience. The Human Development Theory also describes how these decisions from individual actors are constrained and incentivized by changing macro economic, cultural social and political environments conditioning individual's attitudes at any particular time (Abdollahian et. al. 2013). The Human Development theory argues that liberal values are outcomes of democracy, economic development, and modernization and result from a shift toward post-

materialistic values which ostensibly leads to greater social tolerance. Consistent with the human development theory and Inglehart's post-materialist thesis, attitudes toward homosexuality have become more liberal worldwide over recent decades. Yet differences across countries are evident. Higher levels of educational attainment are a key marker of modernization, and yet education has been known to be a double edge sword, at times fostering freedom and others serving as an instrument for integrating younger generations into the logic of the current system (Freire 2000). Predominantly Muslim countries integrate the education system's responsibility for educating the masses with the responsibility of perpetuating the cultural and religious teachings of Islam. Given the state's roles in education and the persistent Muslim intolerance of homosexuality, it may be plausible that a self-proclaimed Muslim state's education system may be at least partially responsible for the resulting intolerance of homophobia in its citizens. I test for this assumption, by analyzing how views towards homosexuality differ across citizens with varying exposure to the country's education system. I hypothesize that individuals with the least education will be the most tolerant of homosexuality and respondents with the most education will be the least tolerant of homosexuality.

This study uses data from over 5,000 respondents from the Pew Research Center's "World's Muslims" dataset to investigate: 1) How does the educational attainment of Muslim individuals in Algeria, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey relate to their moral tolerance of homosexuality? 2) Does this relationship hold even after accounting for confounding variables? This research is important because it examines a gap in the existing literature that primarily focuses on

democratic countries. It tests the assumption that education universally fosters liberal views and explores how human development theory, which posits that social values are impacted by educational attainment among other factors, can predict the onset of liberal values (Abdollahian et al. 2012).

Literature Review

Theoretical Framework

Modernization theory describes how economic development influences shifts towards liberal social attitudes, and previous studies on the relationship between educational attainment and views on homosexuality have used modernization theory to interpret their results (Andersen & Fetner 2008). Studies have consistently shown that as societies prosper economically, they tend to transition from survival values to self-expression values, which include greater tolerance of diverse sexualities (Andersen & Fetner, 2008; Brewer, 2003; Loftus, 2001). The Human Development Theory builds on Modernization Theory to offer a comprehensive framework for understanding the various impacts of socio-economic progress on cultural, social, and political transformations within societies. The Human Development Theory asserts that socio-economic advancements lead to profound shifts in basic human values, which subsequently shape political systems (Yesilada & Noordijk, 2010). Central to this theory are two main dimensions of cross-cultural value variation: religious (traditional) versus secular (autonomy) values, and materialist (survival) versus post-materialist (self-expression) values (Yesilada & Noordijk, 2010). The limitation of

modernization theory is that it assumes that the process of modernization is linear from traditional to modern. What modernization theory can't explain are events such as the Iranian revolution (1979) which spurred a cultural transformation from secular Western-aligned monarchies to Islamic theocracies that emphasize traditional values. Alternatively, Inglehart's post-materialist thesis and the Human Development theory view shifts in basic human values (traditional/secular and survival/self-expression) that shape the political systems. For the purposes of this study I focus on one aspect of human development, education, and how education is related to tolerance of homosexuality.

The applicability of Human Development Theory to research on how education predicts tolerance of homosexuality is particularly insightful. Education, mostly a state-controlled institution in Muslim-majority countries, plays a pivotal role in reshaping individuals' values and attitudes (Abdollahian et al., 2010). Just as religion played a central role in the Iranian/Islamic Revolution; alignment with traditional/Islamic perspectives has been a key winning political strategy popular among political candidates in most Muslim-majority countries. Governments in Muslim-majority countries generally align their public institutions to reflect values and practices of the Islamic religion, which includes making modifications to school curricula. In most Muslim-majority countries, Islam is a mandatory subject from grades K-12. According to Human Development theory, increased education correlates with a shift from traditional, survival-oriented values towards secular, self-expression values. Empirical studies using data from sources like the World Values Surveys have shown that higher levels of education are associated

with more liberal attitudes towards homosexuality, as educated individuals are more likely to embrace values of autonomy and self-expression (Yesilada & Noordijk 2010). However, the theory also underscores the importance of cultural and religious contexts, which can moderate or even counteract the effects of education on tolerance. Therefore, Human Development theory provides a framework for understanding the multidimensional relationship between education, a state-controlled tool that reflects Muslim values and wider political environments such as tolerant attitudes towards homosexuality across different societies (Yesilada & Noordijk 2010; Abdollahian et al. 2010).

The Human Development theory emphasizes that a country's development may progress toward modernization but it may also progress towards more traditionalist perspectives. The assumption of modernization theory is that socioeconomic progress leads towards more liberal values; alternatively the human development theory accounts for socioeconomic progress that also results in shifts towards more traditional values. Unlike classical modernization theory, which posited a linear and inevitable progression towards development, the Human Development theory emphasizes the non-linear and multidirectional, context-dependent nature of modernization (Yesilada & Noordijk 2010).

The role of education within the processes of human development is critical, as it serves as a medium through which cultural values are taught, practiced, reproduced, and perpetuated. While the ideal perspective of education is that it fosters freedom, education can also be an instrument for integrating younger generations into the current system

(Freire 2000). In countries where Islamic beliefs form part of the educational curriculum, education may be teaching perspectives of homophobia. A heterosexual hidden curriculum is documented even in some American high schools, where they have detrimental effects on interpersonal relationships among and between genders. An American reader might recall the stigma of being associated with homosexuality during the AIDS crisis, a prejudice that lingers in some American cultures. The best way to interrupt LGBTQ+ prejudice is through education; similarly, when prejudiced adults teach their beliefs, such as in a religious setting, the (mis)education of students is the principal cause of homophobic and transphobic beliefs (Goodboy & Martin 2018). An example comes from Algerian-born novelist Anouar Rahmani, who identifies as third-gender. Rahmani shared some of his early poetry with his elementary school teacher; the teacher's response was, "Those who change the word of God, God will break their bones" (O'Driscoll 2022). His teacher's response demonstrates how teachers in a religious-Muslim context might teach other students to express their prejudice against students that don't behave in traditional heteronormative ways.

