

Taiwan Bachelor of Social Work Student Support for Marriage Equality Legalization

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<https://doi.org/10.12982/CMUJASR.2025.020>

Editor:

Yos Santasombat,
Chiang Mai University, Thailand

Article history:

Received: June 23, 2024;

Revised: February 11, 2025;

Accepted: February 17, 2025.

ABSTRACT

Social workers and social work students benefit from respecting cultural diversity and individual differences. Social work students' degree of support for marriage equality could affect their attitudes toward same-sex couples after graduation and their assessment of same-sex couples' needs, which could affect the rights of same-sex couples and their family members. This study surveys Bachelor of Social Work students in Taiwan about their support for marriage equality. In doing so it explores the factors affecting that support. Based on regression analysis, no evidence that traditional family values influence support for marriage equality was found. Evidence regarding the influence of education about sexuality is weak. However, there is strong evidence that sexual orientation, having close gay or lesbian schoolmates, exposure to parents' openness, religion, religiosity, attribution of the cause of sexual orientation, and fear of Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome all significantly affect student support for marriage equality legalization. Teaching and training should expose social work students to information on sexual identity development and sexually transmitted disease transmission, should increase the frequency of interactions between students and gay or lesbian schoolmates, and should provide opportunities for students to analyze distinctions between religious and legal perspectives of marriage.

Keywords: Same-sex marriage, Social work, Marriage equality, Human rights, Taiwan.

INTRODUCTION

People with families and relationships of all types, including same-sex couples, need social services. Social workers have an ethical responsibility to respect cultural diversity and individual differences. As social work students are future professionals in social services, it is important to understand whether they support marriage

equality. As noted by Dion and Diez (2020), tolerance toward same-sex sexuality differs from support for marriage equality. Several academic studies have examined the general public, tertiary students and professors in social work departments to understand the degree of support for marriage equality (Dion and Diez, 2020; Woodford and Chonody et al., 2012). However, research on social work students as a cohort in particular has not yet been undertaken. Given social work students tend to be more liberal than students from other majors (Black, 1994; Enoch, 1988; Lee, 2019; Merdinger, 1982; Swank et al., 2001), their opinions are particularly interesting. Research has found social workers' attitudes toward gays and lesbians influence their practice (Crisp, 2007). Therefore, it is important to study social work students' attitudes – again, they the social workers of the future.

To the best of the author's knowledge, no study has focused on social work students' support for marriage equality in Taiwan – the first country in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage. In the United States, Swank and Raiz (2010b) surveyed social work students on their support for same-sex relationship rights, including the right to legal marital status. However, their study explored what factors affect Bachelor of Social Work (BSW) students' support for overall same-sex relationship rights rather than those impacting support for marriage equality. In Greece, Papadaki et al. (2013) surveyed social work students on their attitudes toward marriage equality at only one university and analyzed single influencing factors separately without controlling for other factors. To address insufficiencies in studies of social work students, the present study surveyed BSW students studying in Taiwan to examine their support for marriage equality and explore the factors influencing their support.

This study employs multivariable regression analysis to explore what factors affect participants' support for marriage equality. This is the first study focusing on social work students' support for marriage equality and exploring what factors affect their support in Taiwan. BSW students are future social workers whose support might affect their delivery of social welfare services to same-sex couples. Existing studies provide only vague insights into BSW student support. This study adds to the scarce quantitative literature on marriage equality in Asia. The majority of the studies on marriage equality in Asia are qualitative in nature (Chen, 2019; Ho, 2019; Tang et al., 2020). Although these studies are informative, this quantitative study could be helpful for establishing additional evidence-based facts about support for marriage equality in Asia, particularly regarding the factors affecting support.

THE TAIWANESE CONTEXT

Located east of the People's Republic of China, north of the Philippines and south of Japan, Taiwan has a hybrid culture of Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism (Laurent, 2005).¹ Confucianism emphasizes family and kinship (Hsu and Yen, 2017). The Confucian prioritization of family obligations over individual rights appears to

¹ Christians and Muslims are minorities om Taiwan. Christians constitute only approximately 6% of the popular, and less than 0.25% for Muslims (Lin, 2022; Su, 2022).

conflict with legalizing marriage equality (Adamczyk and Cheng, 2015; Ho, 2019; Rich, 2017). Influenced by Confucianism, the pressure to marry with the goal of procreating and starting a family is very strong in Taiwanese society and contradicts the legalization of marriage equality (Laurent, 2005). Christians and Muslims have reputations of intolerance toward same-sex sexuality and are minorities in Taiwan (Chen, 2019; Laurent, 2005). Several of Taiwan's Christian denominations actively opposed legalizing marriage equality (Chen, 2019).

