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**Quo Vadis Same-Sex Marriage**

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**ABSTRACT**

The topic of same-sex marriage in Timor-Leste intersects deeply with the nation's moral theology and cultural values, especially given its predominant Catholic influence. This research explore the complexities surrounding the acceptance and recognition of same-sex unions within the context of Timorese culture and moral theology. The introduction outlines the significance of same-sex marriage as a progressive step towards a more just and equitable society, emphasizing the importance of legal recognition for rights and the protection it affords.

Subsequent sections discuss the recent societal reactions following a same-sex marriage involving Timorese individuals, which sparked widespread debate across various spheres of society. This discussion highlights the challenges faced by same-sex couples in a predominantly Catholic society where traditional family structures and religious beliefs strongly influence public opinion.

The article analyzes the theological and cultural barriers to acceptance of same-sex marriage, including Catholic doctrine that views marriage as a sacred union solely between a man and a woman. It examines the implications of this stance on societal attitudes, legal recognition, and the broader human rights discourse in Timor-Leste.

Ultimately, this exploration reveals a critical tension between emerging global norms regarding rights and the deeply entrenched cultural and religious values in Timor-Leste. The conclusion reflects on the need for a dialogue that respects cultural traditions while also advocating for human rights, presenting a nuanced view of how Timor-Leste navigates the intersection of faith, culture, and the evolving landscape of marriage equality.



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## INTRODUCTION

The evolution of same-sex marriage has been a central topic in contemporary sociological research, legal debates, and public discourse. As societies grapple with issues of equality, rights, and recognition, the methodologies used to study same-sex marriage become critical in understanding its implications on various levels. This paper presents a comprehensive research methodology that employs ethnographic, normative, and empirical methods to explore the current landscape of same-sex marriage, encapsulated in the phrase "Quo Vadis," which translates to "Where are you going?" This inquiry not only seeks to understand the present state of same-sex marriage but also to investigate its future trajectory in societal acceptance, legal recognition, and cultural significance.

In today's modern world, same-sex marriage is a significant step forward towards a more just and equal society. By allowing same-sex couples to formalize their unions, society recognizes and values the diversity of human relationships, promoting inclusion and respect for individual rights. In addition, the legal recognition of same-sex marriage (hereinafter PMS) provides legal protection and fundamental social benefits, ensuring that all couples have access to the same rights and opportunities. (Bunchaft et al., 2016; Cardoso Farias, 2018)

From the perspective of moral theology (religion) and culture of East Timor, the marriage between SMP challenges the author to research and argue his ideas based on moral theology and Timorese culture. How does the perspective of Timorese moral theology and culture on same-sex marriage? Where does this form of marriage go in the path of moral theology and Timorese culture? (Guerra, 2013; Miskolci, 2007; Mott, 2006)

Thus, the present article with the theme Quo Vadis Marriage between a Person of the Same Sex?, in interrogative diction, is an article that the author wanted to shape and trace the marriage between PMS in moral theology (Catholic) and Timorese culture without judging anyone. In addition, the author also wanted to underline the position of this type of marriage in moral theology and culture in East Timor without alienating anyone. Also, it will be an article that does not represent any institution, but it represents a level of knowledge of the author about the moral theology and the Timorese culture where I was born in your lap, therefore, the person responsible for this article is his own author.

### 1. News the PMS Wedding

I think that for the media society throughout the territory of East Timor to know what has happened in the last two weeks. Even though the marriage refers did not take place in East Timor (another country), but involved the person from East Timor (Timorese). It was about a PMS wedding. It was published on the facebook network on July 21, 2024 and shared many times by another user on your Facebook page.

This news quickly exploded throughout the territory, like an atomic bomb that exploded in the midst of the silence of society. At the same time, he called for a pro-contra reaction from society. On the streets, in the markets, in schools and in university halls, this subject was much debated. The debate generated at various levels in Timorese society on the subject intensifies the fundamental moral, political and socio-anthropological debate on the meaning and function of institutions and constructs such as marriage, kinship, gender, sexuality, reproduction, etc. In this text, once again, I say that PMS marriage is seen as a disputed symbol.

At first, I followed this news, I noticed that soon after the first photo shares of the event, many people began to utter homophobic insults against the couple, evoking culture and religion to justify what they say is "unnatural". Why?