While education generally promotes tolerance, the relationship of educational attainment to liberal-democratic values critically depends on the degree to which political freedoms are available in the country—namely, the separation of church and state (Zhang & Brym 2019). Political conditions play a decisive role in determining the role that education is allowed to play. In settings where political freedoms are restricted, even well-educated individuals may not exhibit a greater likelihood of tolerance of homosexuality. In other words, governments influence the effectiveness of educational

systems in promoting liberal values (Zhang & Brym 2019). Governments with large Muslim populations or governments that are self-proclaimed Islamist governments have a great political incentive to promote Islamic teachings. In Algeria, where Islamism and secularism played a key ideological role in the 1990s civil war, Islamic education is an integral part of Algerian schools, as it is compulsory for all students from years one through nine (Clark 2006). In Malaysia, Islamic education is mandatory for Muslim students in public schools in primary and secondary school, and morals and ethics courses are mandatory for non-Muslim students (US Department of State 2022). In Pakistan, until 2023, Muslim and non-Muslim students alike were required to take Islamic Studies from grades one through twelve (Christian Daily International 2024). Lastly, in Turkey, there is a state union called the Presidency of Religious Affairs that governs and manages religious affairs, including religious education (US Department of State 2021). In the following section, I relate the specific Islamic beliefs that pertain to the tolerance of homosexuality.

Education and Perspectives of Homosexuality in Algeria, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey

To capture the unique education governance and status of homosexuality in each country, I separate the following descriptions by country. Because the data was collected in 2011, I cater my descriptions to emphasize this period of time. However, I also provide a glimpse into current events, further contextualizing the predictions from my findings for each country.

In 2011, Algeria's population was approximately 37 million (The World Bank 2011). The majority are Arab-Berber, and Arabic is the official language, with Berber also recognized as a national language (United Nations Statistics Division 2011). Islam is the dominant religion (Lowi 2009). Algeria achieved independence from France in 1962 after a prolonged war. The early 21st century in Algeria was marked by recovery from the civil conflict of the 1990s, and by 2011 the country was relatively stable but still grappling with governance and economic reform issues (Benrabah 2013). The state-controlled education system is divided into primary, middle, and secondary education and is compulsory up to the age of 16. In 2011, the country's efforts in education were focused on increasing access to education and improving educational standards. However, challenges such as overcrowding, inadequate facilities, and teacher shortages persisted (Benrabah 2013). In Algeria, Ordinance 66-156 Article 338 stipulates that individuals found guilty of homosexual acts are subject to imprisonment ranging from two months to two years, accompanied by a fine of 500 to 2000 Algerian Dinars (Ottoson 2010). Homosexuality is illegal under Article 338 of the Penal Code of 1991, which imposes penalties for same-sex acts (Algerian Penal Code 1991). Social attitudes toward homosexuality are generally conservative, influenced by religious and cultural norms. LGBTQ+ issues are not part of the educational curriculum. Stigma and discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals is likely to impact their educational experiences (Human Rights Watch Reports on Algeria 2011).

As of 2011, Malaysia had a population of approximately 28 million people (The World Bank 2011). It is a multi-ethnic and multi-religious society, with ethnic Malays

constituting the majority, followed by large Chinese and Indian minorities (United Nations Statistics Division 2011). The official language is Malay, although English is also widely used (Andaya & Andaya 2001; Milner 2012). Formed in 1963 from various British colonial territories in the region, Malaysia has enjoyed relatively stable political conditions and considerable economic growth, especially in the manufacturing and service sectors (Milner 2012; Gomez & Jomo 1999). The education system in Malaysia is divided into national schools, which teach in Malay, and vernacular schools, which teach in Chinese and Tamil. Education is compulsory for all children between the ages of 6 and 15. The government has consistently invested in education, focusing on technological integration and quality improvement (Tan & Santhiram 2014; Postiglione & Tan 2007). Homosexuality is illegal in Malaysia, governed by both secular laws, which criminalize "carnal intercourse against the order of nature," and Sharia law, which applies to Muslims and includes harsh penalties for same-sex acts. The relevant penal code provisions originate from British colonial law enacted in 1936 (Malaysian Penal Code 1936). Formal education regarding LGBTQ+ rights or issues is absent from schools. The educational environment is often hostile toward LGBTQ+ individuals, influenced by prevailing conservative and religious attitudes (Lee 2011; Human Rights Watch Reports on Malaysia 2011).

Presently, LGBTQ+ Malaysians face increasing scrutiny and discrimination under the governance of Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim (Latiff 2023). The Prime Minister, seen as a progressive reformer, has achieved some success in winning the support of Islamists by actions such as vowing that Malaysia will never recognize LGBTQ rights, banning

books that promote the LGBTQ lifestyle, and halting a music festival after a British pop band's male member kissed a bandmate on stage (Latiff, 2023). Anwar himself was imprisoned for nearly a decade on sodomy charges, which he claims were fabricated and politically motivated (Latiff 2023). Malaysian activists report rampant harassment of queer Malaysians on social media, which activists say has increased since Prime Minister Anwar Ibrahim took office (Latiff 2023). Additionally, the Malaysian government issued a statement warning that anyone buying or selling LGBTQ-themed Swatch watches could face up to three years in prison, explaining that it "may harm the morality" of the country (Lyons 2023). Like Algeria, Malaysia has Islamic movements that have been legally recognized and integrated into the political process (Esposito & Voll 1996). Both Malaysia and Algeria represent forms of political Islam that interact with existing political structures rather than seeking to overthrow them, illustrating their unique trajectories where Islamic values and democratic governance attempt to coexist and influence one another in legal and political frameworks (Esposito & Voll 1996).