The first public demonstration for the recognition of same-sex relationships occurred in 1986. Taiwan's most noted first gay activist, Chi Chia-wei, applied to the notary public office of the Taipei District Court for a marriage license in 1986; this application was rejected. He then petitioned the Legislative Yuan, which also rejected his application. He was subsequently jailed, linked to his 'unconventional' behavior (Ho, 2019). In 1996, when Taiwan ran its first democratic presidential election, lesbian groups in a women's march spoke out for the legalization of marriage equality (Chen, 2019).

However, since its transition to democratization in the late 1980s, Taiwan has perceived its own tradition as lacking human rights and lagging behind the West (Chen, 2019). Additionally, since the early 2000s, international human rights have been part of the prevailing ideology in Taiwan's political elections; thus, voices supporting marriage equality as human rights have become loud and strong in society (Lee, 2018; Wang, 2016).² The issue of legalizing marriage equality eventually sparked Taiwan's first robust cultural public debate between people defending traditional family values³ and people supporting human rights (Kingston, 2016; Wang, 2016).

The term "marriage equality" was adopted for the annual gay pride parade held in Taipei in 2012 as a preferred term for same-sex marriage (Chen, 2019). In the following year, the Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights announced its advocacy for a three-in-one policy of support for diverse families, comprising marriage equality, partnership rights, and multiple-person family rights,⁴ with the goal of legalizing marriage equality. (Chen, 2019; Ho, 2019; Tang et al., 2020). In the same year, the Family Guardian Coalition, consisting of several of Taiwan's Christian denominations, effectively launched a movement to defend traditional family values against the diverse-family movement (Chen, 2019).

² According to Debnath (2018), the United States legalized marriage equality as a human right nationwide in 2015.

³ Traditional family values in Taiwan emphasize the fixed role of each family member (Su, 2019). Men are expected to carry on the family line, women are expected to care for husbands and children, and children are expected to fully respect their parents (Lu, 2016). The loss of kinship names is assumed to result in the misplacement of the fixed role of each family unit, which will then cause a decline in traditional family values.

⁴ The advocacy of multiple-person family rights seeks to shift the concept of "family" from a social group based on biological relationships to a concept founded on a lasting communal relationship, as long as family members expect to look after each other and legally register their relationship to one another (Taiwan Alliance to Promote Civil Partnership Rights, 2013).

In contrast to Ma Ying-jeou and Eric Chu of the conservative Kuomintang Party, who showed respect for but did not declare support for the diverse-family movement, Tsai Ing-wen of the Democratic Progressive Party endorsed the three-in-one advocacy project in 2013 and clearly declared her support for marriage equality in October 2015, before the 2016 Taiwan presidential election.⁵ In 2016, Tsai Ing-wen won the presidential election. In the same year, inspired by President Tsai's campaign promise, the diverse-family movement shifted its focus to the legalization of marriage equality and emphasized marriage as a human right also belonging to same-sex couples (Chen, 2019).

From 2000 to 2010, single-person households rose from 21.5% to 22%, and households comprising one husband and one wife with their children decreased from 45.5% to only 39.9% of the total households in Taiwan (Directorate General of Budget, Accounting and Statistics, 2011). Clearly, the family structure comprising one man and one woman as one husband and one wife together with their biological children, as portrayed by the Family Guardian Coalition, was no longer the mainstream family structure or at the very least was rapidly disappearing in Taiwan (Wang, 2016).

Against this backdrop, the campaign to promote marriage equality became a campaign not only to defend same-sex couples' rights but also to protect families of diverse structures, such as those consisting of a single man or woman, against discrimination by people holding traditional family values (Wang, 2016). Pro-marriage-equality legislators and activists even advocate that legalizing marriage equality will facilitate Taiwan's international recognition as a nation of democracy and freedom distinct from the People's Republic of China (Chen, 2019). On 24 May 2017, the meeting of the Constitutional Court of the Judicial Yuan issued Interpretation No. 748, which states that civil law prohibiting marriage equality violates articles 7 and 22 of the Constitution, which protect all citizens' freedom of marriage and right to equality ("Marriage equality case", 2017). The interpretation also says that the amendment or reformulation of the relevant civil laws should be completed within 2 years of the announcement of the interpretation to protect freedom of marriage and right to equality of citizens irrespective of their sexual orientation ("Marriage equality case", 2017). Thus, the Legislative Yuan was under pressure to amend or reformulate the relevant laws. However, there was still a serious dispute over this bill in the Legislative Yuan, and the disagreement arose over whether to "revise civil law" or "make new laws accommodating same-sex sexuality".

The viewpoint of those advocating for a new law was that, as society does not fully support marriage equality, a new law accommodating same-sex sexuality should be established. The voices supporting revision, however, held that it would be discriminatory to not directly amend civil law and instead create a special law for

⁵ The Kuomintang and the Democratic Progressive Party are two major political parties dominating the political landscape in Taiwan, particularly after the year 2000. The Democratic Progressive Party was established in Taiwan in 1986. The Kuomintang retreated from the mainland to Taiwan in 1949, following its defeat in the Chinese civil war. Ma Ying-jeou was the party's leader and was also the president of Taiwan in 2013. Eric Chu was the party's candidate for the 2016 presidential election in Taiwan.

same-sex relationships. After all the party groups in the Legislative Yuan and the administrative team negotiated, an agreement on a draft of the “Act for the Implementation of J.Y. Interpretation No. 748” was finally reached. The Executive Yuan subsequently sent this draft to the Legislative Yuan for review. Finally, the act passed legislative review, and marriage equality came into force on May 24, 2019.