### 2. Marriage between PMS in the Moral Theology and Cultural Values Perspective to Timorese

#### Marriage between PMS

Same-sex marriage, also known as same-sex marriage, refers to the legally recognized union between two people of the same gender. From a human rights perspective, this form of marriage has important significance and implications in several dimensions:

- a) Legal recognition and civil rights: Same-sex marriage gives same-sex couples the same legal rights and responsibilities as heterosexual couples. This includes rights related to inheritance, taxes, health benefits, adoption, and pension. Legal recognition provides protection from discrimination and violence, ensuring that couples have the same rights and recognition under the law.
- b) Social and cultural aspects: The legal recognition of this form of marriage is an important step towards the acceptance and social inclusion of the LGBTQ community. It helps to combat stigma and discrimination, promoting a more just and equal society. Also to promote equality in marriage is a recognition of the diversity of human relationships and the intrinsic value of all people, regardless of their sexual orientation.
- c) Psychological and emotional aspects: Marriage offers a public and legal validation of the relationship, which can strengthen the self-esteem and well-being of individuals. Legally recognized marriages also offer emotional and financial security to couples, providing a solid foundation to build a life together.

#### Marriage between PMS in the Cultural Values and Moral Theology perspective

Of course, from the perspectives of democracy, freedom and human rights, marriage between SMP has important meaning and implications in several dimensions as explained above. Even if this is the case, it seems to me that this form of marriage is being forced to be accepted by Timorese society, supported by a political force masquerading as freedom and human rights. However, it is necessary to be honest and recognize that all freedoms and human rights must be measured by the morals and cultural values of a society.

In this sense, we have to recognize that this form of marriage faces several challenges in the Timor-Leste context, where cultural and religious traditions strongly influence perceptions and attitudes towards this issue. Here are some of the main challenges of marriage among SMP:

#### Cultural challenges

It is undeniable that Timorese society is predominantly Catholic, and traditional and religious values play a significant role in shaping attitudes towards issues of sexuality and marriage. Morality and ethics in Timor-Leste are shaped by a combination of cultural, historical, religious, and social influences.

- a. Religion: The Catholic Church, which is the predominant religion in Timor-Leste, teaches that marriage is a sacred union between a man and a woman. This view strongly influences public opinion and legislation, making it difficult to accept same-sex marriage.
- b. Traditional family structure: Timorese culture values the traditional family structure, where marriage is seen as a union between a man and a woman, with the goal of procreation and continuity of the family lineage.
- c. Customs and rituals: Traditional wedding ceremonies in Timor-Leste involve specific rituals that are deeply rooted in heterosexual union.

Like these perceptions and attitudes of society relate to this issue, therefore, the change to include same-sex marriages would be a significant break with these traditions.

### Challenges Moral Theology

The moral theology and canon law of the Roman Catholic Church have specific and well-established positions on marriage among PMS. The moral theology of the Catholic Church teaches that marriage is a sacramental, exclusive, and indissoluble union between a man and a woman. This view is based on several biblical, theological, and philosophical foundations:

#### a. Biblical Fundamentals:

The Church is based on biblical passages such as Genesis 2:24, which states: "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they will become one flesh."

Texts such as Romans 1:26-27 and 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 are interpreted by the Church as condemnations of homosexual acts.

#### b. Theological Fundamentals:

The Catechism of the Catholic Church (CCC) states that homosexual acts are "intrinsically disordered" and "contrary to the natural law" (CCC 2357). Catholic moral theology emphasizes that marriage is ordained for the procreation and union of spouses, goals that, according to the Church, cannot be achieved in a homosexual union.

#### c. Philosophical Fundamentals:

St. Thomas Aquinas' view of the natural law is central to Catholic moral theology. He argues that sexual acts have a procreative and unitive purpose, which, in the Church's perspective, can only be fully realized in the union between a man and a woman.

#### d. Canon Law

Canon law, which is the system of ecclesiastical law that governs the Catholic Church, has clear provisions on intermarriage between PMS. The Code of Canon Law (CRC) defines marriage in canon 1055 §1 as an alliance between a man and a woman for the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children.

Consequently, marriage between persons of the same gender is considered null and void, as it does not meet the basic definition of marriage under canon law. The CDC lists several impediments to valid marriage, but the most relevant here is that the ability to contract marriage is reserved for a man and a woman. Any attempt at same-sex marriage is not only invalid, but considered non-existent in the Church's legal context.

Several pontifical documents, including encyclicals and statements by the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, reaffirm the Church's position on the impossibility of recognizing same-sex unions as marriage. For example, the letter "Considerations on the Projects for the Legal Recognition of Unions between Homosexual Persons" (2003) emphasizes that the legalization of such unions contradicts Catholic doctrine.