In 2011, Pakistan had a population exceeding 180 million (The World Bank 2011) with a diverse ethnic makeup that includes Punjabis, Sindhis, Pashtuns, and others (United Nations Statistics Division 2011). Urdu is the national language, while English is also an official language used in government and legal matters (Malik 1996). Pakistan has experienced a turbulent history characterized by military rule, political instability, and conflicts with neighboring India over Kashmir (Jalal 1995). In 2011, the country was still recovering from the severe floods of 2010 and grappling with internal security challenges (Fair 2014). The Pakistani education system is marked by disparities,

encompassing public schools, private schools, and madrassas (Islamic religious schools). The literacy rate is relatively low, especially among women (Saigol 2007). The government faces challenges such as inadequate funding, poor infrastructure, and a curriculum that varies greatly in quality (Hoodbhoy 1998). Homosexuality is illegal in Pakistan under the Penal Code of 1860, which criminalizes same-sex relationships (Pakistani Penal Code 1860). Cultural and religious conservatism strongly influences societal attitudes, leading to widespread discrimination (Khan 2014). LGBTQ+ issues are not included in the educational curriculum, and the environment is generally unwelcoming for LGBTQ+ students, with frequent cases of bullying and discrimination (Human Rights Watch Reports on Pakistan 2011).

Since 2023, Pakistan allows transgender people to receive identity documents with their preferred name and gender under the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act of 2018. In late 2023, the Lahore High Court upheld this law for the first time in *Nayyab Ali v. Federation of Pakistan*. While Pakistan recognizes non-binary genders, allows for legal changes of gender, and provides gender-affirming care, individuals can still be imprisoned for acts of homosexuality, same-sex adoption is illegal, LGBTQ+ individuals are indefinitely banned from donating blood, and homosexuals are not banned from the military, and conversion therapy is legal. A public opinion survey in Pakistan finds that only 2.56% of respondents supported the justifiability of homosexuality (Equaldex 2022) and only 41.15% said they would accept homosexuals as neighbors (Equaldex 2022). Pakistan is described as having a complicated relationship with Islam and democracy, with intermittent periods of political democracy and interruptions by

military rule putting strain on reconciliations between modernity and traditional Islamic values (Esposito & Voll 1996). Given Pakistan's recent strides toward defending trans rights; its turbulent history with militancy and war, and its persisting ambivalence in tolerating homosexual neighbors (41.15%; Equaldex 2022) I expect Pakistan to reflect a population that is politically polarized with a clear divide in opinions across individuals with varying levels of education.

In 2011, Turkey's population was approximately 74 million people (The World Bank 2011). The majority of the population is Turkish, with a large Kurdish minority (United Nations Statistics Division 2011). Turkish is the official language, and the majority of people adhere to Sunni Islam. Turkey is a country with a rich history that bridges Europe and Asia. Established as a republic in 1923 by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, who implemented extensive reforms to secularize and modernize the nation, by 2011 Turkey was experiencing political stability and economic growth under the AK Party. Education in Turkey is centralized and compulsory until the age of 18. The education system underwent important reforms in the early 2000s aimed at increasing access to education and improving the quality of teaching. Challenges remain in addressing disparities between urban and rural schooling and integrating Kurdish language rights into the education system. Turkey, unique among these nations, legalized sexual acts between consenting adults in 1858 as part of the Tanzimat Secular Reforms of the Ottoman Empire. However, there are no specific laws protecting LGBTQ+ individuals from discrimination.

The social climate is mixed in Turkey, with some tolerance toward homosexuality in urban areas and with persistent challenges and discrimination, particularly in rural areas. LGBTQ+ issues are largely absent from the educational system. However, there are small-scale initiatives and organizations advocating for more inclusiveness in educational settings, especially considering the risks—social and economic ramifications—of exposing non-normative genders and sexualities (Human Rights Watch Reports on Turkey 2011). In recent speeches, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan emphasized the sacredness of family and vowed to defend it against “LGBT forces” (Garry 2023). Prominent Turkish government officials have labeled homosexuality “a disease” (Ajiki 2024). Yearly Pride parades are increasingly raided with tear gas and water cannons, leading to multiple arrests (Garry 2023). And yet Mustafa Korkmaz, a tourism professional from Taksim, describes his neighborhood as “sort of a gay ghetto” akin to San Francisco in the 1960s, noting that LGBTQ+ life is better now than it was 20 years ago (Garry 2023). Simultaneously, Khaan, a Turkish-born gay man from Istanbul, migrated to the Netherlands due to the lack of LGBTQ+ protections and the inability to marry in Turkey (Garry 2023).

Compared to Algeria, Malaysia, and Pakistan, Turkey seems to be relatively more progressive but is still lacking in legal protections and marriage rights for LGBTQ+ individuals. Turkey serves as a model where secular governance coexists with a strong Islamic identity, providing an example of the integration of Islamic values within a democratic political system (Esposito 2002). Since 2002, Turkey has undergone political transformation under the Justice and Development Party (AKP) led by Recep Tayyip

Erdoğan, characterized by its promotion of Islamist values and traditions. The AKP has steered Turkey away from its historically secular path defined by Kemalism—the driving force behind Turkey's nationalization and state-building process—which was founded on Turkey's secular and modernizing ideology inspired by Mustafa Kemal Atatürk, which had previously rejected incorporating Islamic values into public policy and administration. Given Turkey's long history of a secular government and its recent transformation towards pro-Islamist values, I expect that Turkey's secular values remain reflected in its more educated respondents showing greater tolerance of homosexuality compared to respondents with less education who may be less likely to be tolerant of homosexuality. The primary driving force for my hypothesis for Turkey stems from the century-old tradition of secular values which I expect would persist despite a recent rise in populist Islamic leader.