Approximately one year after the legalization of marriage equality, 4,021 same-sex couples had registered their marriages in Taiwan, according to statistics from the Ministry of the Interior (2020). Among the 4,021 couples, 2,773 were women, accounting for 69%, and 1,248 were men, accounting for 31%. Of the 4,021 married couples, 3,832 were Taiwanese, accounting for 95%. The remaining 189 couples were couples composed of a Taiwanese citizen who was married to a foreigner from a country that recognizes marriage equality. These foreigners were from 17 different countries. Among them, 80 people were from the United States, 21 were from Canada, and 17 were from Australia.

Although the establishment of a law superficially solves the legal problem of marriage equality, the fundamental “value” dispute does not end with the enactment of laws. In fact, in 2021, a public opinion poll conducted by the Executive Yuan revealed that approximately 40% of respondents still did not support the legalization of marriage equality even two years after the passage of the Act for the Implementation of J.Y. Interpretation No. 748 (Liu, 2021). As some legislators have indicated, if there are still doubts about marriage equality among citizens, there is no guarantee that society will not have anti-marriage-equality movements. For instance, although France officially legalized marriage equality on May 18, 2013, the anti-marriage-equality movement has not disappeared from France (Corner Talk, 2016).

LITERATURE REVIEW

An abundant body of literature has examined the attitudes of the general public and tertiary students toward same-sex sexuality from a quantitative perspective; for instance, Lee (2018), Lin et al. (2016), Nierman et al. (2007), and Swank and Raiz (2007; 2010a). There are also some quantitative studies empirically focusing on marriage equality. Several studies show that women and young people tend to favor marriage equality in Argentina, Singapore, Taiwan and the United States (Brumbaugh et al., 2008; Dion and Diez, 2020; Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2005; Lax and Phillips, 2009; Olson et al., 2006; Panchapakesan et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2020). Some studies in the United States also show that support for marriage equality is related to race (Brumbaugh et al., 2008; Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2005; Woodford and Chonody et al., 2012). Barth and Parry (2009) show that age, gender, and race are not significantly associated with support for legal recognition of marriage equality in Arkansas. In the study by Panchapakesan et al. (2014), it was found that ethnicity is not related to support for legalizing marriage equality in Singapore. The above studies reveal that age, gender, and ethnicity could also potentially be associated with social work students’ support for legalizing marriage equality in a diverse society such as Taiwan.

Contact theory asserts that contact will have positive effects on minority groups, as isolation feeds ignorance (Allport, 1954; Barth et al., 2009). Consistent with this theory, Barth et al. (2009) in the United States and Dion and Diez (2020) in Argentina find that personal contact with gay and lesbian individuals significantly impacts public support for marriage equality. Utilizing three waves of a national online survey, Lee and Mutz (2019) also find evidence that increased interpersonal contact with gay and lesbian individuals contributes to the rise of public support for marriage equality in the United States. However, Woodford and Chonody et al. (2012) find no evidence that contact with gay or lesbian individuals affects college students' opinions about marriage equality in the United States.

Several studies also provide evidence that education influences the attitudes of the general public toward marriage equality. Education is strongly associated with an individual's tolerance of difference because education cultivates democratic values (Bobo and Licari, 1989; Nie et al., 1996; Ravitch and Viteritti, 2001). Consistent with this line of thought, Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2005), Brumbaugh et al. (2008), and Lee and Mutz (2019) observe empirical evidence that more highly educated people are more supportive of laws recognizing marriage equality. Woodford and Chonody et al. (2012) provide evidence that college students who have been exposed to gay and lesbian content in courses are more likely to support marriage equality. However, Panchapakesan et al. (2014) do not find that education is associated with support for the legalization of marriage equality in Singapore.

The academic empirical literature also reveals that differences in religious belief and the degree of religious piety could potentially affect attitudes toward marriage equality. As religious institutions have different attitudes toward sexual relationships, religiously affiliated individuals may have different attitudes toward marriage equality policies (Anderson et al., 2021; Barclay and Fisher, 2003; Bawden et al., 2023; Herman, 1997; Panchapakesan et al., 2014; Pearl and Galupo, 2007; Warner, 1999; Woodford and Chonody et al., 2012). Attribution theory suggests that people have more negative emotions toward individuals or groups with a social stigma that is perceived as controllable than toward those that have uncontrollable attributes (Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2005; Weiner, 1985). Consistent with this theory, Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2005) find that people attributing same-sex sexuality to upbringing or the environment are significantly more likely to oppose marriage equality.

