

Determinants Affecting Social and Legal Status: A Study on Same-Sex Marriage in Indian Context

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Abstract

This study delves into the intricate dynamics surrounding same-sex relationships in the Indian context, exploring the historical evolution and the determinants shaping the social and legal status of this marginalized community. Despite dissenting voices, an examination of ancient Indian texts suggests a historically progressive society that predates the post-colonial era. The imposition of criminal penalties on same-sex relationships, notably under Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, originated from British colonial influence, creating a hostile environment marked by imprisonment and fines. The social structure in India further exacerbated the challenges faced by this vulnerable community. The 21st century witnessed a global movement against discrimination, prompting India to confront its own biases. The pivotal Navtej Johar case marked a turning point as the Supreme Court decriminalized same-sex relationships, providing a legal foundation for the community's rights and identity, further reinforced by subsequent privacy judgments. Despite judicial advancements, challenges persist, revealing the nuanced interplay of social and legal determinants influencing the status of same-sex relationships in India.

Keywords: Same-Sex Relationships, Section 377, Indian Legal Landscape, LGBTQ+ Rights

INTRODUCTION

When two people of the same gender tie the knot, it's called a same-sex marriage. Although there are continuous attempts to acknowledge and legitimize same-sex marriages, they are not yet legal in India. The acknowledgment and preservation of LGBTQ+ relationships, as well as the basic human rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, make this an essential subject. Equal marriage for the sexes would have many positive effects, including ending prejudice and increasing social acceptance of LGBTQ+ couples. From the realm of law to that of social and cultural attitudes towards the LGBTQ+ community at large, it is a crucial issue for LGBTQ+ rights campaigners and advocates everywhere. Marriage in India is defined by law as a relationship between a man and a woman, and the institution does not acknowledge same-sex marriages. A huge win for LGBTQ+ rights in India came in 2018 when the Supreme Court of India invalidated Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code, which criminalized homosexuality. Despite homosexuality's decriminalization, same-sex marriages remained illegal [1].

Even though same-sex marriage has been the subject of multiple court proceedings in India, the country's highest court has thus far refused to recognize same-sex couples as legally married. The Delhi High Court did not go so far as to legalize same-sex marriage in 2017, but it did rule that same-sex couples have the right to be in a stable relationship.

Some changes in Indian law have occurred recently that may affect the future of same-sex marriages in the country. A provision that acknowledges the right to privacy as a fundamental right was included in the Personal Data Protection Bill, which was adopted by the Indian government in 2020. Since it acknowledges the right of individuals to regulate their own lives, some legal experts think this Article might be utilized to support the legalization of same-sex marriage. When the British colonizers of India enacted Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code in 1860, criminalizing gay activities, the LGBTQ+ movement in India began. After India's independence in 1947, this law stayed on the books and was utilized for discrimination and prosecution of LGBTQ+ people for more than a hundred years[2].

But by the century's end, the fight for LGBTQ+ rights in India had picked up steam. The AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA) was established in Delhi in the 1990s as the initial LGBTQ+ organization to combat the prejudice and aggression that the LGBTQ+ community encountered. A non-governmental organization known as the Naz Foundation took Section 377's constitutionality to the Delhi High Court in 2001 through public interest litigation (PIL). The LGBTQ+ community and those who supported them persisted in the face of fierce resistance from conservative organizations and religious leaders; in 2009, the Delhi High Court ruled that Section 377 was unconstitutional, decriminalizing homosexuality. The Indian Supreme Court, however, reversed this ruling in 2013 and reinstated Section 377.

Reversing a prior ruling and re-decriminalizing homosexuality, a five-judge panel of India's highest court deemed Section 377 unlawful in 2018. In the fight for LGBTQ+ equality and the eradication of discrimination, this was a huge win for the LGBTQ+ community in India. But the LGBTQ+ community in India continues to confront big obstacles, even with these court successes. Many members of India's LGBTQ+ community still endure prejudice and exclusion at home, in school, and at work, on top of the widespread violence and discrimination they confront every day. Education, work, healthcare, and housing are just a few areas where transgender people encounter discrimination[3]. Equal marriage rights for the LGBTQ+ community in India are still a long way off. Because they are not officially recognized, they are subject to more forms of discrimination and violence, and they are also denied social and legal privileges.

Section 377 was added to the Indian Penal Code in 1860 by the British colonial authority. This section made homosexuality and other sexual practices that went against nature illegal.