In summary, each country has unique conditions in which it developed socially, religiously, ethnically, and historically. Aside from the influence of Islam, Algeria, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey share few characteristics. For example, Malaysia is influenced by the cultural heritage of the Mughal Empire, and Turkey is influenced by the cultural heritage of the Ottoman Empire. Aside from the influence of learning Arabic for religious purposes, none of these countries speak the same language. Any commonalities are related to the influence of the Islamic religion. Some examples include the call to prayer, which can be heard from mosques five times a day; the celebration of religious holidays such as Ramadan, Eid al-Fitr, and Eid Al-Adha; learning to read and understand the teachings of the Quran from an early age; and the ubiquity of women who

wear the hijab. Finally, in all of these countries, schools play a role in the effort to educate on religious Islamic teachings. As the predominant Muslim views among Muslim leaders of the last thirty years have been characterized by a stance of intolerance when it comes to homosexuality, I expect the education system to participate to some degree in the dissemination of homophobic perspectives as a part of the Islamic curriculum.

Another important characteristic is that all four of these countries—Algeria, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey—all have a plethora of news reports, books and social media posts that document unique environments of homophobia in each of these countries.

Cultural and Religious Contexts that May Differentiate the Relationship between Educational Attainment and Views of Homosexuality Across Countries

In Muslim-majority countries, Islamic identity is often one of the most salient identities, which politicians often harness for political gain. Sharia Law and traditional Islamic doctrines often govern personal behavior and societal norms (Siraj & Kuggele 2003). Sharia Law is the application of Islamic beliefs into the legal framework of a country. The Quran includes the story of the People of Lut, which is most often interpreted as proof of the religion's condemnation of homosexuality. Critics highlight that the term for homosexuality didn't exist and that the original word refers to sexual perversions such as rape. Additionally, Islamic scholars are most commonly male, meaning that dominant interpretations of the Quran are biased, providing the perspective of the dominant gender. Feminists like Fatima Mernissi have pointed out that feminist interpretations of the Quran are desperately needed, but in the meantime, mainstream

Islamic beliefs condemn homosexuality. The punishment for homosexuality varies from stoning to death to burning alive, depending on the hadith, but generally, Islamists believe that homosexuality should be condemned.

Hypotheses

Just as the post-modernist theory places countries at unique positions within two coordinate planes of survival/self-expression values and traditional/secular-rational values, I suspect that these dynamics play out differently in each country I describe the cultural, historical, ethnic, and political components that uniquely shape the trajectory of each country in order to formulate a hypothesis of what my data will show for each country. For instance, I hypothesize that in Turkey, a country with a century-old tradition of secular governance should show that higher education relates to greater tolerance of homosexuality despite the recent rise of Erdoğan, a populist Islamic leader. Although Erdoğan rise to power may be interpreted as a shift toward traditional values, I expect that it would take several generations to eradicate the long standing secular cultural and government tradition of Kemalism established by Atatürk. Although all are Muslim-majority countries, Turkey's governance is described as more liberal and secular in contrast with the other nations where conservative religious doctrines are deeply integrated into state and educational systems (Ottoson 2010) highlighting the role of secular governance in shaping educational perspectives leading more educated individuals in Turkey generally being more tolerance of homosexuality than those with less education. Esposito and Voll (1996) examine the political landscapes of six

countries—Algeria, Egypt, Iran, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Sudan—to understand the relationship between Islamic teachings and democratic governance. From these countries, Algeria and Malaysia have Islamic movements that have been legally recognized and integrated into the political process (Esposito & Voll 1996). Algeria and Malaysia represent a form of political Islam that interacts with existing political structures rather than seeking to overthrow them, illustrating different trajectories where Islamic values and democratic governance attempt to coexist and influence each other within a legal and political framework (Esposito & Voll 1996). In Algeria and Malaysia, higher education might not equate to more tolerance of homosexuality, because of the general conservative nature of the educational content and the stronger influence of religious doctrines in education meaning that as individuals progress through education, they have also inherently been exposed to a great deal of Islamic teachings within the framework of the education system. I hypothesize that in Algeria and Malaysia, individuals with more education will be less likely on average to be tolerant of homosexuality and that individuals with less education will be more likely on average to be tolerant of homosexuality. These country-specific dynamics illustrate the role that both the content of education and the overarching political and religious context play in shaping societal attitudes. In a study by Esposito and Voll (1996), Pakistan is described as having a complicated relationship with Islam and democracy, with intermittent periods of political democracy and interruptions of military rule putting strain on reconciliations of modernity and traditional Islamic values. Given the polarization in Pakistan's political situation, I hypothesize that those with the most education will more likely to be tolerant

of homosexuality compared to those with less education who will be more tolerant of homosexuality because those with less education will be more likely to be concerned with survivalist goals compared to self-expression values such as tolerance of homosexuality.

I summarize my hypothesis by saying that according to the post-materialist thesis and the human development theory, each country finds itself in a different position within the planes of survival/self-expression values and traditional/secular-rational values and will therefore show different results. I hypothesize that Turkey will show a more typical western model with those who are more educated being more likely to be tolerant of homosexuality. I hypothesize that Algeria and Malaysia, both of whom try to incorporate Islamic values into democratic governance, will show that those with less education are more likely to be tolerant of homosexuality compared to those with more education. Finally, in Pakistan, I hypothesize that individuals with less education will be less likely to be tolerant of homosexuality compared to those with more education because those with less education are more likely to be concerned with survivalist goals.

Data and Methods

The dataset for this study is sourced from the Pew Research Center's "World's Muslims" dataset collected via in-person interviews in 2010 and 2011. The data provides cross-sectional data from twenty-seven countries with 32,604 observations. Pew Research states that the dataset provides a nationally representative sample of Muslims for each country. Sampling exceptions are reported for Bosnia-Herzegovina and Russia,

where only part of the sample was nationally representative, and Thailand, where the data is only representative of the five southern provinces: Narathiwat, Pattani, Satun, Songkhla, and Yala. The Pew Research Center incorporates a weight to account for differences in the probability of selection bias and demographic characteristics.

