

LOSING THE WILL TO LIVE: THE LEGALIZATION OF SAME-SEX MARRIAGE AND GERIATRIC SUICIDALITY

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Dear editor,

With increasing elderly population, geriatric suicide is becoming crucial for public health policy. To prevent suicide, health professionals must be trained to identify suicide risk factors and manage suicidal crises. Negative life events, generally classified into marriage/love, family/home, and friend/relationship types, may trigger suicide attempts (Liu et al. 2019). Here, we report a case highlighting a potentially new type of negative life event.

A 70-year-old widow was presented to our emergency department for attempting suicide. According to her son, she tried to suffocate him while he was sleeping and later returned to her room and attempted to commit suicide by hanging herself. Because of the high suicide risk, she was admitted for crisis intervention. We attempted to clarify psychosocial problems because she attempted to both commit suicide and kill her son. She initially hesitated and finally confessed the following: She lived with her only son and long suspected that he was homosexual; recently, the legalization of same-sex marriage in Taiwan caused her to worry, particularly because her son tried to lightly mention this topic with her. She used to think that she could rely on luck to eventually have a grandchild but the new law made her feel so hopeless that at midnight she tried to kill her son and commit suicide.

In 2017, Taiwan's constitutional court ruled that same-sex couples had the right to legally marry. This prompted a public backlash that pressured the government to hold a series of referendums. Lawmakers in Taiwan finally approved a bill legalizing same-sex marriage in a landmark decision that made the self-ruled island the first place in Asia to pass gay marriage legislation in May 2019. The equality of human rights and inclusivity of marriage equality were reinforced thereafter,

supporting some correlated rights such as inheritance rights and financial obligations. We appreciate the legalization of same-sex marriage but also note that it may present a considerable attack on conservative people, particularly for elderly family members. Continuing the family line by producing heirs may remain critical to some Chinese families.

The largest relevant study to date highlighted reported that 8 to 25% of same-sex sexual behavior can be explained by genetics, with the rest influenced by environmental and cultural factors (Ganna et al. 2019). Although homosexuality has long been removed from disease classifications, when celebrating the legalization of same-sex marriage, the psychological status of elderly people should be considered, particularly those who uphold the traditional idea of having grandchildren to continue the family name. According to the Department of Household Registration in Taiwan, both the number of same-sex marriages and divorces have increased (Ministry of the interior 2020). Because Taiwan was the first in Asia to legalize same-sex marriage, we suggest that couples completely consider their marriage. Such thoughts of marriage should be holistic, and coordinated sets of measures for elderly family members should be implemented before the couple marries.

The report concerns more in the concept of Culture Bond. We believe the case supposed to achieve a representative milestone because it is rather contradicted to the human rights entitled by the same-gender marriage when it comes to the relative conservative & unacceptable mindset of same-gender marriage in the elder Asian's Culture while in the Westerner's culture which individualism is rooted in their genes. The human rights continue its path to get progress as time goes by. This report aims to offer a representative reference for all other countries considering the same-sex marriage legislation for their citizens.

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References

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