The AIDS Bhedbhav Virodhi Andolan (ABVA), the initial LGBTQ+ organization, was established in Delhi in the 1990s to combat the prejudice and aggression that members of the LGBTQ+ community encountered.

The legitimacy of Section 377 was challenged in a public interest litigation (PIL) launched by the non-governmental organization Naz Foundation in the Delhi High Court in 2001.

The 2009 verdict of the Delhi High Court decriminalized homosexuality and deemed Section 377 unconstitutional.

The decision of the Supreme Court of India in 2013 was to reinstate Section 377, which had previously been struck down by the Delhi High Court, and to criminalize homosexuality once again.

The previous ruling decriminalized homosexuality again in 2018 when a five-judge panel of India's highest court deemed Section 377 unconstitutional.

Aiming to safeguard the rights of transgender persons and grant them official recognition, the Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act was enacted in 2019.

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Many studies and discussions have focused on the legal standing of same-sex weddings recently. From a variety of vantage points, scholars and legal professionals have investigated this matter, examining how laws and public opinion have changed about same-sex marriages in many nations, including India.

An Overview of the Law and Judgement

The Netherlands officially legalized same-sex marriage on April 1, 2001. Unlike in other nations, the legalization of same-sex marriage in the Netherlands did not hinge on individual court cases. In the Netherlands, however, the procedure mostly comprised new legislation and amendments to the existing marriage laws. A move was made by the Dutch government to legalize same-sex weddings. When the Dutch Marriage Act was passed in 2000, it was a turning point. By removing the gender-specific phrasing that restricted marriage to partners of the opposite sex, this act altered the existing marriage statutes[4]. The outcome was that same-sex couples could legally marry on an equal footing with opposite-sex couples, without having to bring individual court cases to question the prior limitations.

The Netherlands' 2001 decision to legalize same-sex weddings was a watershed moment in global marriage equality, as it established a precedent and encouraged other countries to follow suit. Similarly, particular court cases were not necessary to legalize same-sex weddings in Belgium. Rather, revisions to marriage laws and other legislative acts were the primary drivers of the process. A law was enacted by the Belgian Parliament legalizing same-sex marriages. The Belgian Parliament passed a law legalizing same-sex marriage and adoption on January 30, 2003, which became law on February 13, 2003 [2]. The legislation repealed the gender-specific phrase that had previously restricted marriage to couples of the opposite sex.

Belgium became the second country in the world to legalize same-sex weddings after this legislation passed. By granting legal recognition and safeguards to same-sex couples seeking to tie the knot, it highlighted the nation's dedication to equality. Legal and social advocacy efforts by individuals, organizations, and the LGBTQ+ community were vital in promoting and shaping public opinion and legislative action in favor of marriage equality, even though particular court cases may not have directly led to the legalization of same-sex marriages in Belgium, similar to the Netherlands.

Indian Perceptions of Homosexuality

The Union government's justification for legalizing same-sex weddings was based on "urban elitist views," yet statistics reveal that city dwellers were no more tolerant of same-sex couples than their rural counterparts. Only 19% of those who took part in a 2019 poll by CSDS-Lokniti & Azim Premji University said same-sex relationships should be acceptable, while 55% were in disagreement. On this subject, almost 25% of respondents did not express any views. One interesting finding is that whereas 53% of rural Indians were against accepting same-sex couples, 59% of urban Indians disagreed [5].

A 6% increase from 47% in the poor to 53% in the wealthy was also noted in the percentage of people who strongly disagreed with society's acceptance of same-sex couples. The practice of same-sex marriage was frowned upon by many faith communities. In a survey asking about same-sex couples, more than 70% of Christians and 50% of Muslims expressed their disapproval. Hindus and Sikhs made up about 40% of the population. Hindus, in particular, had the greatest rate of acceptance of same-sex couples at 22%.

Around the Globe

Indian society as a whole has mixed feelings about same-sex marriages, relationships, and the government's stance on the matter. However, it's not alone: just 34 nations have decriminalized homosexuality while 133 have legalized same-sex marriages. As of 2022, just 1.21 billion people call a country that allows same-sex marriage home, while 6.77 billion call a country that does not. Based on a 2020 Pew Research Centre survey, the United States and Western Europe were found to have a more tolerant attitude towards homosexuality compared to Eastern Europe, Russia, Ukraine, West Asia, and sub-Saharan Africa. How a nation's citizens feel about homosexuality and same-sex marriages is influenced by their religious views, political stances, and economic circumstances [6].