In contrast to the above studies on the attitudes of the general public, Woodford and Luke et al. (2012) investigate attitudes toward marriage equality among academic staff in social work departments. Their study shows that among professors in social work departments in North America, the rate of support for marriage equality is quite high. Through multivariate analysis, their study reveals that gender, age, sexual orientation, residence, and religious affiliation have no effect on support for marriage equality. Instead, race and religious piety affected respondents' attitudes. The study reveals that the significant factors influencing support for marriage equality among social work academics might be different from those influencing the general public's support.

Surveys on support for marriage equality among students in social work departments are scarce. Swank and Raiz (2010b) surveyed support for same-sex relationship rights among 571 social work students who were completely attracted to people of the opposite sex. Although Swank and Raiz (2010b) document descriptive statistics for support for marriage equality, they analyze the determinants of support for overall same-sex relationship rights instead of support for marriage equality per se. However, as noted by Lewis (2011) and Dion and Diez (2020), support for same-sex civil unions differs from support for marriage equality. Therefore, the findings of studies on same-sex relationship rights may not be generalizable to marriage equality. Papadaki et al. (2013) conducted their study at a single university. However, they analyze single influencing factors separately without controlling for other potential influencing factors. Although helpful in describing the correlation between an influencing factor and social work students' attitudes toward marriage equality, their analysis is more likely to suffer biases from confounding factors. Therefore, the present study employs multivariable regression analysis to explore what factors affect social work students' support for marriage equality.

DATA, VARIABLES AND ANALYSIS

DATA COLLECTION

For this study, participants were recruited from 20 social work-related academic programs at 17 universities in Taiwan to complete an anonymous paper-based survey. Social work education programs listed by the Ministry of Examination of Taiwan were contacted to support recruitment for the study. For budget reasons, administrative assistants in the programs helped post flyers inviting students from each year of their programs to participate; these assistants also distributed and collected the surveys. Ultimately, 1,584 questionnaires were collected in 2016.

The Research Ethics Committee of Hualien Tzu Chi Hospital, Buddhist Tzu Chi Medical Foundation, reviewed and approved the survey and the study (approval number IRB 104-42-A). For this study, pilot tests were conducted to finalize the survey questionnaire, and cover letters that explained the survey were prepared. Small gifts were provided as compensation to thank the students and the assistants for their kindness and time. Throughout the survey process, ethical guidelines were followed to protect the privacy of participants.

RESEARCH VARIABLES

To measure support for the legalization of marriage equality, the survey contained the following questionnaire item: "I do not approve of the legalization of marriage equality in Taiwan". The survey used a 5-point Likert scale, in which 1 represented 'strongly agree' and 5 represented 'strongly disagree,' to measure

respondents' support for marriage equality. Therefore, higher scores indicate stronger support for the legalization of marriage equality in Taiwan.

The survey collected demographic information on ethnicity, gender, and age (Dion and Diez, 2020; Haider-Markel and Joslyn, 2005; Panchapakesan et al., 2014). With Minnanren ethnic people as the reference group, I created four dummy variables indicating respondents' subjective ethnicities: Hakka Han (coded 1 and otherwise coded 0), Indigenous People (coded 1 and otherwise coded 0),⁶ Waishengren (coded 1 and otherwise coded 0), and other ethnicities (coded 1 and otherwise coded 0).⁷ Gender was also a variable coded as 1 for males and 0 otherwise. Age was calculated using the respondents' birth years and months.

This survey also collected information on sexual orientation and place of residence (Lee, 2018; Swank and Raiz, 2007). Respondents' sexual orientation was measured with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = absolute same-sex sexuality, 5 = absolute opposite-sex sexuality). For easy interpretation, the gay-lesbian identity variable was created, with 1 representing absolute opposite-sex sexuality and 5 representing absolute same-sex sexuality. Urban residence was a dummy variable coded as 1 if respondents grew up in large metropolitan areas and suburbs and 0 if otherwise.

In addition, information on gay-lesbian contact and reference group nonhomophobia was collected (Barth et al., 2009; Dion and Diez, 2020; Lee and Mutz, 2019; Swank and Raiz, 2007).⁸ Surveyed students were asked whether they have siblings, close friends or close schoolmates who are gay or lesbian. Three variables, gay siblings, gay close friends, and gay close schoolmates, were created for their answers (1 = have, 0 = do not have). The students were also asked whether they believe that their parents, most of their friends or most social workers accept gay or lesbian people (Lee, 2018; Swank and Raiz, 2007). Three nonhomophobia variables were created for their responses, which were coded on a Likert scale, with 5 representing the strongest acceptance.

The present study surveyed students, and two variables were created for whether they took courses about same-sex sexuality before entering the department of social work (1 = had, 0 = did not have) or after entering the department of social work (1 = had, 0 = did not have) (Chonody and Yu, 2014). Furthermore, this study surveyed students about the number of courses they had taken related to same-sex sexuality and their course performance measured with a 5-point Likert scale (1 = very bad, 5 = very good).