In exploratory analyses, I conducted analyses with data from all 25 countries available in the World Muslims dataset. I focus my analysis on Algeria, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey because, in these countries, the relationship between educational attainment and moral tolerance of homosexuality is statistically significant. To address missing data across all independent variables, I employ multiple imputation using the MICE (Multiple Imputation by Chained Equations) system, including the dependent variable for imputation as recommended.

To achieve less biased estimates of how educational attainment relates to moral tolerance of homosexuality in each country, analyses control for respondents' income, internet use, urbanicity, gender, and age. Prior research indicates a positive relationship between internet use and homophobia, where beliefs in traditional gender roles can dampen the liberalizing effect of internet use (Lian et al. 2022; Hu & Li 2019). Global studies show differences in views on homosexuality depending on urbanity, with a trend of greater moral tolerance toward homosexuality in urban areas compared to rural ones (Wirth 1938; Wilson 1985; Murray 1987; Lin & Wang 2021; Wang et al. 2019; Wimark & Östh 2014; Andersen & Fetner 2008; Silva 2022; Kuhar & Švab 2014). A previous study on American Muslims' attitudes toward homosexuality revealed a gender disparity,

with Muslim men being less likely to agree with societal acceptance of homosexuality (74.53%) compared to Muslim women (53.48%) (Hammad Ali 2022). Research in education typically controls for age because educational experiences vary by age (Cohen et al. 2022; Rothes et al. 2022).

Variables

The dependent variable, moral tolerance of homosexuality, is dichotomously coded. Responses indicating "morally acceptable" or "not a moral issue" are coded as indicative of moral tolerance, while responses marked "morally wrong" are coded as indicative of intolerance. Responses of "refused" and "don't know" are treated as missing data. The primary predictor of interest in this study is education. Initially, the education variable had various categories that were inconsistent across countries, such as "vocational school (4 years)," "vocational school (2 years)," "no formal education," and "master's degree." I managed these variations by combining responses into three categories—low, medium, and high—prioritizing educational experience over degree completion. Low education includes respondents who have no formal education and those who completed some or all of primary school. Medium education includes those with middle school and high school education. High education encompasses respondents with vocational or college education.

Control variables included are gender, urban living, age, income, and internet usage. Gender was recorded by the interviewers during the in-person interviews. Urban living is measured dichotomously. I control for age and limit the sample to individuals

aged 25 and above, as is typical in education research to capture the education of respondents past the typical age of entry into the workforce and include non-traditional paths in higher education who might have delayed entry into the workforce. Respondent ages in my analysis range from 25 to 97. Initially, my predictor of interest, income, is now a control variable standardized using the 'std' command in Stata to facilitate cross-country comparisons. Lastly, internet usage is also controlled for in the analyses.

Analytic Plan

I provide descriptive statistics for all variables used in the study. I employ logistic regression models stratified by country to examine the relationship between education and tolerance of homosexuality in four countries: Algeria, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey. The first models are baseline estimates and then the second models include all control variables.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

Table 1. Means and Proportions Describing All Variables Used in Study for Algeria, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey

	Algeria			Malaysia		
	Means/ Pro.	Range	(SE)	Means/ Pro.	Range	(SE)
<i>Dependent Variable</i>						
Tolerant of homosexuality	0.25		(0.01)	0.06		(0.01)
<i>Predictor of Interest</i>						
Educational attainment:						
Low	0.26		(0.02)	0.17		(0.01)
Middle	0.41		(0.02)	0.65		(0.02)
High	0.32		(0.01)	0.18		(0.01)
<i>Controls</i>						
Respondent's income	0.02	[-4, 5]	(0.01)	0.04	[-4 - 5]	(0.98)
Uses the internet	0.47		(0.02)	0.34		(0.02)
Lives in urban setting	0.68		(0.01)	0.69		(0.01)
Woman	0.49		(0.02)	0.52		(0.02)
Age (25+)	40.52	[25, 97]	(0.02)	41.28	[25, 97]	(12.50)
Respondents (n)		1,181			1,244	
	Pakistan			Turkey		
	Means/ Pro.	Range	(SE)	Means/ Pro.	Range	(SE)
<i>Dependent Variable</i>						
Tolerant of homosexuality	0.09		(0.01)	0.15		(0.01)
<i>Predictor of Interest</i>						
Educational attainment:						
Low	0.52		(0.02)	0.51		(0.01)
Middle	0.39		(0.02)	0.38		(0.01)
High	0.09		(0.01)	0.11		(0.01)
<i>Controls</i>						
Respondent's income	-0.29		(0.02)	0.01		(0.01)
Uses the internet	0.07		(0.01)	0.40		(0.01)
Lives in urban setting	0.40		(0.02)	0.76		(0.01)
Woman	0.49		(0.02)	0.51		(0.01)
Age (25+)	39.16	[25, 97]	(0.02)	42.00	[25, 97]	(0.01)
Respondents (n)		1,450			1,485	

Note: Pro.=proportions.

Table 1 provides descriptive statistics on all variables used in the study. The proportions of respondents who are tolerant of homosexuality vary across these countries:

Algeria (0.25), Malaysia (0.06), Pakistan (0.09), and Turkey (0.15). Educational attainment levels also vary, with the highest proportion of respondents reporting high education in Algeria (0.32) and the lowest in Pakistan (0.09). The highest proportion of individuals reporting low education is in Turkey (0.52), closely followed by Turkey (0.51) with Algeria (0.26) and Malaysia (0.17) having less individuals that reported low education. Notably, the mean standard deviation score for respondents' income is lowest in Pakistan (-0.29) and highest in Malaysia (0.04) highlighting economic disparities in Pakistan compared to rest of the countries in my analysis. Internet use is lowest in Pakistan (0.07) compared to the rest of the countries; Algeria (0.47), Turkey (0.40), Malaysia (0.34). Pakistan (0.40) also had the lowest proportion of respondents living in urban settings compared to the rest of the countries; Algeria (0.68), Malaysia (0.69) and Turkey (0.76). For all countries, the sample is split into about half women and the other half men; with women making up (0.49) in Algeria, (0.49) in Pakistan, (0.51) in Turkey and (0.52) in Malaysia. The mean age (excluding individuals 24 and younger) is Pakistan (38.16), Algeria (40.52), Malaysia (41.28) and Turkey (42).