In 2002, 51% of Americans were open to the idea of homosexuality. This percentage jumped to 72 percent in 2019. The acceptance rate of homosexuality has increased significantly over the years, even if it was quite low in South Africa and India, to begin with. Take South Africa as an example; in 2002, 33% of people there accepted homosexuality; by 2019, that number had risen to 54%. In 2013, just 15% of Indians were open about being gay. The rapid shift in public opinion towards homosexuality is shown by the 22% increase to 37% in 2019.

The percentage of the population that accepts homosexuality has risen sharply in Latin American nations such as Brazil and Argentina. There was a 10% spike in the percentage of Argentines who think society should embrace homosexuality. From 2002 to 2019, the percentage rose from 66% to 76% nationwide. From 2011 to 2019, this percentage increased in Brazil from 61% to 67%. In contrast, a 2014 Pew Research Centre survey found that Latinos were less tolerant of same-sex weddings than Americans. In contrast to Argentina's 52% acceptance of same-sex marriages and Brazil's 45% acceptance, more than 70% of the population in eight Latin American countries (including Ecuador, Paraguay, and Honduras) did not support marriage equality.

Whereas over 75% of the population embraces the gay community in Western European nations including the Netherlands, Sweden, France, and Spain, the level of tolerance for homosexuality was lower in Eastern European nations. In other countries, including as Poland, Ukraine, Slovakia, Lithuania, and Hungary, the percentage of accepting members of the community is below 35%. A lot of people in Eastern Europe appear to let their religious views dictate how they feel about homosexuality. A 2019 survey by the Pew Research Centre found that in Poland, Lithuania, Hungary, and Croatia, the majority of the population identifies as Catholic. As a result, the religious majority views same-sex couples with disapproval[7]. Suppression of same-sex marriage was opposed by more than 60% of Catholics in Hungary, Poland, and Croatia. Catholics in Lithuania, Belarus, and Latvia made up more than 80% of the population. Less than 10% of the population accepts homosexuality in some African nations, including Nigeria and Tunisia, making them the most tolerant in the world. Over 70% of respondents in 18 of the 23 African nations surveyed by Afrobarometer in 2019 and 2020 expressed intolerance towards homosexual neighbors. These nations included Tunisia, Morocco, Kenya, and Uganda. With a whopping 98% of the population strongly disapproving of having a gay neighbor, Senegal topped the list.

THE INDIAN PERSPECTIVE

Indian culture is fundamentally conservative. Since India is a secular state, its citizens are free to follow and spread the beliefs of any religion they like. Due to the prevalence of religion, many aspects of society and individual legislation are rooted in religious principles. This encompasses all facets of relationships between people of the same sex as well. Looking at the evolution of same-sex couples provides a fascinating glimpse into the shift from a liberal, accepting society to a conservative one. The British-imposed Indian Penal Code, and Section 377 in particular, provided the necessary legal permission for this. This rule institutionalized discrimination and dominance against same-sex couples by making such relationships illegal and punished by fines and jail time. The Navtej Johar case in 2018 finally addressed the decades-long road of subsequent decriminalization.

Many of India's historical kingdoms made mention of same-sex couples or transgender people. Hindu art, architecture, and the Vedic period all represent the concept of gender fluidity.² A few notable examples include the following: the birth of King Bhagirathi; the temples of Khajuraho, the Ellora caves in Maharashtra, and the Sun Temple in Kornak; and the famous text, Kama Sutra, written by Vatsyayana, which deals with sexuality, eroticism, and the emotional fulfillment of life.⁴

The Khajuraho temples are a wonderful illustration of the ancient people's open-mindedness.⁵ The Chandela dynasty constructed these sacred buildings between the years 950 and 1050 AD. The sculptures in the temples represent same-sex relationships, including a sexually fluid portrayal of men and women hugging one other in an open embrace. Similar depictions can be seen in Kornak's Sun temple.⁶ Such depictions of same-sex intercourse can also be found in the Ellora caves, which detail the life of Gautam Budha, the founder of Buddhism. These diverse instances illustrate the presence of a tolerant culture, one that did not pass judgment and freely displayed them in a revered setting like a temple[8].