The variable Christian-Muslim has a value of 1 if the respondent is a Christian or Muslim and a value of 0 otherwise. The variable of religious piety measured

⁶ Similar to Lee (2021), although there are 16 groups of indigenous people, they have been combined for robustness in the analysis.

⁷ Minnanren, Hakka Han, Waishengren are Taiwanese terms for specific ethnic groups within Taiwan.

⁸ As the debate is about whether to legalize marriage of same-sex couples, this study follows prior studies of marriage equality and only collected information about gay and lesbian people and not the broader LGBTIQ+ experiences.

respondents' attitudes toward religious teaching against same-sex sexuality with a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree).

The variable of perceived cause addresses students' attitudes toward the view that same-sex sexuality is caused by nature such that individuals cannot control their sexual orientation and was measured with a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree). As rumors that marriage equality would increase the number of people with Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome (AIDS) in Taiwan ("Come again", 2023), this study also surveyed the fear of AIDS as a variable measuring how comfortable respondents would be in providing social services to a person who has AIDS (5 = strongly comfortable) (Lee, 2018; Swank and Raiz, 2007).

The variable of traditional gender roles was measured by the sum of the scores for the following three 5-point Likert scale questions (5 = strongly agree): (1) In each family, it is a better arrangement for the father to make money to support the family and the mother to take care of the family at home; (2) Women should have fewer sexual partners than men; and (3) If a man spends a lot of money on a woman, this man has the right to expect sexual services (Lee, 2018; Swank and Raiz, 2007).⁹

Moreover, this survey collects respondent attitudes regarding the following two questions with a 5-point Likert scale (5 = strongly agree): (1) filial piety is the most important traditional family value;¹⁰ and (2) there are three things that are unfilial, and having no child is the most serious among them. The filial piety variable and the no-child unfiliality variable were created to record responses accordingly.

ANALYSIS METHODS

After missing responses and apparent mistakes were removed, 1,281 valid questionnaires were completed and usable. This study first produces descriptive statistics for all variables on the 1,281 samples. To explore the relationships between the marriage equality support measure and the potential influencing variables, this study employed hierarchical regression analysis.¹¹ Variance inflation factors were used to detect whether collinearity among the potential influencing variables was a problem in the regressions (Lee, 2021; Voss, 2004). The robust significance levels were calculated when heteroskedastic regression errors were revealed by Breusch-Pagan tests and White tests (Gujarati and Porter, 2009). The incremental F tests were utilized as the regression selection criterion.

⁹ This study also created three variables each for the three questions relating to traditional gender roles. Importantly, including each variable separately instead of the variable of composite scores for traditional gender roles does not change the empirical results.

¹⁰ Lin et al. (2016) also includes filial piety as a predictor in their study on college students' attitudes towards same-sex sexuality in the People's Republic of China.

¹¹ Following Brumbaugh et al. (2008), the hierarchical regression utilizes one item measuring support for marriage equality as the dependent variable.

DESCRIPTIVE STATISTICS AND REGRESSION RESULTS

DESCRIPTIVE RESULTS

In table 1, Panel A shows the descriptive statistics for the marriage equality support measure and the influencing variables. The mean score of the marriage equality support measure was 4.08, indicating that social work students tend to approve of marriage equality legalization. Although most of the students are supportive, a noticeable portion of the students are neutral or unsupportive toward marriage equality legalization. Nearly 11% of the students explicitly expressed that they do not support marriage equality. Approximately 14% of the students were neutral toward marriage equality.¹² Panel B shows that the mean score for traditional gender roles is 5.55 points, with a standard deviation of 2. An average score lower than 9 indicates that social work students tend to disagree with traditional gender roles. The variable filial piety has an average score of 3.75 with a standard deviation of 0.99, revealing that students only slightly tend to consider filial piety to be the most important traditional family value. The no-child unfiliality variable has a mean score of only 2.45 with a standard deviation of 1.07, which indicates that, on average, individuals do not regard the decision to remain childless without carrying on the family name as the most unfilial action. Panel C shows that approximately 20% of the students are male, as the gender variable has a value of 1 for males. The panel also shows that approximately 49% of the students had taken courses about same-sex sexuality at college, as the college variable has a value of 1 for students who had taken the courses after entering the department of social work at their institutions.

Table 1

Descriptive statistics.

Panel A: Support measure		<3	=3	>3
	Mean	Percentage		
Support for Marriage Equality	4.08	10.77%	14.21%	75.02%
Panel B:		Mean	Standard Deviation	
Traditional gender roles	3-15	5.55	2.00	
Filial piety	1-5	3.75	0.99	
No-child unfiliality	1-5	2.45	1.07	
Panel C:	Frequency		Percentage	
Gender	Male = 252 (Female=1,029)		19.67% (80.33%)	
College courses	Took = 623 (Not took=658)		48.63% (51.37%)	

¹² The tendency towards the middle response is a well-known phenomenon among Asian survey respondents (Wang et al., 2008). Nevertheless, the portion of social work students expressing neutral responses in this study is less than the equivalent groups in the Geek study of Papadaki et al. (2013) (24.9%) and in the US study of Swank and Raiz (2010b) (16.2%).