Logistic Regression Models

Table 2. Log Odds from Logistic Regression Models Predicting Respondent is Tolerant of Homosexuality, Baseline Models and Models Adjusted by Controls

	Algeria Model 1		Malaysia Model 2		Pakistan Model 3		Turkey Model 4	
	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)	B	(SE)
Educational attainment								
Low	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Middle	-0.55 **	(0.19)	-1.10 ***	0.29	-0.81 **	0.26	0.57 ***	0.18
High	-0.49 *	(0.20)	-0.83 *	0.40	-0.22	0.37	1.25 ***	0.23
Constant	-0.71 ***	(0.15)	-1.92 ***	0.22	-1.98 ***	0.16	-2.15 ***	0.13
Educational attainment								
Low	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Middle	-0.65 **	(0.24)	-0.82 +	0.45	-1.24 *	0.43	0.32	0.21
High	-0.41	(0.27)	-2.01 **	0.85	-0.58	0.72	1.00 **	0.32
<i>Controls</i>								
Respondent's income	-0.08	(0.10)	-0.04	0.23	0.06	0.30	0.06	0.10
Uses the internet	-0.02	(0.20)	1.07 *	0.50	-0.26	1.00	-0.01	0.21
Lives in urban setting	0.42 *	(0.19)	-0.40	0.48	0.02	0.35	1.16 ***	0.33
Woman	0.18	(0.18)	1.07 *	0.51	-0.07	0.39	-0.06	0.20
Age (25+)	-0.01	(0.01)	0.26	0.45	-0.04 *	0.01	-0.02 **	0.01
Constant	-0.79 ***	(0.50)	-3.34 ***	0.78	-0.57	0.79	-2.01 ***	0.44
Respondents (n)	1181		966		1450		1485	

+p < 0.10, *p < 0.05, **p < 0.01, ***p < 0.001

The first set of models in Table 2 provide coefficient from logistic regression models predicting whether respondents are morally tolerant of homosexuality at the baseline (i.e., without adjusting for potential alternate explanations by including control variables). In the baseline models in Table 2, the differences in tolerance for homosexuality for respondents with middle and high education relative to respondents with low education are statistically significant in all countries except Pakistan, where only the difference between respondents with middle and low education is statistically significant. In Algeria, the log odds of being tolerant of homosexuality are 0.55 lower for respondents with middle education compared to those with low education ($p < 0.01$, Table 2: Model 1), and the log odds are 0.49 lower for respondents with high education compared to

those with low education ($p < 0.05$, Table 2: Model 1). In Malaysia, the log odds are 1.10 lower for respondents with middle education compared to those with low education ($p < 0.001$, Table 2: Model 2), and the log odds are 0.83 lower for respondents with high education compared to those with low education ($p < 0.05$, Table 2: Model 2). In Pakistan, the log odds are 0.81 lower for respondents with middle education compared to those with low education ($p < 0.01$, Table 2: Model 3). In Turkey, the log odds of being tolerant of homosexuality are 0.57 higher for respondents with middle education compared to those with low education ($p < 0.001$, Table 2: Model 4), and the log odds are 1.25 higher for respondents with high education compared to those with low education ($p < 0.001$, Table 2: Model 4).

The second set of models in Table 2 provides coefficient from logistic regression models predicting whether respondents are morally tolerant of homosexuality, after including control variables in the models. In the adjusted model for respondents from Algeria in Table 2, the log odds of being tolerant of homosexuality are 0.65 lower on average for respondents with middle education compared to those with low education ($p < 0.01$, Table 2: Model 5). In Malaysia, the log odds of being morally tolerant are 0.82 lower on average for respondents with middle education compared to those with low education ($p < 0.1$, Table 2: Model 6), and the log odds are 2.01 lower on average for respondents with high education compared to those with low education ($p < 0.01$, Table 2: Model 6). In Pakistan, the log odds of being morally tolerant of homosexuality are 1.24 lower for respondents with middle education compared to those with low education ($p < 0.05$, Table 2: Model 7). In Turkey, the log odds of being morally tolerant of

homosexuality are 1.00 higher for respondents with high education compared to those with low education ($p < 0.01$, Table 2: Model 8).