When it comes to texts that discuss same-sex attraction in Islamic literature, Baburnama stands head and shoulders above the others. Notable writers who have displayed such references include Sufi poets like Bulleh Shah, Sarmand Kashani, and others. As the British Empire expanded into India, a more Anglicised view of society was introduced into the legal system and social norms. Within the Indian system, western ideals were imposed, with the Church playing a particularly significant role in determining these views. Lord Macaulay made homosexuality a criminal crime when he drafted the Indian Penal Code, which was part of the British-created legal framework in India. A sense of immorality and the social infusion of morality occurred along with this legal restriction. Society began to doubt these practices and openly dehumanize them as a consequence of morality and religious views on life after death. Even after gaining independence, the Indian Penal Code and Section 377 remained part of the legal system, demonstrating how deeply embedded this viewpoint was in society. In 1967, the British removed the rule in their nation, but in India, the fight persisted until 2018.

CASE LAWS

JUDICIAL REVIEW OF LGBTQ RIGHTS IN INDIA

A review of LGBTQ rights in India's courts demonstrates that, in contrast to the legislature's lack of initiative, the courts have taken the lead on this issue in recent years. In particular, the Supreme Court has made several landmark decisions in the past ten years that have allowed this historically oppressed community to have their fundamental rights acknowledged. A liberal judiciary was necessary to rectify the conservative character of Parliament, which was shown by the parliamentarians' failure in this area. A few of the most seminal Supreme Court decisions on the matter are as follows.

Naz Foundation v Government of NCT Delhi

Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code was deemed illegal in this historic case⁹ by the Delhi High Court. It was the NGO's Public Interest Litigation that resulted to the decision, which allowed for a judicial examination of laws passed during the British rule. According to the Indian Supreme Court, it is against three articles of the country's constitution that deal with equality: Article 14, Article 15, and Article 16.

NALSA v. Union of India

Following the heavily criticized decision in Suresh Kumar Koushal v. Union of India¹¹, this case was brought before the court. After decriminalizing Section 377 in Naz Foundation, the Supreme Court re-criminalized it in Suresh Kumar. To help the transgender community, the National Legal Services Authority spearheaded the effort to ask pertinent questions. Transgender people were officially recognized as a distinct gender in this ruling. As a whole, the ruling established norms that will safeguard the liberties and rights of transgender people [9].

A specific statute outlining their rights was subsequently established as a result of legislative changes. The 2019 Transgender Persons (Protection of Rights) Act is the culmination of long discussions and proposed legislation. While there are some good things about the law and it is essential, there is a big problem with it: it requires administrative meddling by making everyone be recognized as "transgender" by having a district magistrate issue an identification certificate. The delicate nature of the topic makes this an extremely pressing matter.

Justice (Retd.) K. S. Puttaswamy v. Union of India

This ruling upheld the right to privacy as a component of the right to life and liberty (Article 21), finding that privacy is fundamental to the human experience and applicable to all people regardless of their gender or sexual orientation.¹² Justice Chandrachud made the observation in the ruling that the LGBTQ community ought to have the right to privacy, including autonomy and independence from governmental intervention. In the context of sexual freedom, autonomy, and the ability to choose one's own partners, a particular observation was made. At the heart of the fundamental rights provided by Articles 14 (right to equality), 15 (discrimination on grounds of sex), and 21 (right to life and personal liberty) of the Constitution lie the right to privacy and the protection of sexual orientation, the Court noted. This ruling laid the groundwork for the landmark Navtej Johar case^[10].

Navtej Singh Johar v. Union of India

By striking down the notorious Section 377, this ruling decriminalized homosexuality in India. The ruling struck down the section, finding that it violated Articles 14, 15, 16, and 19(1)(a) of the Constitution, to the extent that it criminalized consensual intercourse between two consenting adults. Taking cues from the Puttaswamy ruling, the right to a dignified existence, independence, and personal choice were acknowledged.

LEGAL STATUS OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN INDIA

The Indian government must pass legislation outlining the many rights that citizens have and provide specific guidelines for how each state should apply this law. The Indian Special Marriage Act of 1954 guarantees a person the right to be married. Yogyakarta Plus 10 and the Yogyakarta Principles may serve as the basis for this statute and its motivation. A working group in Indonesia had never before produced such a substantial piece of legislation. The fundamental principles of equality and freedom form the basis of this very useful publication, which responds to community problems from a human rights viewpoint.

Involvement with the LGBTQ community is the next potential remedy, which is greatly required in the Indian setting. The first step is for people to talk about sexuality and gender more freely and openly in their homes and communities. Everyone must be involved in the mainstream for the community to thrive. Personal space ought to be safeguarded and appreciated. No one's social standing is impacted by their sexual orientation. The Puttaswamy ruling correctly noted that "equality demands that the sexual orientation of each individual be protected on an even platform" since it is a person's sexual preference. Programmes of education and awareness are necessary to achieve this goal.