### THE METHOD

The proposed methodology comprises three intertwined components: ethnographic research, normative analysis, and empirical assessment. This triangulation allows for a holistic understanding of same-sex marriage from both a qualitative and quantitative perspective.

#### 1. Ethnographic Research

##### a. Participant Observation

Ethnographic research involves immersive fieldwork, where the researcher engages with same-sex couples and communities to gather rich, qualitative data. Participant observation will be employed in various contexts, such as:

- Community Events: Attending pride parades, advocacy meetings, and marriage ceremonies to observe social dynamics and cultural expressions.
- Interviews: Conducting in-depth interviews with same-sex couples to explore their experiences before and after marriage legalization, capturing personal narratives that reflect broader societal trends.

##### b. Focus Groups

Focus groups composed of diverse participants from communities can provide insight into collective attitudes and experiences. These discussions will help elucidate the shared and divergent views on the significance of marriage within the community, social challenges faced, and the perceived benefits of legal recognition.

#### 2. Normative Methodology

##### a. Conceptual Analysis

This aspect of the research will analyze the normative frameworks surrounding marriage, focusing on the concepts of love, commitment, and family. Key questions include:

- What does marriage mean in the context of identities?
- How do societal norms influence the acceptance of same-sex marriage?

This analysis will draw upon existing literature and theories, such as Judith Butler's notion of performativity and Michel Foucault's ideas on power and sexuality, to provide a theoretical backdrop for understanding the normative implications of same-sex marriage.

##### b. Legal and Policy Review

A thorough examination of the legal landscape regarding same-sex marriage will be conducted. This review will include:

- Analyzing landmark court cases that have shaped the legal status of same-sex marriage in various jurisdictions.

- Assessing current policies at both national and international levels to identify commonalities and disparities in legal recognition.

### 3. Empirical Methodology

The research methodology, utilizing ethnographic, normative, and empirical approaches, offers a robust framework for exploring the multifaceted nature of same-sex marriage. By addressing both the lived experiences of individuals and the broader societal norms that shape perceptions of marriage, this study aims to provide valuable insights into the current state and future trajectory of same-sex marriage. As societies continue to evolve, understanding the complexities of same-sex relationships and the implications of legal recognition becomes increasingly essential in fostering an inclusive and equitable world.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

The legalization of same-sex marriage has been a pivotal issue in contemporary social, political, and personal landscapes. This article aims to explore the consequences of same-sex marriage legalization through the lens of the Etnograbh normative empirical method. This method allows for a comprehensive understanding of the socio-cultural and psychological implications of same-sex marriage while integrating both normative and empirical perspectives. The research findings will highlight the benefits and challenges faced by same-sex couples post-legalization and the broader implications for society.

### 1. Research Results

#### Legal Recognition

Numerous studies have examined the impact of legal recognition of same-sex marriage on the health and well-being of sexual minorities. Herdt and Kertzner (2006) argue that marriage is integral to citizenship and social participation. The empirical data indicates that access to legal same-sex marriage correlates positively with improved mental health outcomes among LGBTQ+ individuals. For instance, individuals in same-sex marriages report lower levels of anxiety and depression compared to their unmarried counterparts.

Key Findings:

- Improved Mental Health: Access to legal marriage significantly reduces mental health issues among sexual minorities, as indicated by lower rates of anxiety and depression (Herdt & Kertzner, 2006).
- Social Inclusion: Legal recognition fosters a sense of belonging and social inclusion, leading to enhanced psychological well-being (Badgett, 2011; Haas & Whitton, 2015).

#### Societal Perceptions and Acceptance

The legalization of same-sex marriage has shifted societal perceptions and acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals. A mixed-methods study conducted in Massachusetts revealed that participants felt increased acceptance and social inclusion post-legalization. This shift is crucial as it reduces stigma and discrimination, empowering LGBTQ+ individuals to engage more fully in social life without fear of marginalization.

Key Findings:

- Increased Acceptance: The legalization of same-sex marriage has led to greater societal acceptance of LGBTQ+ individuals, promoting inclusivity (Rostosky et al., 2016).
- Reduced Stigma: Participants in studies noted a decline in stigma associated with being a part of the LGBTQ+ community, attributing this change to the visibility and normalization of same-sex marriage (Lannutti, 2011).