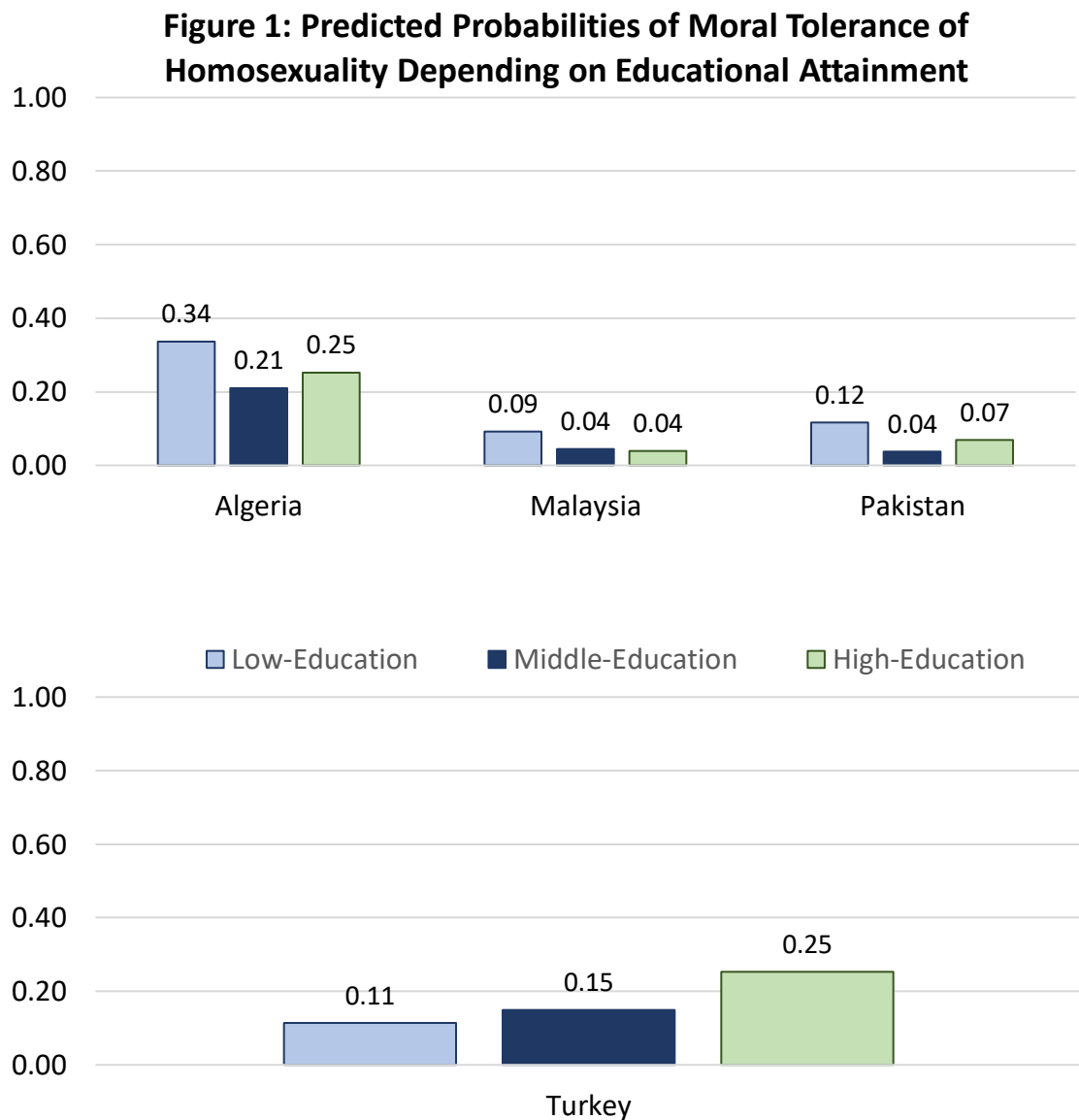


Figure 1 shows predicted probabilities post-estimated from the second set of models in Table 2. In Algeria, Malaysia, and Pakistan, the predicted probabilities of tolerance are highest for respondents with the lowest levels of education. In Turkey, in contrast, the

predicted probability of tolerance is highest for respondents with the highest levels of education.

Discussion

The findings of this study are complex and highlight the nuanced relationship between educational attainment and moral tolerance of homosexuality in Muslim-majority countries. These results challenge the universal applicability of modernization theory and underscore the influence of socio-political and cultural contexts on educational outcomes. For a more detailed discussion, I analyze the results for each country in light of modernization theory and Human Development Theory. Overall, findings reveal that the moral tolerance of homosexuality is actually higher among respondents with the lowest levels of education in three of the four countries: Algeria, Malaysia, and Pakistan. In contrast, respondents in Turkey, more consistent with Western notions, are more likely to be morally tolerant of homosexuality if they have higher levels of educational attainment.

The hypothesis for Turkey posited that higher education would relate to greater tolerance of homosexuality due to the country's relatively liberal and secular governance. The findings support this hypothesis, showing that individuals with higher educational attainment are more likely to exhibit tolerance of homosexuality. This aligns with modernization theory, which suggests that education fosters liberal values in environments where democratic values are robust. Turkey's history of secularism and democratic governance appears to enable its education system to inculcate values of

freedom and acceptance, facilitating more liberal attitudes toward contentious social issues such as homosexuality.

In Algeria, the hypothesis predicted a negative relationship between higher education and tolerance of homosexuality due to the conservative nature of educational content and the strong influence of Islamic teachings. The findings corroborate this hypothesis, demonstrating that higher educational attainment does not lead to a greater likelihood of tolerance of homosexuality. Instead, education in Algeria seems to reinforce conservative views, likely reflecting the broader socio-political environment where traditional values are deeply entrenched. This outcome challenges the assumptions of modernization theory, suggesting that in contexts where educational content is conservative, higher education may perpetuate rather than challenge existing prejudices.

Similar to Algeria, the hypothesis for Malaysia anticipated that higher education would not relate to greater tolerance of homosexuality due to the conservative and religious nature of the educational system. The results affirm this hypothesis, showing that individuals with higher education levels are not more likely to tolerate homosexuality. The integration of Islamic values within Malaysia's educational curriculum appears to sustain traditional views, aligning with Human Development Theory, which posits that educational development is influenced by the broader socio-political context. This reinforces the idea that in countries with strong conservative religious influences, higher education alone is insufficient to foster liberal attitudes.

Modernization theory suggests that economic development and higher education foster liberal values, including greater tolerance of homosexuality. The results from Turkey support this theory, demonstrating that in environments where democratic values are robust, education promotes liberal attitudes. However, the findings from Algeria, Malaysia, and Pakistan challenge this linear progression, highlighting the role of socio-political contexts. Human Development Theory provides a more flexible framework, emphasizing that educational outcomes are shaped by broader societal changes and political ideologies. In Algeria and Malaysia, the conservative educational content and strong religious influences likely explain why higher education does not relate to a greater likelihood of tolerance of homosexuality. In Pakistan, the impact of conflict further complicates this relationship, illustrating that the development process is neither inevitable nor unidirectional.

This study examines the relationship between educational attainment and moral tolerance of homosexuality among Muslims in Algeria, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey, building on Ronald Inglehart's post-materialist thesis, which argues that liberal values are outcomes of democracy, economic development, and modernization. Previous cross-national studies have shown that tolerance of homosexuality tends to decrease as national income inequality increases, and the effects of economic development on attitudes are mostly for those who already benefit most from it. This study finds that the impact of education on moral tolerance of homosexuality varies across countries, reflecting their socio-political and cultural contexts. In Turkey, higher education is related to greater tolerance of homosexuality, aligning with the country's relatively liberal and secular

governance. In Algeria and Malaysia, higher education does not lead to a greater likelihood of tolerance of homosexuality, which may be influenced by the conservative nature of the educational content and the countries' adherence to Islamic teachings. Similar to Algeria and Malaysia, higher education levels do not relate to a greater likelihood of tolerance of homosexuality, challenging the universal applicability of modernization theory.