It is a question of free will, not biology, which is the first myth that needs dispelling. There is a need for appropriate programming to dispel the many myths that circulate in the community [11].

Sexuality education should begin in schools and spread to all levels of society.

It ought to be imparted with honesty and without drowning it in guilt or judgment. Law enforcement and the police force are another important industry. The Indian police force has a reputation for insensitivity and has been involved in incidents of community abuse and violence.

DETERMINANTS OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN INDIA

The legalization of same-sex marriage in India is a complex and multifaceted issue that is influenced by a variety of social, cultural, legal, and political factors. While there has been some progress in recent years towards recognizing the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals, India still does not recognize same-sex marriage.

Social Determinants

Traditional views of marriage:

Traditional views of marriage in India, deeply rooted in a patriarchal and conservative society, perceive marriage as exclusively between a man and a woman. This perspective, influenced by religious teachings, often leads to the stigmatization of same-sex relationships, viewing them as immoral and a threat to the traditional institution of marriage and family. The absence of legal recognition exacerbates this issue, perpetuating discrimination in areas such as inheritance and spousal benefits[12]. This traditional stance also impacts mental health services, hindering access for individuals in same-sex relationships. While generational shifts and global perspectives on LGBTQ+ rights indicate the potential for change, efforts must include educational reforms, media inclusivity, and intergenerational dialogue to challenge stereotypes and foster understanding. Integration of LGBTQ+ themes in cultural celebrations and political advocacy are essential components of a comprehensive approach to dismantling traditional biases and promote inclusivity.

Lack of awareness and understanding:

The lack of awareness and understanding of LGBTQ+ issues in India is exacerbated by the limited visibility of LGBTQ+ individuals in mainstream media and the absence of comprehensive sex education in schools. The underrepresentation of diverse sexual orientations and gender identities in media perpetuates stereotypes and fosters a climate of ignorance. Moreover, the omission of LGBTQ+-inclusive content in educational curricula hinders the development of an empathetic and informed perspective among students. Without adequate sex education that covers a spectrum of identities and relationships, societal misconceptions persist, contributing to the marginalization of the LGBTQ+ community. Efforts to increase visibility through media representation, coupled with the integration of LGBTQ+-inclusive education, are crucial for fostering awareness, understanding, and acceptance within the broader public sphere.

Stigma and discrimination:

Stigma and discrimination against LGBTQ+ individuals in India constitute a pervasive and distressing reality, resulting in profound social consequences. The prevalent societal biases often translate into social isolation, where individuals may grapple with feelings of exclusion and alienation due to their non-normative identities. The discriminatory attitudes also manifest in instances of bullying, both within educational institutions and the workplace, creating hostile environments that impede personal and professional growth. Furthermore, the most alarming consequence of such discrimination is the heightened risk of violence, as LGBTQ+ individuals may become targets of hate crimes or physical assaults. The lack of legal safeguards and societal acceptance compounds these challenges, amplifying the vulnerability of the LGBTQ+ community. Addressing these issues necessitates comprehensive efforts, including legal reforms, awareness campaigns, and education initiatives, to foster an inclusive society where diversity is celebrated rather than met with discrimination.

Cultural Determinants

Cultural determinants in India are profoundly influenced by religious beliefs, where major religions like Hinduism, Islam, and Christianity often uphold traditional views that do not condone same-sex relationships. The impact of these religious beliefs extends beyond personal faith, affecting familial and communal acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals. The clash between one's sexual orientation or gender identity and religious teachings can create significant challenges in gaining understanding and approval within families and communities, intensifying feelings of isolation for individuals.

Furthermore, the cultural emphasis on collective values in Indian society adds another layer to the challenges faced by the LGBTQ+ community. The prevailing emphasis on collectivism and conformity can create a stifling environment, making it arduous for individuals to openly express their authentic selves, particularly if their identities diverge from traditional gender norms. The societal pressure to conform to established norms may force individuals into a mold that does not align with their true selves, contributing to a pervasive struggle for authenticity and self-acceptance[13]. These cultural dynamics underscore the need for societal conversations and educational initiatives that foster acceptance, understanding, and respect for diverse identities, thereby promoting a more inclusive and affirming cultural landscape.