REGRESSION RESULTS

Hierarchical regression analysis was employed, and four regression models were built to analyze social work students' support for marriage equality. The first model included only the demographic bloc variables. The second model repeats the estimation of the first model while incorporating the variables of the contextual factor bloc as the variables are related to the contact theory which appears widely in previous research. The third model generates a similar estimation while also incorporating the variables of same-sex sexuality education which appear in previous studies about attitudes of social work students. The fourth model further incorporates the variables from beliefs and values which include unique variables in the Taiwan context. The unreported variance inflation factors show that collinearity was not a problem in the regressions.

Table 2 shows the four regression models. The incremental F tests suggest choosing the fourth model. In this model, the gay-lesbian identity variable is the only demographic variable that is statistically significant at the 1% level ($\alpha=.01$). Its significant and positive coefficient indicates that social work students' same-sex sexual identification is positively associated with their support for marriage equality. The variables of indigenous identification, gender, age and urban residence are statistically significant at the 5% level ($\alpha=.05$) in the first to third models. However, the age variable becomes significant only at the 10% level ($\alpha=.10$), and the remaining variables become insignificant after the variables in the category of beliefs and values are added.

Table 2

Regressions for BSW students' support for marriage quality.

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Demographics	coefficient			
Gay-lesbian identity	-0.31***	-0.26***	-0.26***	0.15***
Hakka Han	-0.10	-0.08	-0.08	-0.09
Indigenous people	-0.45**	-0.47*	-0.47**	0.07
Waishengren	-0.22	-0.14	-0.14	-0.01
Other ethnicity	-0.01	0.02	0.02	0.15
Gender	-0.27***	-0.16**	-0.16**	-0.11
Age	-0.03***	-0.02**	-0.02**	-0.01*
Urban residence	-0.14**	-0.14**	-0.14**	-0.08
Contextual Factors				
Gay-lesbian siblings		0.09	0.09	0.02
Gay-lesbian close friends		0.08	0.08	0.03
Gay-lesbian close schoolmates		0.31***	0.31***	0.21***
Parental nonhomophobia		0.14***	0.14***	0.08**
Friend nonhomophobia		0.15***	0.15***	0.04
Social worker nonhomophobia		0.10**	0.10**	0.02
Same-sex Sexuality Education				

	Model 1	Model 2	Model 3	Model 4
Precollege classes			-0.01	-0.01
College courses			0.04	0.20
Number of college courses			-0.01	-0.01
Course performance			0.00	-0.03
Beliefs and Values				
Christian-Muslim				-0.75***
Religious piety				-0.31***
Perceived cause				0.13***
Fear of AIDS				0.07**
Traditional gender roles				-0.00
Filial piety				0.01
No-child unfiliality				-0.03
Incremental F test statistic		23.23***	24.63***	38.29***
Model F statistic	19.46***	17.13***	13.54***	26.31***

Notes: 1. All the models contain a constant term. 2. *, ** and *** indicate p values based on heteroskedasticity-robust standard errors less than 10%, 5% and 1%, respectively. 3. The incremental F test statistic test whether the added variables should be included in the model.

The contextual factor category comprises variables on gay-lesbian contact and reference group nonhomophobia. In this category, only the variables of gay-lesbian close schoolmates and parental nonhomophobia are significant in the chosen model. Their coefficients indicate whether social work students have gay-lesbian schoolmates and how students' parents feel about same-sex sexuality, as associated with their support for marriage equality. Although the variables for friend nonhomophobia and social worker nonhomophobia are significant in the second and third models, the variables become insignificant after they are added to the final model. No variables in the category of education on same-sex sexuality reached statistical significance at any conventional level in the third model. However, the incremental F test indicates that the same-sex sexuality education variables collectively improve the understanding of social work students' support for marriage equality relative to the second model. Nevertheless, none of the variables are still significant in the final model.

In the final model, there are four significant variables in the category of beliefs and values. The variables Christian-Muslim, religious piety, and perceived cause are statistically significant at the 1% level ($\alpha=.01$), and the variable of fear of AIDS is significant at the 5% level ($\alpha=.05$). The negative coefficient of the Christian-Muslim variable reveals that Christians and Muslims tend to oppose marriage equality legalization. The negative coefficient of religious piety indicates that social work students who tend to agree with religious teachings against same-sex sexuality also tend to be against legalizing marriage equality. The variable of perceived cause has a positive coefficient, indicating that social work students who tend to agree that same-sex sexuality is caused by nature have a stronger tendency to support marriage equality. The variable of fear of AIDS also has a positive coefficient, which indicates that students who tend to feel comfortable providing social services to people who have AIDS also tend to be supportive of marriage equality. The variables of traditional

gender roles, filial piety, and no-child unfiliality did not reach statistical significance at any conventional level.