Findings from Turkey support the notion that education fosters liberal values in contexts where democratic values are robust. Turkey's history of secularism and democratic governance enables the education system to foment values of freedom, facilitating more liberal attitudes towards homosexuality. Conversely, the results from Algeria, Malaysia, and Pakistan challenge the universal applicability of modernization theory. In these countries, higher levels of education do not relate to a greater likelihood of tolerance of homosexuality, possibly due to conservative educational content and more stringent societal norms. Human Development Theory better explains the unique patterns in the relationship between education and views on homosexuality in Algeria, Malaysia, and Pakistan. This theory highlights the development of social services that enhance human welfare as a key component of individuals' development process. Unlike modernization theory's linear progression, Human Development Theory views educational development as iterative and reflective of political developments towards democratic values.

The liberalizing effect of education on societal attitudes is contingent upon the presence of political freedoms and a supportive cultural milieu. In Turkey, where political and social liberalization trends are observed, education tends to promote liberal attitudes. In contrast, in countries like Algeria and Malaysia, the integration of religious doctrines within the curriculum may explain why higher education does not equate to a greater likelihood of tolerance of homosexuality. The findings suggest that efforts to use education as a lever for promoting tolerance of homosexuality need to critically assess and modify educational content to ensure it fosters critical thinking, challenges prejudices, and promotes a broader acceptance of diversity. Moreover, these efforts must be supported by broader political and societal changes that foster a culture of tolerance of homosexuality and respect for all human rights.

Having been an English teacher for several years in a Muslim-majority country, my interest was in finding if in Muslim-majority countries there is a relationship between the educational attainment and respondents' views of homosexuality given that education systems in these countries include Islamic teachings as a part of the standard curriculum. Even universities have on site mosques and prayer rooms that encourage Islamic practices. Adherence to Islamic practices, even in educational settings, can function as a form of cultural capital (Bourdieu) as students, staff and faculty are able to inspect those who do or do not participate in Islamic practices within these educational settings. If Islamic practices a form of cultural capital then, students who've spent the most years within a certain education system will have greater exposure to a system that rewards individuals for their display and reproduction of Islamic teachings. This study finds that

the education system are at least in part complicit in shaping views toward homosexuality, which means that educational policy reforms that interrupt the perpetuation of homophobic views within educational settings can be identified as a way of addressing the stigma and discrimination that individuals associated with homophobia face.

Limitations and Positionality

The data cannot speak to a global trend of education influencing tolerance of homosexuality in Muslim-majority countries. Rather the findings represent a potential to address the social stigma for those associated with homosexuality in Muslim countries through educational reforms. The data points to education as key culprit in maintaining the status quo of social stigma against individuals' associated with homophobia. Educational reforms are an actionable, attainable and easily communicable goal that gender and sexuality activists can focus their efforts for gains in addressing and minimizing the negative impacts of the stigma associated with homosexuality in Muslim majority countries. Typically in published research only statistically significant results are presented, for this reason I focus the majority of my analysis on the four countries in which the relationship between education and tolerance of homosexuality is statistically significant. The importance of statistical significance, however, is debated among statisticians (Nature, 2019). Alternatively to emphasizing statistical significance, statisticians have emphasized practical significance and effect size over statistical significance (Kirk, 1996; Hojat & Xu, 2004). Because statistical significance remains a

crucial concept in hypothesis testing (Di Leo & Sardanelli, 2020), I focus my analysis on the four countries with statistical significance.

Algeria, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey, the countries on which I focus my analysis, are all unique in their ethnic composition, language spoken, history, cultural heritage, among other unique characteristics. Algeria, Malaysia, Pakistan, and Turkey share few characteristics; but they all have large Muslim-majority populations influenced to varying extents by the popular mainstream beliefs of the modern Islamist leaders. I focus my analysis on these countries because they all demonstrated statistically significant results in the relationship between education and tolerance of homosexuality. I describe the social, educational and political environment of each country in order to demonstrate the unique trajectories of each of these countries.

During the five years I taught English in Kuwait, I was deeply moved by the cultural kindness, warmth, and hospitality of the people I met. However, I was equally struck by the stark contrast when this kindness was replaced by hatred, disdain, and prejudice against gender and sexual minorities. I had the privilege of befriending incredibly kind individuals with non-normative genders and sexualities. In them, I recognized a desire for support and acknowledgment of their predicament, which often persists unacknowledged politically, religiously, and interpersonally. These individuals face great risks in the pursuit of romantic love, often confining their genuine selves to a select few they deem safe. Outside of safe spaces, appearances must be kept as heterosexual marriages are expected by friends and family members. I was a witness to

how the trajectory of what is expected of them hinders their own prerogatives. Many grow up learning that their natural desires can condemn themselves and their families to eternal damnation. It's my hope that this research will embolden gender and sexuality activists and gender and sexually diverse individuals to blame the systemic culprits fomenting social environments of tolerate them rather than blaming themselves.

Conclusion

This study highlights the complexity of the relationship between education and moral tolerance of homosexuality, illustrating that educational attainment does not universally lead to more liberal views. The findings underscore the necessity of considering the broader socio-political and cultural contexts in which education occurs. For policymakers and educators, these insights emphasize the importance of creating educational systems that not only impart knowledge but also foster critical thinking and acceptance of diversity. Future research should continue to explore these dynamics using more recent and diverse data and adopting a multifaceted approach that includes qualitative and longitudinal studies. By doing so, we can better understand and harness the potential of education to promote tolerance and inclusivity in diverse cultural and political environments.

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