Legal Determinant's

Legal determinants in India significantly impact the lives of LGBTQ+ individuals, and one critical aspect is Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code. This provision criminalizes "unnatural sexual intercourse," a vague term that has historically been misused to target and prosecute individuals based on their sexual orientation. Despite the historic 2018 Supreme Court ruling that partially struck down Section 377, the LGBTQ+ community still faces legal challenges, as the remnants of this law continue to be weaponized, perpetuating discrimination and harassment.

Adding to the legal hurdles, the absence of specific legislation recognizing same-sex marriage compounds the struggles faced by the LGBTQ+ community. The lack of legal provisions for same-sex unions means that these couples are denied the rights and protections afforded to heterosexual couples.

Issues related to inheritance, spousal benefits, and other fundamental rights become significant obstacles, reinforcing the need for comprehensive legal reforms that acknowledge and safeguard the rights of LGBTQ+ individuals. Bridging this legal gap is crucial for fostering a more equitable and inclusive legal landscape that upholds the principles of equality and non-discrimination for all citizens, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

ROLE OF DETERMINANTS OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN INDIA

The determinants of same-sex marriage in India play a pivotal role in shaping the landscape for LGBTQ+ individuals seeking legal recognition and societal acceptance. Cultural factors, deeply rooted in traditional views of marriage and religious beliefs, significantly influence perceptions, making it challenging for individuals in same-sex relationships to gain acceptance from their families and communities [14]. The legal determinants, particularly Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code and the absence of specific legislation recognizing same-sex marriage, contribute to a complex legal environment, impacting the rights and protections available to LGBTQ+ individuals. Furthermore, the lack of awareness and understanding, combined with persistent stigma and discrimination, further hinders progress towards embracing same-sex unions. Addressing these determinants requires comprehensive efforts encompassing legal reforms, cultural shifts, and education initiatives to foster inclusivity, dismantle stereotypes, and ensure equal rights for all individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation or gender identity.

LEGAL STATUS OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE IN INDIA

There has been no resolution to the fight for same-sex marriage in India. The only change is that same-sex relationships are no longer illegal. However, the legal status of same-sex marriages is still lacking, particularly when it comes to the rights that traditionally come with marriage, such as child custody, divorce, and recognition. The argument was presented before the highest court in India in April 2023 in the Supriyo V. Union of India case. This case dealt with a large number of petitioners and respondents. The Indian Supreme Court is about to hear a historic case that will decide whether same-sex couples should be allowed to marry and start families. However, two same-sex couples—Supriya Chakraborty and Abhay Dang and Parth Phiroze Merhotra and Uday Raj Anand—filed the case on November 14, 2022. The petitioners contend that the Special Marriage Act, 1954, Section 4 ©, which permits marriage solely between a "male" and a "female," is incompatible with the Constitution and infringes against their basic rights to non-discrimination, equality, and privacy.

The government maintains that the Special Marriage Act, 1954, Section 4©, is an equal protection statute that does not target same-sex couples. On the other hand, the state has maintained that marriage is not an essential right and that same-sex couples' right to privacy does not encompass the right to marry.

FUTURE OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE

More persistent campaigning and understanding would be necessary. Some areas still do not acknowledge or strongly oppose same-sex marriages, even though this practice has become legal in some nations. Marriage equality can be further advanced by continuous activism, education, and awareness campaigns that aim to promote understanding and acceptance. There is room to improve legal safeguards as well. Even though same-sex marriages are now legal in many countries, LGBT people and couples still need strong legal safeguards inside marriage laws. For same-sex couples to have full equality and protection, we must address their needs in areas like healthcare benefits, anti-discrimination policies, inheritance rules, and rights to adopt.

This calls for research comparing the legality of same-sex weddings in other nations. The consequences of marriage equality on LGBT rights, societal acceptance, and general well-being can be better understood with its help. Scholars, activists, and politicians can all benefit from the findings of this research as they shape future efforts.

CONCLUSION

The trajectory of legal recognition for same-sex marriages has undergone substantial advancements globally. Leading nations such as the Netherlands, Belgium, Canada, Spain, and South Africa have played pivotal roles in championing the rights of same-sex couples to marry, establishing crucial benchmarks for the global community. An examination of the legal landscapes and journeys of diverse countries provides us with a profound understanding of the societal implications surrounding same-sex marriages [15]. This knowledge empowers us to strive collectively towards fostering a world characterized by inclusivity and equity, where individuals, regardless of their sexual orientation, can enjoy equal rights and opportunities.

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