### Counterarguments and Challenges

Despite the numerous benefits associated with same-sex marriage legalization, several counterarguments and challenges persist. Critics often cite concerns about the potential erosion of traditional marriage values and the implications for family structures. Some argue that the legalization of same-sex marriage could lead to a slippery slope towards the acceptance of polyamorous relationships and other non-traditional family structures.

Key Findings:

- Traditional Values Concerns: Opponents argue that same-sex marriage undermines traditional marriage, potentially leading to further redefinitions of family structures (Polyamorous Families, 2011).
- Slippery Slope Argument: Critics warn that legalizing same-sex marriage might open the door to legalizing polyamorous relationships, which they believe could destabilize societal norms regarding family (Center for Inquiry, 2018).

### Impact on Family Dynamics

Research investigating the impact of same-sex marriage on family dynamics reveals both positive and negative outcomes. Families with same-sex parents report unique challenges, such as societal discrimination and the need for constant advocacy for their rights and recognition.

Key Findings:

- Unique Family Challenges: Same-sex families often face discrimination and challenges in gaining equal recognition and rights, impacting their family dynamics and children's experiences (Anti-Social Effects, 2020).
- Positive Family Environments: Conversely, many studies indicate that children raised in same-sex households thrive and exhibit high levels of well-being, debunking myths regarding the inadequacy of same-sex parenting (Haas & Whitton, 2015).

## 2. Discussion

### Normative Perspectives

From a normative perspective, the legalization of same-sex marriage can be viewed as a significant step toward achieving equality and social justice. It reflects societal progress in recognizing the rights of sexual minorities and affirming their identities. The normative argument posits that access to marriage is a fundamental human right, contributing to the overall well-being of individuals and families.

The ethical implications of denying same-sex couples the right to marry are profound. It perpetuates inequality and exclusion, undermining the principles of justice and fairness that should underpin a democratic society. The normative framework supports the view that legal recognition of same-sex marriage is essential for fostering inclusive communities where all individuals can participate fully in societal life.

## Empirical Evidence and Societal Transformation

The empirical data surrounding same-sex marriage reveals noteworthy transformations in societal attitudes and behaviors. The research indicates that legal recognition has not only improved the health and well-being of LGBTQ+ individuals but has also contributed to broader societal acceptance. This acceptance is critical in combating discrimination and fostering environments where individuals can thrive regardless of their sexual orientation.

Moreover, the economic implications of same-sex marriage legalization cannot be overlooked. The financial benefits to local economies, coupled with the positive social outcomes, create a compelling case for continued support of same-sex marriage rights.

## Counterarguments and Future Considerations

The counterarguments against same-sex marriage often stem from deeply rooted cultural and ideological beliefs. While it is essential to respect differing viewpoints, it is equally crucial to challenge unfounded fears regarding the implications of same-sex marriage. The slippery slope argument, in particular, lacks empirical support and often serves as a rhetorical device rather than a substantive concern.

Looking forward, it is vital to continue research that examines the ongoing impacts of same-sex marriage legalization. As societal norms and values evolve, understanding the long-term effects of this landmark decision will be crucial in shaping future policies and societal attitudes.

The legalization of same-sex marriage represents a significant milestone in the pursuit of equality and social justice for individuals. Through the ethnographic normative empirical method, we can appreciate the multifaceted implications of this legal recognition. The empirical evidence highlights improvements in mental health, economic benefits, and societal acceptance, while the normative perspective underscores the ethical imperatives of justice and inclusion.

As society navigates the complexities of family dynamics, cultural shifts, and ongoing challenges, a continued commitment to understanding and advocating for the rights of same-sex couples is essential. The journey toward equality is ongoing, and the lessons learned from the legalization of same-sex marriage will undoubtedly inform future discussions on marriage and family rights across diverse communities.

## CONCLUSION

On the front of democracy, freedom and human rights, By allowing same-sex couples to formalize their unions, society recognizes and values the diversity of human relationships, promoting inclusion and respect for individual rights. It is a significant step forward towards a more just and egalitarian society.

However, in Timorese culture and moral theology there are clear indications in their position that marriage is an exclusive union between a man and a woman, intended for procreation and the union of spouses. It is clear and indisputable.

Thus, any same-sex marriage is morally and culturally considered invalid and contrary to Church doctrine. It is considered non-existent. The legalization of such unions contradicts Catholic doctrine. And in traditional society as Timorese, I honestly say that it was strange and is still not recognized.

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