DISCUSSION

Gay-lesbian identity is clearly the only demographic variable robustly associated with social work students' support for marriage equality in Taiwan. Social work students who are neither gay nor lesbian are less supportive of marriage equality. This finding is consistent with the findings of other studies on social work students' attitudes toward same-sex sexuality (Lee, 2018; Swank and Raiz, 2007).

Age appears to be marginally associated with social work students' support for marriage equality.¹³ Younger students seem to be more supportive of marriage equality. To some extent, the finding is consistent with the findings of studies on the general public by Brumbaugh et al. (2008), Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2005) and Olson et al. (2006), who find that younger people tend to be more supportive of marriage equality. Ethnicity, gender, and whether one grew up in large metropolitan areas are not associated with social work student support for marriage equality. These findings are consistent with that of Swank and Raiz (2010b), who study social work student support for same-sex relationship rights. Similarly, Barth and Parry (2009) find that gender and race are not associated with the general public's support for the legal recognition of marriage equality. Panchapakesan et al. (2014) also find no evidence of an association between ethnicity and general public support for the legalization of marriage equality.

Partially supporting the contact theory, meeting gay close schoolmates boosts support for marriage equality, while interactions with gay siblings and gay close friends do not. This finding is consistent with that of Swank and Raiz (2010b). They find that meeting gay peers increases support for same-sex relationship rights among social work students, but interactions with gay close friends do not. Their study explains these findings with the weak tie theory proposed by Granovetter (1973), in which acquaintances are more likely to be influential than close friends in social networks (Swank and Raiz, 2010b).

Social work students' support for marriage equality is also influenced by their immediate social circles. In particular, students tend to express more support for marriage equality when they feel that their parents are less homophobic. However, student support is not robustly associated with their feelings toward friends' or social workers' homophobia. These findings are partially consistent with those of Swank and Raiz (2010b) regarding same-sex relationship rights among social work students. They find that support by social work students is influenced by their feelings toward both their friends' and their parents' acceptance of same-sex relationships. It appears that the social milieu influences support for marriage equality differently from its influence on support for same-sex relationships.

¹³ Ninety-five percent of the students are between 18 to 24 years old. Some of the surveyed students are in bachelor's degree further study programs and are older than 50 years old.

Weak evidence of the influence of same-sex sexuality education on social work student support for marriage equality was found in the present study. In contrast, Lee (2018) finds that same-sex sexuality education has a statistically significant influence on social work students' comfort with same-sex sexuality in Taiwan. However, the finding of the present study is consistent with that of Panchapakesan et al. (2014), who find no evidence of an association between education and the general public's support for the legalization of marriage equality in Singapore.

The finding that Christian and Muslim students show comparably less support for marriage equality legalization is in line with that of Lee (2018) regarding social work students' comfort with same-sex sexuality in Taiwan. Panchapakesan et al. (2014) also find that Christians are less supportive of marriage equality in Singapore. Social work students who more strongly agree with religious teachings against same-sex sexuality are less supportive of legalizing marriage equality. This finding is consistent with the finding of Papadaki et al. (2013), who find that religious social work students are more likely to think marriage equality is 'ridiculous' than those who are not religious in Greece. This finding is also consistent with that of Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2005), who find that highly religious people are more likely to oppose marriage equality. These findings are also consistent with those of Swank and Raiz (2007) and Lee (2018), who study social work students' comfort with same-sex sexuality.

Supporting attribution theory, social work students attributing same-sex sexuality to biology are significantly more supportive of marriage equality. This finding is consistent with that of Haider-Markel and Joslyn (2005), who find that people attributing same-sex sexuality to upbringing or the environment are significantly more likely to oppose marriage equality. Students who feel more comfortable providing social services to people with AIDS are also more supportive of marriage equality. These findings are also in line with those of same-sex sexuality studies (Lee, 2018; Swank and Raiz, 2007).

The above findings indicate that, in addition to personal gay-lesbian identity, there are other factors influencing social work students' support for marriage equality in Taiwan. Even though they are minority religions in Taiwan, Christianity and Islam exert significant influence on students to oppose marriage equality. Parents and close schoolmates are the main influencers shaping social work students' support, perhaps partly because students are financially dependent on their parents and frequently meet with schoolmates in Taiwan.

How students perceive the cause of same-sex sexuality is also an important factor, as social work students who perceive same-sex sexuality as uncontrollable are more supportive of marriage equality in Taiwan. Additionally, inaccurate beliefs about the risks posed by casual social contact with people with AIDS appear to be a significant issue, as students who feel less comfortable with them are less supportive of marriage equality in Taiwan.

However, there is notably no support for associations between social work student support for marriage equality and their education about same-sex sexuality,

attitudes toward gender roles, or traditional beliefs about filial responsibility. The above findings contrast with prior research regarding attitudes toward same-sex sexuality and relationship rights.

In particular, Lee (2018) finds a statistically significant influence of same-sex sexuality education on social work students' comfort with same-sex sexuality in Taiwan. It appears that it may be more difficult for education to influence attitudes toward marriage equality in Taiwan. Lee (2018) and Swank and Raiz (2010b) find that social work student attitudes toward traditional gender roles are significantly associated with their attitudes toward same-sex sexuality and same-sex relationship rights in Taiwan and the United States, respectively. Lin et al. (2016) show the effect of college students' attitudes toward filial piety on their attitudes toward same-sex sexuality in the People's Republic of China. These findings may differ because marriage equality in Taiwan is more than an issue of traditional family values and is also about freedom of marriage and the right to equality ("Marriage equality case", 2017).

One likely explanation that some variables do not emerge as predictors is that the variance of support for marriage equality is accounted for by other variables in the specific statistical models presented (Anderson et al., 2017), even though the variance inflation factors do not detect severe collinearity issues. It can still be argued that these variables might be related to social work students' support for marriage equality, but they do not help explain the support beyond the variables emerged as predictors.

Regarding the above empirical findings, several methodological limitations should be noted. Like any other survey, the survey in this study may not be completely immune to issues such as overdemanding recall and social desirability bias. The nonprobabilistic nature of the sample is also a limitation of the study. Despite these caveats, the pilot tests for the present study show no serious problems in terms of survey design, and the sample is large and was analyzed for robustness. Therefore, the empirical findings should be reliable sources of valuable information and merit serious attention. Another limitation is that one-item instruments, instead of multi-item instruments, are used to measure the variables in this study. Importantly, the above findings reveal that, as noted by Dion and Diez (2020), tolerance toward same-sex sexuality differs from support for marriage equality, and as expected, the findings of studies on same-sex sexuality are not entirely generalizable to marriage equality.

Prohibiting marriage equality is a form of discrimination against same-sex people, as same-sex partners are blocked from accessing social services on a family basis (Herdt and Kertzner, 2006; Woodford and Luke et al., 2012). As social workers have a professional ethical responsibility to act to eliminate and prevent discrimination based on sexual orientation, it is vital for social worker educators to strengthen social work students' support for marriage equality, particularly in Taiwan, as a noticeable portion of social work students are not supportive of marriage equality. Research indicates that diverse training strategies based on exposure to educational information and intergroup contact seem to be effective at reducing prejudice (Kwok, 2021; Pettigrew, 1998).

The significance of the attribution of the cause of sexual orientation and the fear of AIDS indicates the importance of including information on sexual identity development and AIDS transmission in coursework. The significance of having close gay-lesbian schoolmates highlights the benefit of increasing the frequency of interactions between social work students and gay or lesbian schoolmates. To foster these scenarios, social work educators could invite students who publicly identify as gay or lesbian to classrooms to interact with students.¹⁴ Given the influence of religion, social work educators might analyze the distinction between the religious and legal perspectives of marriage and stress the necessity of legalizing marriage equality for fairness and equality in the provision of social services.¹⁵

Notably, in contrast to previous research on social work students' tolerance of same-sex sexuality in Taiwan, the evidence of the influence of sexuality education on support for marriage equality is weak. Additionally, in contrast to prior studies focusing on same-sex sexuality, the variables of traditional gender roles, filial piety and no-child unfiliality all had no significant influence on support for marriage equality. These findings support that marriage equality is not as much an issue about traditional family values as it is an issue about freedom of marriage and the right to equality in Taiwan.

CONCLUDING REMARKS

The present study presents findings revealing that social work students' support for marriage equality is predicted by their gay-lesbian identity, having gay close schoolmates, parental nonhomophobia, being Christian or Muslim, perception of the cause of same-sex sexuality and fear of AIDS. In closing, this study contributes to the literature on social work students' support for marriage equality. This study suggests future studies to examine whether freedom of marriage and the right to equality are gaps in the current curricular content for sexuality education in Taiwan. If these social concerns are missing, it might be fruitful to study whether incorporating them into current social work teaching activities could improve social work students' support for marriage equality in Taiwan. Additionally, in future studies, current social work practitioners could be surveyed to help evaluate the potential need for continuing professional education. In addition, future studies could be conducted in other societies to verify whether the findings of this study, particularly regarding the influences of traditional family values and education on social work students, can be generalized beyond Taiwan.

¹⁴ Lee (2018) proposes similar suggestions for promoting comfort with gay and lesbian people.

¹⁵ Swank & Raiz (2010b) propose similar suggestions for promoting the support of same-sex relationship rights. Papadaki et al. (2013) also have similar suggestions for improving social work students' attitudes towards gay and lesbian people.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT

This work was funded by the Taiwanese National Science and Technology Council [MOST 104-2410-H-320-006] and Tzu Chi University [TCMRC-P-107003].

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